

Simply Said 2015



Issue 27

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

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

Acknowledgements

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Clare Adult Basic Education Service (CABES)
Clonroad Business Park
Ennis
Co. Clare

Your comments and suggestions are very welcome.
Please contact us at 065 6897646

Co-ordination team:

Amanda O'Connor, Karl Quinn, Pauline Murphy, Sarah-Jane Geoghegan, Victoria Hook, Moira Greene, Mary Flanagan, Olwyn Griffin, Clare Sheahan, Loretta Hughes and Margot Walsh.

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Brian Boru Mural at Killaloe Boys National School
Created by: Parents and children of CABES Family Learning class

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Foreword

Welcome to the 27th issue of *Simply Said*, the annual collection of writings by adult learners taking part in programmes with the Clare Adult Basic Education Service.

The writers of *Simply Said* attend classes in CABES centres all around County Clare. Some attend group classes in writing and spelling, maths, computers, English language, cookery, craft, horticulture, sewing and woodwork. Others choose to work on their own with a tutor to improve their reading and writing skills. Regardless of the word count, the process of writing, correcting, editing and proofreading each draft is the same for every writer.

This edition has an impressive 125 articles contained within its pages. This year's writers were inspired by many things, such as dreams, heroes and memories. 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 times of year. The articles are thought provoking, uplifting and some are even a little sad.

The mural on the cover of this year's *Simply Said* was painted by parents and children taking part in a family learning class in Killaloe last summer. The mural is on the wall of the Killaloe Boys National School. It was painted to commemorate High King Brian Boru's links with Killaloe. The millennium commemoration of the Battle of Clontarf was in 2014 and there was a festival in Killaloe to celebrate this during the year.

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 2015*.

The CABES team

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Afternoon tea

Every three weeks my friend Josephine and myself treat ourselves to afternoon tea in the Fig Tree Restaurant in Dromoland. I have a pot of tea with apple tart and ice-cream. Josephine has a pot of tea with a scone and butter. When we are finished our tea we drive to The Inn at Dromoland where we park the car in the car park. Then we take a walk in the woods if it is not raining. We walk around Dromoland Lough and watch people fishing and playing golf. When we are walking, we have to be careful of stray golf balls! When we are walking, we see a lot of other people walking around. I love to see the hawk in the trees. Sometimes we see weddings. I love looking at all the style. Most of the ladies wear lovely dresses and big hats. All this takes about one hour. I have to be back at Woodlands to get my bus home before 5:30 p.m. I look forward to meeting Josephine for our lovely treats about every three weeks.

By Teresa

Christmas day

On Christmas morning I go to Mass, and after Mass I go for a walk in the woods in Kilrush. In the woods there are a lot of leaves on the ground. Then I go to my parents' house for dinner and give them their presents. After dinner we watch a Christmas film. I go to the pub at Christmas time to meet my friends and watch soccer games and have a laugh. There is music in the pubs at Christmas time.

Christmas day is all about young children waking up to see what Santa brought them and they are all excited. On Christmas day I go to the graveyards to visit both my grandparents' graves and the graves of relatives and friends, as Christmas time is also a time to remember loved ones.

By Darren

ITABE

Twelve weeks ago I started an ITABE course with five other guys, all good friends for years. Woodwork was on Tuesdays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and horticulture was on Wednesdays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

When I started the course I didn't know what to expect from it but I knew working with lads would be enjoyable.

In woodwork, our tutor was Gerry, a nice man and he made it very easy for us to learn. We made mirrors, bird boxes, window boxes and did some stained glass. I learned about metric, shapes, sizes and diameters.

In horticulture, our tutor was Tina, who also made it very easy for us to learn. We learned the life cycles of the plant. We did sowing, potting and cuttings.

We were able to fill the window boxes we made in woodwork with the plants we learned about in horticulture class. It was a great idea to have them running together.

It's coming to an end now and I will miss the lads every Tuesday and Wednesday.

By Jacko

Summer holidays

I'm not going to Lourdes this year. I usually go with my brother, Jimmy, but this year we are going to stay home. I think the summer will be nice and we will have good weather. We will be going out on the boat with John and hoping to catch mackerel. I like to eat mackerel, especially when they are freshly caught. You can just fry them in a pan and eat them with some bread. They taste delicious.

By Joe

Choosing a camera

When buying a digital camera there are many features to consider. Although price is an important factor, choose something light so that it will fit in your pocket and be quickly available if you see something to photograph. The camera should have at least 16 mega pixels so that the detail is good when the photo is enlarged on the computer or printed out. A bright screen is essential to view the picture before taking the photograph - 3.2" is a good size.

Digital cameras do not need film but record and save the pictures and also videos on a memory card. The memory card, also called an SD card, is very important; this could be 4 GB, which stands for gigabytes of memory, but an 8 GB card has more room to record video recordings. Taking flash photos and video uses up a lot of battery power and lithium batteries will last longer than AA batteries. Make sure the camera comes with a good case, batteries and battery charger, memory card, wrist cord to help hold the camera and a USB cable to load your photos onto a computer. On holiday it's useful to have a spare charged battery and another memory card for all those wonderful photos. Most important is the camera manual that will help you understand how to use your camera.

By Peggy, Carmel, Patrick, Anne, Daniele and Mary

Our Christmas

As the song says, Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year. What I most enjoy about it is the fact that our family has time to spend together, away from busy lives.

Christmas, for me, really starts when the children get their holidays and return home. As a family, we always go to select a growing tree from a forest farm and the beautiful smell of pine permeates the house. Then the children decorate it. The lights twinkle and the decorations reflect the dancing flames of the open fire.

I love Christmas Eve and the air of expectation. The carols at Mass are lovely and make everyone really happy.

Even though our children have outgrown Santa, presents are still an important part of the holidays. We enjoy the usual Christmas fare, turkey and ham with all the trimmings. We think of all the people who may be ill or in hospital and wish them well.

Even though it is a very busy time for the mothers of the world, it is a really special day. One of my favourite traditions at Christmas is our after lunch walk on the beach. The remainder of the day is spent playing card games, Scrabble, etc. and everyone has a lovely time.

By Mary

Redeeming Love by Francine Rivers – a review

The story starts in California in 1850, a time when both men and women sold their souls and bodies to stay alive. Angel is a lady growing up in a community where she becomes a prostitute. She hates men as they are using her and leaving her dead inside.

Then the turning point happens in her life when she meets Michael Hosea, a man who obeys God's call to marry her and love her unconditionally. Step by step her cold heart starts to melt.

'You're free, you just don't know it,' Michael says to her. But Angel can't accept easily that she's worthy to be loved so she runs back to her dark old life, and there she experiences the love of the one who will never let her go.

'Just because you don't believe in the Lord, doesn't mean his power isn't working for you.' Angel, who's now called Sarah, discovers the love of God that can heal her more than Michael does.

I recommend this romance and history novel to anyone who is interested in finding the real meaning of life, love and hope. It was published in 1997 and over 1 million copies have been sold.

By Mary

My dream came true!

I've always wanted to teach French and my dream came true in September 2013.

My friend works for the company Caring for Carers. I told her that I speak French and if her children needed extra help I could teach them and for no money! Her son wanted help with his French in school and now his mother is happy for him because I said I would help him.

Now he has also found a girl who writes to him in English and he writes back in French.

I have to help him a lot. It is sometimes very stressful but I enjoy every lesson with him. When he didn't have anyone to speak French with him, he had some problems. Now he comes to me every week on Saturday afternoon for about one hour.

I know how difficult it is to speak French. My brother, Max, had to help his sister. She was here for two weeks in September 2013.

By Susanne

Craft and sewing

I love art and craft. I've always loved to do craft with my girls at home. I also love to crochet. I crochet all the time. I made a big granny square blanket and chair covers.

I like sewing. When I go to sewing class I have a lot of fun, and I meet a lot of different kinds of people. I make all kinds of things at home from old material, such as trousers, shirts, string tops, leggings, shorts for my girls, v-necks for my son and hair bands.

By Rosemary

Westlife

Westlife is the name of a band that started out with five members. Their names are Nicky, Shane, Kian, Brian and Mark.

I went to Dublin in April 2010 to see them. I went with my sister, Mary, and niece, Sarah. We made a weekend of it. *Westlife* weren't playing until 8:00 p.m. on Saturday so, on the day of the concert, we went to Drundrum Shopping Centre. When the evening came I met with my other sister, Catherine, and her two daughters, Laura and Rebecca. Then we went to the O2 arena on the train. I was really looking forward to it. When they came on stage everybody clapped. It was a really good night.

I have 4 CDs of *Westlife* and I listen to them a lot. In 2004 Brian left the band but they continued on without him. After a few years they all split up. I was very sad when that happened. Kian is now a DJ on 2fm and he is a presenter on RTÉ. The others are all doing different things and maybe, some day, they'll get back together.

By Joan

My first special baby

I was excited when I knew that I was going to have a baby. I had special wishes for him, but I didn't know that he was going to be very special.

When the baby was born, the doctor said that it was a boy and he has Down Syndrome. I was very scared. I started to weep. I blamed Allah because I didn't want the baby, but when I was about to touch him, he grabbed my finger and I felt like a true mum.

As he grew up he became very important to me. I feel very proud now that I have him. Thanks Allah for giving him to me.

By Nusrat

Christmas

The Christmas market is on at the Trump International Golf Club, Doonbeg 28th to the 30th of November. They have fireworks in front of the Lodge. They also sing Christmas carols and there are lots of children running around. The people are very cheerful and Santa is there. They have mulled wine and Christmas cakes and hot chocolate and lots of different sweets and jumpers and turf fires outside. I like Christmas time and spending time with my family and cooking dinner. We have turkey and ham with homemade stuffing and vegetables and potatoes and lots of trifle with cream and all the family get together.

By Patricia

My holiday

I went to Medjugorje on the 8th October 2014 for eight nights. I went with my friend and her friend also came with us. We travelled to Dublin Airport where we boarded our flight. The plane was full and everyone aboard was travelling to the pilgrimage.

When we arrived in Medjugorje the weather was extremely warm and, as we had never been here before, we had only packed for cold weather. So then we had to buy suitable clothes for the weather. The hotel we stayed in was fantastic. The staff were very welcoming and met all our needs. The food was also lovely.

The duration of our pilgrimage was eight days. For the first five days we stayed in Medjugorje, where we had to be up most mornings at 7:00 a.m. to be ready for 9:00 a.m. We would do some sight-seeing and get a chance to mingle with others. We celebrated Mass at 12 noon every day in different places, churches and parish halls. We visited many places where miracles took place over the years. We visited the church where the first Eucharist miracle took place.

Our Lady appeared to six children on a mountain and we climbed this mountain to see where Our Lady appeared. We did the Stations of the Cross up the mountains and we prayed to Our Lord and we rubbed our tissues on the holy oil to bring home to family and friends.

One of the children is called Ivanka and we went to see her and she told us her story and how Our Lady appeared to her and the other five children. We visited the poor and sick in hospital in Medjugorje.

We finished in Medjugorje and took a boat to Italy. We visited a famous cemetery in San Giovanni and walked the Stations of the Cross. We finally visited the cell where St. Padre Pio had lived and died and also the birth place of St. Pio.

My overall experience of Medjugorje and San Giovanni was amazing. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit and stay, and would love to go back this year. I would also recommend it to anybody who enjoys pilgrimages or even for anyone who has never been to visit this place. It is overwhelming and a brilliant experience.

By Patsy

Sally in the alley

In a disgust filled dark alley, stood a blonde girl named Sally
With a 2 dollar reputation, because of her half leg amputation,
As a stranger draws near, with a can of half-drunk beer,
Not so much delight as a feeling of fright,
As he comes at her quickly with ease.

In the disgust filled dark alley, stood a tired worn out Sally,
Feeling sad and alone, only skin and some bone,
She's weak and weary, and somewhat teary,
Collapsed on the ground, like an unwanted hound,
She's died worn out, tired and cold.

By Bianca

Back to learning

There is no point in fooling yourself when you cannot read or write. For filling forms or to go on courses, to writing a shopping list - it is so important to be able to read and for these reasons I knew I had to return to education.

The education system was different when I went to school. I went to a country school with one teacher and three classes, so if you fell behind you were left behind. There was no relief teacher or extra help if you were having difficulty in reading and writing. As a result, I arrived in secondary school with difficulties with literacy and because of the embarrassment caused by this, I left school in second year.

I spent a lot of my life covering up for my illiteracy. It was hard to keep it from people. I have finally faced up to my problem and have sought help. I have returned to education with CABES. Because I am good with my hands, I was lucky that I found a job. I have never been out of work. I got a house, a mortgage and a family.

Thanks to the tutor I have at the moment, I feel that I am finally making progress. It is a long road, but I hope I will succeed.

By K

My trip to Manchester and Yorkshire

I travelled by coach and boat to England last summer. I went to the *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale* sets in Manchester and Yorkshire. I met Kate Ford who plays Tracy Barlow in *Coronation Street*. She was a nice lady. I stayed in a fancy hotel in Manchester for two nights. I had a glass of white wine in the Rovers Return and a glass of Guinness in the pub in *Emmerdale*. I saw the costume room in *Coronation Street*. The weather was bad during my trip and there were puddles of water on the cobbles.

I watch the soaps only occasionally now as I often listen to the radio during the evening. Nevertheless, I enjoyed my trip to England.

By John

The Titanic

In 1908 the White Star Line asked Harland and Wolff, Belfast shipbuilders, to build three new liners: RMS Olympic, RMS Titanic and HMHS Britannic. Construction of the Titanic began in 1909. Its length was 882 feet and 9 inches; the breadth was 92 feet and its height was 180 feet. The engines were of 46,000 horse power and the captain was Edward Smith. It was said at the time that 'neither God nor man could sink the Titanic.' It was also said to be the safest ship ever built and that there was no risk of fire or sinking.

The ship was launched in Southampton and then sailed to Queenstown in Ireland (now Cobh) on April 11th 1912. Ireland was the last land to be seen by the crew and passengers. It sailed for three and a half days when it then hit an iceberg and sank - 1514 people died and 710 were saved. Conditions on the night were said to be flat and calm. There were not enough lifeboats available for everyone.

The fate of the other two ships in the line was not great either. The Britannic sank after an explosion during World War One off the Greek island of Kea in 1916 and the Olympic was scrapped after 24 years of transatlantic service.

There is a Titanic memorial in Donegall Square in Belfast.

By Níall

A tribute to the Kennedys

I would like to write a tribute and account of some of the members of the well-known American dynasty that was the Kennedy family. The Kennedys were perfectionists. Joseph Kennedy was the eldest son of Joseph and Rose Kennedy. He was born in July 1915. He was very well educated – he attended the London School of Economics and Harvard. He trained as a U.S. navy aviator and during World War Two undertook 25 missions as a bomber pilot. On August 12th 1944 his explosive laden drone bomber detonated prematurely over the Suffolk coast and killed the entire crew. His body was lost at sea. He was 29 years old.

Jack Kennedy (President John Fitzgerald Kennedy) was born in 1917 and graduated from Harvard in 1940. His thesis about the Munich agreement was published as *Why England Slept* and became a best-selling book. His second book, *Profiles in Courage* won the Pulitzer Prize. He undertook active service in the Pacific during World War Two and his political career began in 1946 when he was elected a congressman and in 1952 he became a U.S. senator. He beat Richard Nixon in the 1960 presidential election and he became president in 1961. He was assassinated in Dallas, Texas on November 22nd 1963. His son was John Junior who also died tragically in a plane crash in 1999.

Robert Kennedy was born in 1925 and studied at Harvard and Virginia Law School. He became Attorney General during his brother's presidency. He was an advocate of civil rights. He became a New York senator and in March 1968 he launched his bid to become president. He was assassinated after winning California on June 5th 1968. He was 42 years old.

Edward (Ted) Kennedy was born in February 1932. He also went to Harvard and University of Virginia. He was a U.S. senator for Massachusetts, an office he held until his death. He was very involved with civil rights and the Northern Ireland peace process. He died at his home in August 2009. He was 77 years old.

Kathleen Kennedy Cavendish, Marchioness of Hartington was one of their sisters. She was born in 1920. She attended Queen's College, London, Finch School and Florida Commercial College. She spent a large part of her short life in England and Europe. She died in a plane crash in the French Alps in 1948.

There are many places and institutions named after the Kennedys – here are a few of them: JFK Airport in New York, The Kennedy Space Centre and the Kennedy Centre in Washington.

May they rest in peace.

By Gerard

Time

Dedicated to Chris, John and Bríd

There's a time to live

And there's a time to die.

There's a time to sow

And a time to harvest.

Life is short and sweet.

By Dympna

The Cookie Club by Anne Pearlman - a review

During my Christmas holidays I had a few wonderful weeks to myself. After assignments and projects, I didn't want to read any magazines or even make a shopping list. I was so tired. However, my passion to read and my curiosity won. Santa Claus, generous as never before, brought a full bag of presents. One of them was *The Cookie Club* written by Anne Pearlman.

Although it is fiction, all the characters seemed very realistic. Twelve women gather every year on the first Monday of December with their homemade cookies. They have to bring a bottle of wine and a dish as well. It seems just a party, but that party has a specific spirit. Each woman takes a turn telling her story, which is about what is happening in her life now.

The main character, Marnie, has two daughters. They are both pregnant. One of them has a risky pregnancy and is waiting for results from the doctor. Marnie's best friend, Charlene, is recovering from her son's death. Another woman dreams about having children, but her husband doesn't want any. Now, she has to decide whether to end her marriage or forget about the dream. Some of them have survived cancer. Some of them have struggled with financial issues. So, each woman has her own story, her fears and joys.

Each part of the book starts with the recipe for cookies and continues with a story of the woman who made them. It ends with a description of one of the ingredients.

I really enjoyed reading this book. It made me feel like I know some of the characters; I recognised some events that happened to my friends, friends of friends, ex-colleagues and acquaintances. Each story is really interesting, but Marnie's was my favourite and kept me guessing until the end.

Although *The Cookie Club* is fiction, some details are true. The writer, Anne Pearlman, participates in the cookie club. Some recipes were used in that club. Charlene is based on a real woman.

As far as I know, *The Cookie Club* has been optioned for a film. That is good news for me. But I highly recommend that everyone who is interested in human lives, communication and relationships read the book. It is a perfect holiday book or gift for your girlfriend, sister or colleague. I would like to finish my review with a nice quote: 'And I know that whatever happens, whatever wonders or hurdles life presents my family and friends and I will journey together.'

By Vilma

Arrest and trial - what happened when the woman got home?

When Marguerite got home she had a nice cup of Barry's Tea. Ann came into the kitchen, had some tea too, and they both sat down and had a very important chat. Marguerite said, 'Ann, your father has gotten out of hand with his drinking and he has to go live with his parents in Kerry until the next court date.'

'Phew,' said Ann, 'I'm glad he's gone. We might get a bit of peace till after the court case.' 'I'm so stressed about this court case. I really hope it all goes well for us with the new baby, Caroline,' added Marguerite. 'I just want all this fighting to stop. I want my parents to get along for our sake.' She put the cup down angrily and stormed out. Marguerite sat alone at the table, crying bitterly into her cup of tea.

Suddenly there was a knock at the door. Marguerite got up to open the door and to her surprise it was her mother-in-law, Kerry from Kerry.

Kerry barged in the door demanding answers from Marguerite about her son's situation. Marguerite told Kerry, 'Feck off out of my house and do not darken my door again. I'm done with your son.'

Kerry composed herself and said, 'What about my Johnboy seeing his kids?' And Marguerite said, 'I'll see you in court,' as she pushed out the door.

The end...for now.

By Flan and Bianca

A shock

At 5:00 a.m., my husband shouted, 'Lek get up! Lek get up!' I said, 'What's wrong with you? It's too early to get up.' He said, 'Your cousin died.' I was shocked and started crying. I thought she must have had a car crash so I called my mother in Thailand to find out what exactly happened.

My mother answered, crying. I asked her, 'What happened?' She said someone murdered her. Then I asked, 'Who did that to her?' She said, 'A young man in the village.' I couldn't believe how that could happen to my family. I had just lost my grandfather, and six months later I lost my cousin. My mother said this guy came to steal money but my cousin woke up and saw him. He got frightened, so he murdered her. Her mother got injured too because she tried to protect her daughter from this bad guy. She stayed in ICU for 3 days and no one told her that her daughter had died because they were worried about shocking her but, 4 days later, her family decided to tell her. She is stronger than we think.

We lost a beautiful girl who was only twenty five years old and who was going to have a good future (she was working in the bank) because of a bad man who wanted money to buy drugs and drink. May you rest in peace my beautiful girl.

By Anongkran

Clare U21 down through the years and beyond

The 90s were great but so was 2013. We were up-beat with the U21 senior lads. In 2009 we beat Kilkenny by one point. The score was 14 points for Kilkenny and 15 points for Clare. Cormac O'Donovan got the winning point in the 2009 final. His twin brother Domhnall O'Donovan stopped Cork getting their hands on the Liam Mc Carthy cup in 2013.

A young lad in 2013 named Shane O'Donnell, crashed 3 goals into the back of the net. The young lad was on fire. Mc Grath and Honan got a goal each. That was a mighty day.

They were great and very dedicated to the game, and not being paid huge amounts of money like the soccer and rugby players. They did it for the love of the game.

Sixmilebridge is my home club. To see players from my own club get some glory is great. Going back to the county scene, our U21s have to rebuild so we will look forward to the championship and we will see what that will bring.

I love going to the matches. The banter is great. My father has a great interest in hurling. He talks a lot about it. He is from the Smith O'Briens club and, I suppose, that is how I came to take an interest in it.

My brother played hurling when he was in primary school in Sixmilebridge. He is married now to a girl from Tipperary. They live in Australia and they have a son. Some day he is hoping that his son will play hurling for club and county in the county of Clare. My mother is from County Limerick, the parish of Ahane. 'Come on Ahane, the spuds are boiling!' A good hurling county, Limerick. Mick Mackey hurled for Ahane.

Now, looking forward to the Munster Championship and what will happen and how far we will go. I would like to see Domhnall O'Donovan and Shane O'Donnell as joint captains.

Davy Fitzgerald was our 2013 All Ireland winning manager and, like the great Roy Keane, he is a passionate sportsman but sometimes he loses that head and Clare suffers.

Anthony Daly (Dalo) was a great captain for us in the 90s

Rory Mc Ilroy was named as RTÉ sportsperson 2011 and 2014. I am a great fan of his. I know he loves cars and boxing. Rory is one of the sports stars I would most like to meet.

By Colm

The shadow of a dark autumn evening

(extract from a longer story)

I got up on a Wednesday. I looked out the window and it was a lovely bright morning. I sat down to eat some breakfast. I was wondering would I walk to work or not as the day was promised good. I decided to walk and get some fresh air and the exercise would be no harm either.

I was walking along when I met Mr. J.J. Barry. I said, 'Good morning.' He said, 'Good morning yourself Jim. How are the family?' 'They are very well. Thank you for asking.' 'That's good to hear.' I continued walking down the road, whistling away and met Caroline. She said, 'Good morning Jim.' 'Good morning to you,' I replied. 'Did you decide to walk to work too?' 'I did,' she said, 'because it's a nice morning and the exercise is good for me.'

When I got to work, I sat down with Mary, John and Joan and we had a coffee before we started work. We spoke about lots of things but we didn't speak about anything really. Then we started work and it was a busy day. We worked in a bank and I don't remember so many people coming into the bank in one day before. I have worked in the bank for twenty years and never remember anything like this. They were looking for loans and everyone that came in thought that they should get one. But when I say no, they get very angry. Sometimes what they say to you could not be repeated to anyone.

I met Mary, Joan and John at dinner time and I was telling them about some of the things that were said to me. They could not believe it. Mary said, 'You must be a very quiet man to listen to those things.' Then John butted in and said, 'I would not take that. I would get very

angry and say something back.' John then said, 'Jim, I don't think I'd do that job because if someone said something like that to me, I would probably hit them.' 'Well John,' I answered, 'if you did that, you would be sacked. I think that would not be very smart. I think your family would not be very happy with that. What would pay for the children's schooling and feed the family, because the salary only barely feeds ye?' Well, after all that, dinner time was over. We just went back to work and forgot about it.

It made a very interesting evening at work. I met some very nice people. It was real nice to meet so many people like this. It was getting very close to closing time, but I decided to see another couple of people. We will call them Mr. and Mrs. Red for the rest of the story. I asked them to come in and sit down and we started to talk, just in general, about all sorts of things and Mr. Red said, 'I'll tell you about my son, James. He is seven years old but you'd think he was twenty with the things he comes out with. The other day, he was at school and the teacher was talking about maths – how it was very important as you grow up and get older. My son asked her why. She started to explain why. It would be very important to be able to add and subtract later in life. When you're older, you may need to measure a window to know what size curtains you need for your house. You would need to be able to count your money in a way you would know how much you had. It would be handy when you need to pay for something.' Mr. Red suddenly stopped talking. I threw one eye at the clock. It was 2:55 p.m. That meant there were five minutes to stopping time. I said to myself, 'That's great. We can get on with it.' The thought had hardly gone from my head, when he started on about his older son. I thought, 'Oh no, not another long story about this son!'

But I was wrong. He started to tell me about when this son started school, then about secondary school. I thought, 'Great, that's over.' But then he started to talk about college and all the subjects he did and the honours he got. I was saying to myself, 'Would you ever shut up?' It was now 3:05 p.m. But no. He started to tell me about all the things his son did and the things he used to do. I was getting really sick of this and I said, 'Did you want to see me?' 'Yes sir,' he replied. I said, 'Excuse me? No need for sir. My name is Jim.' He replied, 'OK Jim.' I thought, 'Great. Now we can get somewhere.' Then Mr. Red started to tell me why he was here. I thought, 'That's great. I'll be home before dark.'

Then Mr. Red said, 'I'm here because my older son came up with a plan to build holiday homes on the far end of our farm as it is near the sea. It would help to raise more capital and add to the farm business. 'OK,' I said. 'Tell me about it.' He said that his son was talking about building twenty houses.' I said, 'OK. So, you're looking for a loan.' 'Yes,' he said. I asked him how much it would cost to do the whole project. He stopped for a minute, then he continued, 'The builder said, looking at the drawings and the site, taking everything into account, it would take €1.5 million to complete.' I asked to see the drawings and the planning permission and he handed me the drawings. 'Have you got the planning permission?' I asked. He said he had not got any. 'Mr. Red, you cannot build anything without planning. That is the law. Mr. Red, I am afraid I can't give you a loan until you have all the paperwork.' He did not like this and he got a little nasty. I said nothing. Then he left. I thought to myself, 'All this talk about his son and all the education he has. You'd think he would know this.'

It was late now. I locked my office and I had a coffee at the shop. I headed home. I had three miles to walk. I started down through the town. People must have thought I was mad because I was talking to myself. There were people saying hello and I would just look at them. They looked at me like I had two heads when I did not answer.

At this stage, I had got to the edge of town. Now it was dusk. I started down the road home. As I walked along the road, I could not get the story that Mr. Red told me out of my head. I was still walking and talking to myself. Then, all of a sudden, I saw this shadow inside the ditch.

By Denis

Aging

Many years ago, when I was a child and my mom was 36, I thought she was old. Now, I am 52 and I don't think this is old. Now, when someone dies at 50 I think that they died very young. As a person lives life, thoughts change.

By Luba

Step by step to confidence

I never got a chance to do my Junior Cert in school. Years later my cousin, Margaret, told me about the Adult Education Centre in Ennis. I came in and met Mary. We had a chat and she told me about lots of classes going on in the centre.

First, I did cooking with Nora. Next, I did Junior Cert Maths; it was tough but I did well. Then, I did Junior Cert English; that was even tougher but I got through it. My next challenge was learning to drive. First up was Driver Theory – the questions, the driving lessons and all those Thursday tests. But I did it and I felt good.

Learning new things felt great, so off I went to learn about computers. I did a basic course and I'm not frightened of computers any more. I'm still going strong and right now I'm getting ready to do my driving test. After that, who knows what I might take on!

By Clare

I like

I like to have tea with friends.
It's good to sit and chat.
Friends bring a smile to my day.
And are with me on my way.

I like to have good neighbours too.
No matter what we do,
Their kindness gets us through,
A happy word for me, for you.

By Geraldine

My story about bullying

Some people say that school days are the best days of our lives but, for me, they were not. I was bullied every day going to school and I was bullied when I got home from school as well. There were days when I did not want to go to school. I wanted to stay in bed all day long. I was called names – ‘fat’ and ‘ugly’. I did not ever tell my mum or my dad about all the names I was called going to school.

I was bullied when I got off the school bus as well. All this has got stuck in my mind and, thanks to some people, all of the bullying is still in my mind today.

When I am up on stage though, it is a big story. I always get the crowd going, every time. No one can ever get the mic off of me when I am up on stage – haha haha. When I am up on stage, I love to sing *Simply the best* because I am just simply the best – and to all those people - watch this space!

By Mel

The one we love

When we love someone with all of our hearts, we fight to keep them safe so that no harm can come to them. We do our best to do it at all times. We help them in their time of need – but I wonder if I am doing my best at times.

It might hurt in the process but we can't help who we fall in love with. For me, I fight for the one I love in my everyday life – even if I have to go to hell and back for her. I know she would do the same for me.

By Ian

I like Bray

I like Bray in County Wicklow. It is called 'The Garden of Ireland' because of all the beautiful flowers there. I go to my sister in Bray in the winter. When I am there, I walk Seedy the dog with my niece Áine, who is a nurse in Dublin. I help out with jobs in the house. I put out the rubbish bins and get messages in the shop. When it is windy in Bray, the trees shake and the bins blow away. There is a lot of snow on the mountains in Wicklow. The local soccer team is called the Bray Wanderers and their nickname is 'The Seagulls' because Bray is so near the sea. They do nicely - they are coming on.

I love Quilty though. That is my home.

By John

Manchester

I was in Manchester last summer with Tina and John. We travelled by car and ferry. I went to an old pub. It was the Rovers Return. I saw a collection of pictures of the *Coronation Street* actors who have been in the show in days gone by – actors who played Mike Baldwin and Jack Duckworth.

I went to see the *Emmerdale* pub, The Woolpack. It was raining as we walked around the set. We stayed three nights in Manchester.

By Michael

Horses

I like horses because I am always around them. I was brought up with horses. I care for them by feeding them hay and oats and they need a lot of hard work. Sometimes, I take the horses outside for a ride. Also, they are friendly and good natured.

By Christy

The wedding of Sharon and Gerry

Sharon and Gerry got married last year in Tralee. It was lovely dry weather. It was a family wedding. The wedding reception was in Killarney. There was a red carpet in the hotel and tea and coffee on arrival. My Auntie Ann and her husband were there with their son, Alan. Sharon and Gerry's baby, Robert, was there too. He is a good, kind child. He is four years old and he will be going to big school next year.

Marie, Sharon's friend, and Danielle, Gerry's sister, were bridesmaids and Dad walked Sharon up the aisle. The hotel was lovely and there was a disco after the meal. We had turkey and ham for the meal. We had a lovely full Irish breakfast the next morning.

Sharon and Gerry toured around Ireland for their honeymoon.

By Adrian

Homelessness

It can happen to anybody in many situations. My name is John. I had an experience that I will never forget. People believe that most people become homeless because they have a drink problem or maybe drugs or both, but not in my case.

It all started when I went to the U.K. seeking work. Southampton is the name of the place I went to. I was left on the streets with no money as I had been robbed of everything. I went to the local police station. All they said was, 'You can't hang around this place. You must keep walking. No loitering.'

By a bit of luck, I sat on a park bench to rest myself. This man sat beside me. We got talking. He was from Scotland. He told me he was in the same situation. He told me he slept in the park. I got his trust. He showed me where he slept at night. He had a burrow dug amongst the bushes so I went along with it. The only noise I could hear was the siren of the ships coming in to the harbour. The weather was bitterly cold.

I was always tired and I went around in a trance during the day. There were no social services around to avail of. This lasted for approximately 3-4 weeks. I was walking on a path one day and I met an Irish man. I told him my situation. He happened to be a truck driver so he obliged me with a lift to London. He told me at least there were social services available there. He gave me a five pound note, so I made my way to an aunt of mine to get a loan from her, which I did. I would have stayed with her if I had not had to look after my mother. That was in the back of my mind. My aunt said I could stay if I got a job. Then I could get my own place. I had made a rash decision to begin with. In the finish, I would be worried about my mother.

I made my way back to Ireland. I would not wish homelessness on anybody. It was a frightening experience that I will never forget. This all happened many years ago.

By John

My new apartment

I love my new apartment. I can enjoy the peace and quiet. There is a kitchen, a living room, a gorgeous bedroom and a bathroom.

I have a television and a laptop. In the kitchen, there is a dining table and six chairs. In the living room, there is a couch and cushions and a nest of tables. My bedroom has a double bed, locker, wardrobe, chest of drawers and units.

I have pictures and photos around my apartment. Friends and family visit me and give me gifts.

My favourite time in my apartment is evening time. I watch TV, knit and relax.

By Margaret

Coill Dubh - our village

The village was built in the early 1950s for the Bord na Móna workers. My parents moved into their house in 1953. People moved in from all over Ireland. My father worked there long before they moved in. He would cycle home every Friday or Saturday with his wages to Carlow and back again on Sunday.

The men at that time lived in a camp in huts. There are two stories of how the camp came to be - one was that it was built for prisoners of war; the other was that it was built for the workers. Years later, when the school in the village became overcrowded, the same huts were used for the overflow until a second school was built.

The married men looked after the younger men or lads for a fee. They cooked and did their washing for them. That way, they saved their own wages for home.

There were a hundred and sixty houses built and about twelve council houses. Each house had a tree planted in front of it. Every second one was a pink or white cherry blossom. There were houses built for the top management at both ends of the village.

When they moved into the village, there were no roads or footpaths but they had running water, cold and hot, which was heated from the range and also flushing toilets. Almost all of the tenants had never had indoor plumbing; as one lad said, they had great fun flushing the toilets and switching on and off the lights. A few did not know how to use the range. A report was sent in about one house being so smoky, and when the caretaker went to check it out he found the fire on top of the range instead of in it. I won't tell the one about the cat - it may upset cat lovers.

There were four shops - a grocer's, clothing store/drapers, newsagent and a chemist/post office. There was no school or church until 1956 when the school was opened. The church opened in 1963. The doctor's dispensary was outside the village. There was also a district nurse/midwife living in the village. A dentist came once a month and, after his clinic, the kids would gather around his car and he handed out sweets. Now we know he was looking for future patients.

There were no pubs in the village. The nearest one was about two miles away. It has never changed - only got a litter posher with a golf club and bar just on the edge of the village.

We had two caretakers. They looked after a lot of things - mending windows, painting doors, cleaning gutters and grass cutting. It was a good community. Everyone knew each other and no child could get away with anything. Someone would see you and deal with it without your mother knowing. It was like a big crèche.

In the summer we all went to the bog to foot the turf - Mammy with the pram and babies all aboard. We would spend a few weeks there, sometimes on our own. Not a lot got done with all the messing about. The bog was very black, but you could find different colours in the heather - pink, yellow, green and purple. The vibrant wild raspberries and strawberries and the different coloured insects brought colour too.

My dad worked on a bagger, cutting the turf, working shifts in the summer. The money was good then, except in wet times when money was low. In winter, when they worked in the yard repairing the machinery, that's when local grocery stores came into play. You could always get groceries on tick and pay for them on pay day, but in winter it was worse. There was just a basic pay, and you would give over what you could pay until summer came around again.

We had home deliveries then, long before Tesco's. You left your notebook or shopping list in your letter box and it was collected and the groceries were delivered before lunch, and if you forgot anything you left a second list for the evening delivery. A local farmer delivered our milk. You left out a billy can or jugs and the milk was poured into them with a pint measuring cup or through the spout of the can. Well, if you could get to it before your mum took it in, you could slurp the froth off the top and run, hoping someone else got the blame. The farmer also came every Saturday with potatoes and veg.

Sports were a big thing in the village as there were so many different counties involved, especially for hurling. It is the same today. The men and, later, the lads would gather on the big green to play hurling or football. There were about eight greens around the village. The biggest was in the middle of it. A few of the men went on to play for the county. Our games were hopscotch, rounders, hurdles, Red Rover,

skipping, marbles, steelers (for the boys), also cowboys and Indians. Some games were played on the greens, others on the path or road. There were only a few cars then. Back gardens were mainly for growing vegetables.

During a discussion once at home about the different careers our family members had taken, my father was asked if he had ever thought of joining the army. He said he had, once. He had spent a day cycling around looking for work and had ended up in The Curragh. 'Thinking it was maybe my only option. And, you know what saved me?' he asked, as he stood up to throw some turf on the fire. Taking hold of a sod of turf, and holding it up to show us, he said, 'This is what saved me. I got talking to a man who told me about a company starting up on the bogs and giving me directions where to go. He told me that I should give them a try and, as you know, that was it.'

When asked to describe the smell of turf, I find it difficult. It is a combination of heather, damp wood and fresh turned soil. The smell of the turf is what I call home. It was the only fuel that was burned. You could rent a site from the board and cut your own turf, dry it, and haul it home. It was a hard slog.

When you wanted to go anywhere, it was done by bike or shank's pony. I think we must have completed a few marathons over the years with all our walking to school in the camp and to church. As we grew older and were going to dances, especially in marquees in summer, a radius of ten miles was the furthest we walked. We left the village at about the same time so there was plenty of company, coming home especially. You went in groups - that way you did not feel the time pass (you may have, with heels but you could always walk barefoot). The lads of the village would always look after the girls if needs be.

I left the village when I was fourteen, for work in Dublin, but always returned for weekends or holidays up until my mum left in 2001. I have only gone back to the edge of the village since. Some things have changed - an extra few houses on the outskirts - but it's more or less the same, but without Mammy and Daddy there it's not home, only in memories.

By Rose

Tommy Fleming

I went to a Tommy Fleming concert in Glór in Ennis on the 24th of January. I found Glór very comfortable. The people were friendly. An usher showed us to our seats. The lighting was very good and bright on the stage. There were lots of lights shining around Tommy Fleming.

Tommy Fleming is a very good singer. He sang 'The Contender' and 'Hard Times'. In 'Hard Times', he is singing about sadness in life. Some people are poor and find life hard.

Tommy Fleming is a nice man and he is very friendly. I got my picture taken with him and he signed my programme.

By Martin

My way of life

I go to the mart in Ennis on Thursdays. I go in the afternoon. It is a noisy place. People lift their hands to make bids on cows. The auctioneer selling the cattle talks very fast. He watches for the bids, and bangs his hammer off his desk when an animal is sold.

I like farming. I like baling. I like feeding and counting cattle and helping calves to be born. I like doing silage, feeding hens and collecting eggs.

In fine weather, cattle can graze outside. Cattle like to be outside in the spring and summer. Friesian is a common breed of cow. Friesians are black and white.

Farming is a healthy way of life. You are out in the fresh air.

By Thomas

My new home

My new home is a bungalow. It has two bedrooms. There are two bathrooms, a kitchen and a sitting room. There is a garden at the back of the house. I would like to sow potatoes, cabbage and flowers. Crows take the potatoes. They dig them up and fly away with them. Slugs eat cabbage leaves. There is hard work to do in the garden, but my favourite place is the garden.

I like to put on the radio in the morning when I'm having breakfast. I have three radios. There is not a bit on television. I listen to the news on Clare FM. I like to listen to *Farm Focus* on Saturday mornings at 9:30 a.m. They talk about the marts in Ennis and in Gort.

A stray cat came to my house soon after I moved in. At first, I didn't feed him. He would sit on the windowsill shouting for food. I started feeding him. He stayed with me and I called him Smokey. He is brown and red.

Evening is my favourite time of the day because I go for a walk in Lahinch on the prom or on the beach. I like to walk on the sand and I like the water. I go back home then and have my dinner.

I like having my own place.

I will leave my front door open in the spring time and in the summer. The sun will shine in. I like that.

By Séamus

The playgroup

My name is Mairéad. I work in a playgroup on Mondays. I like working there. We play outside sometimes on the swings and slides. We have a party at Christmas. I miss it when it closes for the summer.

By Mairéad

My name is Patrick

My name is Patrick. I am a believer in God. God has already blessed me over the last few years. He has answered lots of my prayers and I receive Holy Communion most days down at the cathedral. I also attend daily AA meetings and try to get to at least one meeting a day.

God has delivered me from alcohol and drug addiction and I am very grateful to God. I would recommend prayer because I know it works and God is only one prayer away.

By Patrick

Presenting in Vienna

We went to Vienna for a week to make a presentation for the Brothers of Charity, Clare at the I.A.S.S.I.D. (International Association of Scientific Study of Intellectual Disability) Conference 2014. After our presentation we visited art museums, palaces and churches and a big market where we nearly got lost. We bought souvenir t-shirts and caps. We went up the Donauturm tower and had a meal watching Vienna go round below us. It's a place that's well worth a visit.

By Brian, Ger and Rob

Storm in Lahinch

Cold and rain
storm and high winds
with big waves at sea
rocks fell on the village

But after the cold and rain
people built it up again.

By William

Egg nest treats

Ingredients: ¼ tsp. water
 90g flaked coconut
 2-4 drops food colouring
 45g butter or margarine
 300g marshmallows
 180g Rice Krispies
 Bag mini chocolate eggs /sweets/dried fruit/nuts

Method:

1. Stir together water and food colouring in a small bowl.
2. Add the coconut and stir until it's all tinted.
3. Spread on a baking tray to dry.
4. Heat butter and marshmallows in microwave in a microwave-safe bowl on HIGH for 3 minutes, stirring after 2 minutes and again at end.
5. Add the Rice Krispies and stir until well coated.
6. Divide the mixture into bun cases in a 16-hole muffin tin.
7. Leave to set and then remove from tin.
8. Fill the cooled nests with the dry coconut and mini chocolate eggs/sweets/dried fruit/nuts.

*By Jackie, Michael, Liam W., Eoin, Liam M.,
Patrick, Lisa, Eilish, and Bridget*

Golf

My name is Jill and I enjoy playing golf. On Mondays, I practise my skills and Jackie and Kitty show us what to do. We practise at Ennis Golf Club and practise our putting on the green. Rory McIlroy is my favourite golfer and I watch him on TV when he is playing in competitions.

By Jill

All Ireland victory

Clare played Cork in the All Ireland Hurling Final in 2013. We had to play them twice because the first match on 8th September ended in a draw. We won the title later in the month with a score of 5-16 to 3-16.

Davy Fitzgerald from Sixmilebridge was in charge of Clare, while Louis Mulqueen was part of his back room team. There was a huge crowd in attendance at both matches. The referee for the first match was Brian Gavin and for the second match the referee was James McGrath.

The Clare colours are saffron and blue and the Cork colours are red and white. But for Darach Honan on the Clare team, we would have been beaten and that would have been awful.

The weather was just right for the replay. All the Clare fans were hoping for a win and, believe it or not, we won. I was over the moon with excitement and I'm sure everyone in the Banner County was also.

By Mary

My country, Guinea

My name is Fatoumata Binta. I come from Guinea. The capital city is Conakry. We speak Pular and French. In Guinea we don't use Euro, we use the Guinean Franc.

Guinea is a very nice place. The weather is very hot. I miss my country's food. I like Ennis because the people are very friendly.

By Fatoumata

Imagine that

We, 'The Shannon Creative Writers' class, came together as a group three years ago driven by a common goal - to write our personal stories. We achieved what we set out to do and more, with the unexpected accolade of having our personal stories gathered together in a book entitled *Corners of Our Mind* and launching it at Listowel Writers' Week 2014. From there we, along with new members, decided to explore the world of fiction writing. We yet again achieved our goal through listening, responding, suggesting and of course laughing along the way. I mean when you're looking up how to curse in Latin, something special is happening!

So, now that we have our stories, what next for the group? We will be looking at submitting our stories to online competitions and travelling to various festivals. The prospect that we could be an independent writing group somehow doesn't seem as far-reaching now as it did three years ago!

Ebenezer never flinched. He did not respond because he was not programmed for destruction. From 'Ebenezer' by Caroline

It was a lie of course, but lying had become easy for her. It was the only way to endure the mysterious world they had built around each other. From 'Secrets' by John and Paul

He tied the only button that was left on his duffle coat and trudged through the wet and mucky trail along by the ruins of the old church. From 'Chained to the Past' by Marion

Daniel Conway and Noel Sheehan laid into each other and even though they were pulled apart after ten minutes, that fight lasted for the rest of their lives. From 'Grave Undertakings' by Frank

She felt I needed a big hug. She should know better, if she has read my case file... From 'Caught in Amber' by Kay

'There is a lot that you humans don't know about us birds,' he said. Staring at the princess, the raven continued, 'You have all the comforts and you are still sad.' From 'Wishes' by Sharon

'OK,' he said. He put on his coat and went out the door mumbling to himself, 'That young wan is nothin' but trouble from the first day we brought her into this house!' From *'Thou Shalt Not Lie'* by Joe

The two boys were as excited as ever they had been: doing what you shouldn't do always gives a frisson of excitement. 'Keep the eyes peeled for rebels, me ol' mate,' Reggie shouted over his shoulder. 'They'd want to be fast to catch us Reggie,' Hookie shouted back. From *'Long Way Home'* by Stephen

Untitled

Where have all the flowers gone? – Donovan.

*Sipping summer wine
Watching the sun go down
Nietzsche had it sussed
- you said
A blade of sweet meadow
grass between your lips.
Now we shoot the breeze
And mourn the passing days.* From a poem by Bridget

By 'The Shannon Creative Writers' class

My nephew

I have four nephews. I like all my nephews but my favourite nephew is Kenneth. He comes to visit me sometimes. He also rings me and contacts me on Facebook. Kenneth lives in Quilty with his parents and brother, Thomas. He has no sisters. He always remembers my birthday and special occasions. He is very kind and thoughtful.

By Martina

My first day at school

I was six years old when I started primary school in Warsaw. This school was in a new building and everything in the school was new, e.g. chairs, tables, blackboards. Opposite the school there was a tennis court and a big soccer field.

We were the first year in this school. There were ten first classes. My class was named 1stH. My teacher was Ms. Lidia. In my class there were thirty five children. Everybody had new books, copies, pencil cases and bags.

The children were excited and friendly; so was I. Our teacher was very nice and she smiled at us all the time.

I didn't have to wake up too early because I lived close to school. I knew some of the children from the pre-school and from my apartment block. After school we often played outside. To this day, I am still in contact with some of them.

By Agnieszka

How I got my little dog

A neighbour of mine had a lovely little dog and when Lena, my neighbour, went to a nursing home her dog Rosie was left abandoned in the kitchen in her house.

I used to deliver the parish newsletter to Lena and on this occasion there was nobody there except Rosie, who was alone and abandoned. I discovered later that Lena had gone to a nursing home and left Rosie alone. I got in touch with a relation of Lena's and asked her, 'Who is going to look after the dog?'

I volunteered my services for looking after Rosie. Lena and her relation were satisfied with this arrangement and that is how Rosie came to me.

I looked after Rosie for the following few weeks. I found her a very good companion and a very good watchdog. After that, I brought

Rosie to the nursing home to show her to Lena and to show her that Rosie had got a good home. Lena was really pleased with the way the little dog was being looked after by me.

Soon after, Lena got very ill and was going downhill and she passed away in a short while. The dog was to stay with me and I love looking after her and always will.

By James

Water, a precious resource

I often think what a gift piped water in the home must have been for people who lived in towns in the 1940s and 1950s. You see, I lived in the countryside where we didn't have running water in our home when I was young. I remember how we respected and managed our water supply very carefully and the hard work this entailed.

From as far back as I can remember, we all had chores to do on the farm and in the house and as a result we were never bored. Drawing water in buckets was among those chores. In the evening after primary school, we all hung up our bags, collected our buckets and headed for either the well or the river. When the dry weather came we had a lot of water to draw from three different sources.

The river, which was a long distance from our house, supplied all the drinking water for the animals and for washing the clothes. We stored this water in large containers near the house and it supplemented the rain water we collected in barrels under the shoots. We were thrilled to bits when it rained as we didn't have to make the long trip back and forth to the river.

We also drew water from a nearby well which my mother used for cooking, making tea and washing up. This water was stored in the house and, on average, we used the contents of two to three galvanised buckets every day.

The most precious water of all was from the spring well, which was possibly half a mile from our house. It was a nicely built well and had steps leading down to a platform on which we stood as we filled our

buckets. This was our drinking water which we stored in an aluminium bucket in the coolest part of the house. Any time we were thirsty, we got a cup and drank from this. It was the healthiest of drinks, far better than any Ballygowan or Coca Cola.

All this, of course, was in the pre-washing machine era. My mother could hardly imagine how easy the task of washing clothes would become later on. For her, washing the clothes was a big task which she did up to three times a week. On washday she put on a big turf fire in the open hearth. She then boiled a large black pot of river water which hung on the crane over the fire and refilled it as she needed it. She washed the clothes in a galvanised bath placed on a chair on the kitchen floor. I can still remember how hard she worked on the washboard to get the clothes clean.

I often think how well off people are nowadays by comparison. They have a brilliant water supply from one source that meets all their needs. Like gas and oil, water is a valuable resource that deserves to be minded. We certainly minded it well in my youth and we never spilt or wasted a drop.

By Stephen

Polish – Irish conversations

My name is Agnieszka. I come from Poland. I arrived in Ireland a few years ago. I would like to tell you about a funny English–Polish misunderstanding which happened to me. Sometimes when you hear something, you think that you understand what that person is saying, but that person is talking about a completely different thing.

A few years ago I called a taxi. When the taxi arrived it was raining, so I was running to the car. The taxi driver wanted to be nice so he asked me, ‘Are you rushing?’ My understanding was that he asked me, ‘Are you Russian?’ So I answered, ‘No, I am Polish.’ He started laughing; me too. But I didn’t know why until I figured it out.

Another situation happened when I was talking with my work colleague. When John Paul II died my friend asked me, ‘Did you hear that we have a new pope?’ I didn’t realise what he meant and I

answered, 'Really, another one?' He looked surprised. I said, 'In my opinion, we have enough of them.' His eyes became bigger. Then I asked, 'So where is this new pup?' He said, 'In Rome.' Then everything became clear. It was very funny.

Even now, when my English is improving, those kinds of situations still happen. Hopefully, some day, I will speak English fluently. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of this English course.

By Agnieszka

My memorable story about last Christmas

This happened last Christmas, 2014.

We celebrated the Christmas season at my sister's place in Galway. Our Christmas season normally begins on the 16th of December and ends after the New Year celebration. We started the season by putting up Christmas decorations, most importantly the Christmas tree. Then we started buying gifts.

Last Christmas was very special for me and for my sister. After finishing work she picked me and my boyfriend up to spend the holiday with her in Galway. When we arrived at her place, my mother, my brother and my sister's boyfriend, Peter, and their son were already at my sister's place. My mother and my brother had just arrived from Hungary!

It was a beautiful feeling to be together, and I was so happy to see my mother and brother spending Christmas in Ireland. I heard plenty of stories from home, and my mother and brother were all excited to hear my stories and experiences here in Ennis. So, before Christmas Eve, we did a lot of food preparation and we cooked a lot of Hungarian traditional food. How I really enjoyed cooking our own food. So, at dinner everybody enjoyed the meal, and we had wine too. After the Christmas meal, which was very special, we gave each other our presents. We laughed, we talked, we sang Christmas carols and we hugged. We also thanked God for the gift of Christmas, and

for the presence of my mother and brother, which to me, is a very special blessing from Jesus.

And that is my memorable Christmas story.

By Erika

This happened to me and my family in Tanzania

It was February of 2011 around 8:00 p.m. and we were just finished our dinner. Suddenly we heard a sound; my grandfather said, 'It's gunshot! I think people are robbing the bank or the petrol station,' which was near the place where we lived.

A few minutes later the noise grew serious; the house was shaking, and my stepfather shouted, 'No! This isn't gunshot. These are bombs!' So we went out to see what was going on. Oh My God! There was a huge orange burst into the sky; people were running and shouting for others to run away.

I had never seen an explosion in my life; I was nine months pregnant so I felt my body losing strength. We decided to stay at home and pray to God, because the explosion spread everywhere. A lot of people lost their family members.

One week later, my stepfather began bleeding from the nose and breathing with difficulty. He died in hospital; the doctor said the inhalation of explosives was the cause of his death. My mother was shocked and sick herself. My condition was not good so the doctor said that I had to have a caesarean section.

My baby boy was born healthy and I was very happy to have him. After one week I noticed that he had a white spot on his iris. In my country the doctors said they can't do anything about that. Now we are in Ireland, however, he is receiving treatment for that.

By Hannat

To travel

Kerry is our teacher in the Adult Education Centre in Ennis. She told us that we should write a story. After thinking for a while, and seeing as I am living in a country that is not mine, I decided to write about the reasons that drive people to travel to different countries.

One reason may simply be to have a vacation, to relax and/or enjoy seeing new and beautiful places. Another reason is to meet people and have new experiences to become enriched/grow as a person. A very common reason to travel to another country is to search for work, and another very common reason among young people is to learn another language. Sometimes the reason is love, a powerful reason. There are also adventurous people and people whose job is to travel and people travelling on business.

I think these are the most common reasons to visit other countries, although there are more, of course.

My main reason for being here in Ireland is to learn another language and to have new experiences. I moved to Newmarket-on-Fergus six months ago. It is a quiet little town about ten kilometers from Ennis. In this period of time, I have improved my English and I have met very interesting people. I also have visited beautiful places. I think Ireland is a country full of amazing landscapes.

I am happy here, but I miss my wife, family and friends. I hope to return soon to Spain, but I would like to continue visiting different countries in the future, to continue discovering places, people and new experiences.

By Javier

Liverpool Club

My name is Seán and I enjoy football. My favourite player is Steven Gerrard. He plays for Liverpool. The manager is Brendan Rogers. They play in Anfield.

By Seán

First day at school

The weather was nice. The sun was shining. The air was fresh and the flowers smelled wonderful. There was a cool breeze.

I wore a new white shirt and knee socks and navy skirt. I had two ponytails with white ribbons on them. I was happy with my clothes but I was upset because I wanted to stay at home with my mum. My mum came with me to the school but she had to leave me with the other children and the teacher.

The teacher was nice and she had a friendly smile. I met new friends on that first day. Then I was happy and I couldn't wait for the next day at school.

By Lidía

A Christmas pantomime

Just before Christmas 2013, I was rehearsing for the *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* pantomime with the Crack'd Spoon Theatre Company. The pantomime started in February 2014 in Kilkee and Kilrush.

On Christmas day 2013, the group had a break from rehearsals. I spent Christmas with my mother and sister. I enjoyed Christmas, especially Christmas dinner.

On Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, I celebrated in the pub to ring in Christmas and the New Year. There were a lot of people out on New Year's Eve.

By Anthony

Searching for opportunities

Last year I made the most important trip of my life. I decided to come to Ireland just to try to learn English because I didn't know this language at all. It was very hard to be here because, in the beginning when I came here, I was alone and I couldn't understand anyone. I didn't know how to improve my English quickly so I could speak with other people.

That's why I started feeling stressed and became obsessed with learning English. Time went by, and I started falling in love with this country, day by day. I began to fall in love with Irish people and their sense of humour. They tried to understand me when I spoke in English - 'my Spanish English' - and they were patient with me and helped me so much.

After four months being in Ireland, I decided to go back to Spain to start to work in a restaurant where I work every summer. When I finished working in Spain, I decided to come back to Ireland to start searching for opportunities and having new experiences. I am trying to find a job and improve my English a bit every day. I hope Ireland will give me those opportunities so I can start my new life here. I am going to English classes because I am fighting to achieve my dreams, but I know I could always go back to Spain.

By Miguel

Fairytale

Once upon a time, in a small cottage close to the forest, lived a girl called Doris with her father. Her mother was dead. When her father married again their life completely changed.

Her stepmother and stepsister, who also was named Doris, sat and did nothing all day but poor Doris had to clean, cook and work hard.

One winter morning the stepmother told Doris to bring water from the well. Doris did it but when she was bringing the water, she slipped and she fell into the well. When she opened her eyes, she saw a beautiful country. Doris started walking and then she heard someone crying. It

was the apple tree. The apples on its branches were too heavy. Doris helped by collecting the apples and put them under the apple tree.

She went further. Then she heard someone crying again. It was the bread-oven; he had a loaf of bread inside, which was ready to eat and should be collected. Doris helped him and went further.

She saw a beautiful house and a pretty woman who was called Spring-lady. Doris stayed with Spring-lady and helped her with her house work and took care of the cat and dog. She was very nice and helpful, so everybody loved her.

After a year Spring-lady gave Doris as a reward, a gold box. Inside were gold and jewels.

Doris came back home and told everyone what had happened. The stepmother wanted a box like that, so she pushed her own daughter into the well.

Then the same thing happened all over again. Lazy Doris met the apple tree but she wouldn't help him. Then she met the bread-oven and she wouldn't help him.

She stayed with Spring-lady, but she was very lazy and she didn't want to clean or take care of the cat and dog. She wasn't friendly to anyone.

After a year the stepsister got payment for her work – a black box. When she came back home and opened this box, she found snakes and frogs in it.

The stepmother and stepsister ran away very quickly and never came back. Then the father and his daughter, Doris, lived happily ever after.

The end

By Lidia

School

I still remember my Polish language teacher. She was always paying attention to correct use of Polish, both verbal and written, also to grammar and orthography. She was a distinguished person who asked a lot from us but she also gave a lot of herself.

I still have a friend from my school time. Our children are now friends too. We meet quite often, travel together and we can count on each other.

I have nice memories from my school time. That was a really good time in my life.

By Anna O

The worst night of my life

Ten years ago I was driving back from Krakow when I had a terrible experience.

It was getting dark and it was quite late, about 11:30 p.m. I had to travel 120km home on a side road. As I was overtaking a car in front of me, I noticed that the man driving it looked at me angrily. At first I ignored this, but then he overtook me and he started driving very slowly. It really scared me.

I wanted to overtake him again, but as soon as I started doing that he sped off. As we were driving through the forest, the car in front of me stopped suddenly. I pressed the brakes immediately and I stopped just in time not to crash into him. I was scared. It was only me and him, and the forest on both sides of the road. I locked the doors and closed my eyes. Suddenly, I heard a loud beep behind me and I saw some cars overtaking me. The strange man and his car in front of me had disappeared.

It was the worst night of my whole life.

By Urszula

My travelling life

When I was only a child I dreamed of living in different countries and cultures. I used to ask for an encyclopedia or a globe (which I still have) for my birthday.

My first experience of travelling was when I was sixteen years old and I went to Scotland. I can even remember the fear that I was feeling inside the plane, but it was worth it. It was a fantastic experience and I realised that I would like to have this style of life. I had to argue a lot with my parents until they accepted that my future wasn't going to be what they had wanted for me.

When I started university I began to be freer to decide what I wanted to do. First of all, I started to travel in Europe with my friends, and when I turned twenty two, I decided to take the biggest step: to cross to America. My great-grandfather had lived in Cuba at one time, and I was always trying to visualise what he saw there. This Caribbean country was my first destination, and after this fantastic trip I have never been able to stop.

Now I am in Ireland working hard to learn English, know the culture and play traditional music. I am almost thirty and my views on my future are still the same. I'm quite sure that it's better to collect experiences than things.

By Samanta

My first day in Ireland

I came to Ireland in 2008. My son was only a small child then. It was a sunny day in winter. I was so surprised to see green grass at this time of year. On that first day, I went for a walk with my husband and little son and wondered at the beautiful view of the Shannon. I liked this green Ireland!

By Anastasiya

You can't make it up

I have a hobby. I like going to second hand shops. Things with a history fascinate me. I always imagine who has touched them, in what kind of house they were kept and who was the owner before they appeared on the shelves. Also, in second hand shops, it is possible to buy good quality clothes and shoes at a very cheap price. I would like to share a story that happened to me in one of these shops.

Once I visited a small shop in Limerick. I was browsing through the shelves when I found a beautiful pair of Clarks shoes in perfect condition. I put them on and went to the other side of the shop because the mirror was there. I spun around in front of the mirror for quite a long time (I am a woman) and thought how perfectly the shoes fitted me and matched my clothes. My decision was definite. I wanted them. I went back to the shoe shelves and got a shock. My own new, stylish wine coloured Clarks shoes that I had bought for €90 had disappeared!!! They were gone!!! I was in a panic. And that minute I heard a shop assistant asking, 'Does anybody know the price of these shoes?' I saw a woman at the pay point carrying my shoes and she looked very happy. I jumped on her like a panther and said, 'Sorry, these shoes are mine!!!' 'Sorry, but I grabbed them first!' was her answer.

It took a couple of minutes to explain to her the situation. When she finally understood what had happened she started laughing, and I did too.

Advice: If you like second hand shops, keep your own stuff close by while you are looking around.

By Vera

My dog, Woody

I have a dog called Woody. He is a pug and about 5 years old. We bought him when he was 2 months old and he was so small he looked like a little kitten, so cute!

Woody likes to play and walk and he gets very bored when he is left alone at home. He loves to swim and, in the summer, I often drive him to the seaside where he loves to play with the jelly-fish in the sand.

Last year, at Christmas time, I put presents for all the family under the tree and there was also a present for Woody. When the time came to open the gifts, Woody went immediately to find his present among all the others. He is very clever and funny. I am very happy that I have Woody.

By Solvita

Surprise party

It seems like everyone knew but me. Weeks went into the planning of it. A limo was sent to pick me up from Miltown with my best friends in it. They told me my husband had organised everything and we were to take the girls, my two daughters, back to Ennis. My friends had brought a change of dressy clothes with them and they told me to change as we would be going to a restaurant straight after dropping off the girls.

So, off to Ennis we went, drinking champagne in the limo. When we got to our house, the girls said that something was left in the house for me, so in I went. All I could hear was, 'Surprise!!' I was shocked! It was the best night ever and I will always have brilliant memories of it.

By Melon

My school days

I don't remember exactly my first days at school but I still have some memorable details in my head. I remember I had very loving teachers who used humour to make us feel comfortable and confident. I also remember all the trips organised by the teachers in order to help us discover nature.

In high school I made many good friends. I had more teachers than in primary school and most of them were very kind and understanding. They gave me very strong skills that I still benefit from even now. My

favourite subject was economics because I was very curious about the real economic forces in the world and how they affected our daily lives. Economics was an important subject because it required us to be good at mathematics and, thanks to my teachers, I succeeded in the final exam.

High school was a critical step in my life because I started to make decisions about my future professional life and I had to work hard to get good marks in all subjects, which kept my options open when applying for universities. After graduating from high school, I studied marketing for five years and did training in different companies.

If a company is interested in you, they will hire you after graduation. And that's what happened when I graduated in marketing. The company I worked for during my internship hired me. It was a very good experience because it was a big cosmetics company and I had a lot of responsibility.

If I could give teachers any advice, I would say don't be too strict or do things that would make students lose interest in learning.

By Wided

My first live concert in Ireland

Last Saturday I went with my friend to Dolan's Pub in Limerick. I love music and I listen to it a lot on radio and my MP3 player. But a live performance is something special!

That evening there was a band playing Nirvana songs in the bar. We spent some time in the bar area - it was lovely there. Live music played; some people were dancing.

Then we went in to the concert, which we had actually come to hear, but there were just a few people and we thought that the concert was cancelled. The organisers apologised and asked us to wait a little, as the band was late. We returned to the bar.

After a little while, the main band arrived and the long-awaited concert began. I can't explain to you what emotions we experienced then, but as we say in my country: 'There are no words, just emotions!' Good music, excellent performance!

The concert lasted for about two hours. People sang, danced; someone even managed to stand on the stage.

I can honestly say that I remained in mad delight for days from the wonderful performance, the atmosphere and the excitement of that evening.

By Nadine

I love

I love colour – pink, purple, blue.

I love books and writing too.

I love clothes and shopping,

Sunshine in June,

Style and fun,

Rain on flowers, glitter, the sea,

Friends and family with me.

By Susan

Myself

My name is Ciara. I work in the Dulick Centre. Helen teaches me about computers. I have lots of friends there. I also go to Latch On classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays and I enjoy that too. My hobbies are swimming and bowling. My cousin is getting married to his girlfriend, Val, on the 5th June. I am looking forward to their wedding in Dublin.

By Ciara

My hometown

I was born on the 21st of July, 1970 in Lublin-my hometown. I grew up there and got my education there. Lublin is the largest city in Eastern Poland and is the capital of the province of Lublin. The city has about 400,000 inhabitants and is 147,000 km². Lublin was and is the scene of many political and historical events. There are a lot of places in the city visited by tourists such as: Lublin Castle (the former Royal Castle), Old Town with the Gothic Cracow Gate, Lublin Village Museum, the Cathedral of Lublin and many others. One of the biggest Nazi death camps, Majdanek, was also in Lublin.

One of the places where you can have a good time is a lake located in the southern part of the city. This is a good place for long walks at any season of the year, and in the summer you can enjoy the sunny weather.

My favourite place in Lublin is the Old Town. The most beautiful places in the city are here. There are many romantic alleys hidden in Old Town. A lot of bourgeois buildings have survived. They are being restored now to regain their former glory. The market with the Town Hall, which is a museum now, is in the centre of the Old Town. There are many restaurants, pubs and clubs. Old Town is the perfect place to meet friends.

Lublin is called a student city. There is a total of about 100,000 students. There are five major universities: the Medical University, the Technical University of Lublin, Marie Curie-Sklodowska University, the Nature University and the Catholic University of Lublin. This is where Karol Wojtyla lectured. He later became Pope John Paul II. People from Lublin are very proud of this.

I left my hometown 24 years ago, but I always go there as often as I can. My family, my best friends and my memories are all there. I love my city and I believe that I will be going back soon.

By Agnieszka B

My family

My name is Marie. I have three sisters and two brothers. My sisters' names are Sheila, Helen and Deirdre. My brothers are called Kieran and Liam. My two sisters and two brothers are married, but Helen and I are single. Some of my family live in Dublin and some in Clare. I visit them on holidays, and sometimes they come to visit me. I love my family.

By Marie

Ireland is a miracle for me

Ever since I have lived here, I got a lot of good experience about the Irish people, about their positive attitudes and their kindness. The country is also very nice. For me, who came from where there are few rivers, lakes, mountains and hills, the Irish countryside is wonderful. The 'Green Island', the beautiful green grass, the wide variety of landscapes, the ocean, the well-kept gardens and castles, each of them are unparalleled beauty. Everywhere, wherever I went, the Irish people gave me a warm welcome. This attitude is peculiar to the people living here. I really like that everybody talks to me kindly and everybody is helpful. The attitude that they really want to help the foreigners living here, who want to integrate to learn language is respectful.

This language course, with many other program options on the bulletin board and advertised job opportunities, are really a lot of help to us, to foreigners. The teacher's kindness and helpfulness also strengthens my positive feelings.

Here, you have everything to make people feel good - the wonderful climate and the love of the people living here. I'm grateful for this opportunity and that I can say it in this way too. Thanks for Ireland, thanks for the government and thanks for our teachers.

By Monika

Our day in the mountains

Once, in the mountains, a very warm and sunny day was predicted. Together with friends, we got up in the morning and had breakfast. We decided that after breakfast we would go to Krupówki and in the afternoon we would go over the Marine Eye. We agreed nothing would stop us.

We walked for almost four hours to Krupówki and then we went for dinner in a pub. After dinner we prepared ourselves and we set out for Marine Eye. We went in carriages. The views were beautiful. The water was very clean but cold, because it flowed straight from the mountains. We had a nice time but it quickly passed and we had to go back home.

It was a wonderful day and a big success. I hope that none of us forget this great adventure.

By Paulina

From Ludza to Kilrush

Hello, my name is Oksana. I am 41 years old. I was born in Latvia, and grew up in a small beautiful town called Ludza. Fifteen thousand people live in my town. It is 40 km from the Russian border.

Five years ago, I came to Ireland. I live in the nice small town of Kilrush. My family is here too-Mama, Dad, two sisters and my niece. She goes to school here.

I worked in Clean Ireland Recycling for 4 years. At the moment I do not have work, and I go to English language courses. Ireland is a nice country.

By Oksana

Special Olympics in Los Angeles - Summer 2015

My name is Paul and my first sport is golf. I am representing Ireland in the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Los Angeles in July/August 2015. I will be playing golf. This is a wonderful opportunity for me. It is a lot to take in and there are no words to describe how happy I am to be taking part. This will be a great way to experience new places and meet people from all around the world. I will remember this for the rest of my life.

By Paul

The change from Switzerland to Ireland and remembering Brazil

The trip was long. We left Switzerland on a beautiful sunny day. We travelled in the direction of France. We stopped for dinner in Paris, and slept near the Eiffel Tower.

On Monday in the morning, we crossed the channel and we arrived in the UK. We walked around London and again we went to a hotel. At dawn we went to Liverpool; we crossed in a ferry boat to Dublin.

Finally, on a wonderful Tuesday autumn day, we got to the Emerald Island. In a few more hours we were at home. I'm talking about the town of Ennis where I live. I like it here because the people are polite and friendly. It's a very quiet town. I like the park and the nature, and school and my work. I'm happy here.

Every day I hear the birds sing and I remember Brazil. Often, I go to the beach just to see the Atlantic Ocean, in hope of returning to Brazil and then I wonder if I will ever return.

By Tania and Anderson

Piebalds and flights of imagination

Seen any good westerns lately, or as they were known then, cowboy pictures? No! It seems the fifties and sixties were the golden age of that genre, with films such as *Shane*, *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* and *High Noon* now regarded as classics. We gloried in them, walking and talking like our heroes, even addressing each other with names like Chap, Gunner, Lefty and Kiddo. Sometimes we sported imitation six-shooters which we feigned shoot-outs with. Ah the gore!

We are talking here about pre-television Ireland, steam radio time, when we joined the local libraries and book stalls for our favourite authors like Oliver Strange, Luke Short, Zane Grey and many others who have since saddled up and ridden off into the sun.

We still had fields all around us where we roamed, and played out our fantasies.

One of these fields was used by the Gardaí as a pound for containing loose and abandoned horses, a fact not lost on us sons of the saddle. Evenings saw us urging and cajoling these piebalds of all vintages, all of whom did not readily take to the task at hand with any alacrity. Be that as it may, we continued to ride the canyons and foothills in search of mean hombres and the guards who were likely to appear at any time.

The fun was simple with little danger to horse or man. However, like most things, there was a down side. These animals had never been rubbed down nor had any pampering whatsoever. Years of accumulated dander and hair was the price we paid for our adventures and the effort to remove this from our clothes was one pain in the butt. Needless to say, we mounted up again the next evening. After all, were we not sons of the saddle?

By Peter

My pet cat

I remember my pet cat with great affection. Her name was Sheeba and she was my pet a long time ago. She was white and slim. When I went to bed, she would stay with me until I would turn off the light and when I got up in the morning she would be there looking at me when I opened my eyes. In the summer I used to get a chair and sit out on the lawn. She would put her paws on my lap and never scrape me. When I had to move the cattle from field to field she would come along with me. She was very loyal. Prince, the dog, got on very well with her. He used to put his paws around her and Sheeba would fall asleep. I'll never forget my Sheeba.

By Dympna

The weather

Comparing Venezuela to Ireland is a bit impossible, when I think about the weather and the climate. Venezuela is a hot country except for one or two cold counties, while Ireland is a very cold country in all of the counties.

You could say that in Venezuela the only two seasons are summer and spring. The temperature can vary, but it is 37-42 degrees for most of the year. In Ireland there are four seasons and the temperatures are between 7-20 degrees. We can say that the weather in Ireland is very unpredictable!

Despite being very different countries in climate, both are charming. Their cultures, nature and languages are beautiful.

I am pleased to be Venezuelan and to have lived a while in this small country of Ireland with its lush green beauty.

By María Teresa

The workhouse in Corofin

Corofin has got lots of history and is steeped in folklore, music and dance. It was one of the poorest law unions in Co. Clare. The workhouse was built there in 1852. The layout of the Corofin workhouse was unusual for buildings of that period. If you look at it now all that remains of the workhouse is the single storey depot, which is used today for storage by Clare County Council.

It's so sad if you think of it. My auntie lived in the workhouse as well as a lot of other families. She would tell me that she lived in the last house when she got married, just one room for herself and her husband. Some people still see the ghost of an old lady at night walking into the workhouse.

By Lisa

Bangladesh

If I could go anywhere, I would like to go to Bangladesh. I have family there and I would like to see them. Bangladesh is a very nice and beautiful country with a lot of places to visit and things to do. The food in Bangladesh is very nice and tasty. It could be too spicy for some people. There are a lot of big markets where you can buy foods, clothes and shoes. There are a lot of people in Bangladesh so the streets are crowded. Dhaka is the capital of Bangladesh. The people in Bangladesh are very friendly. The weather is very hot. The longest beach in the world is in Bangladesh. It is 720km long. The problem is, there are not many jobs in Bangladesh so many people go to different countries for work.

By Shetu

My plan for the future

Hello, my name is Dilyara. I live in Shannon, Co. Clare. Last year in February, I passed the Driver Theory Test. My husband taught me how to drive a little bit and I began driving to the Adult Education Centre in Ennis. Two weeks ago I agreed to go to an instructor and started driving lessons. I already have had 3 driving lessons. I just want to get to 10 lessons. I want to drive on the highway and not be afraid that I will be stopped by the Gardaí.

I don't want to break the rules so I hope to have a full driver's licence in the near future.

By Dilyara

School memories

My memories of school are frightening and sad. I hated school because of being bullied by my teacher. He terrified me and I could not learn from him. I was terrified of him because he used to punch me in the head every time he walked between our seats. He would call me to the blackboard to do division sums and would bang my head off the board if I wasn't able to do them. He would not show me and I was too frightened to ask. He would humiliate me in front of the class, and call me a dunce, and call me stupid.

One day my brother stood up to him and told him to leave me alone, that he would tell our father. When we went home we told our parents. Dad wanted to go to the school and hammer him. Mum said, 'No,' that she would talk to the principal and take us out of that school, which she did. After that, my four younger brothers, my sister and I went to another school in the next parish and walked three miles there and back in hail, rain and snow.

I felt guilty for my family having to walk that far to school when our old school was down the end of our road, but they never blamed me. They liked the new school. We were outside more, playing touch

rugby, or going on nature walks. But, I was beaten up and bullied in my first week, because of coming from another village.

One day, the principal had gone to a meeting and as it was a two room school, the other teacher was left in charge of our class. Some children were teasing me and calling me names and the teacher left in charge blamed me and I was told to stand facing the wall till the principal returned. At that time you had no uniform for school. I was embarrassed because my trousers were torn at the back and the class could see my underwear, and were laughing at me. When the principal returned he got to the bottom of what happened. He caught me by the hand and brought me up in front of the class and said, 'I come from the same village as this girl, anyone want to beat me up?' and explained to the class what they did was wrong and that he would not tolerate bullying in his school. I was never bullied in the school after that. As for the teacher that bullied me, he did the same to other students, and was transferred to another school. Later, he was struck off for doing the same thing and he was never allowed to teach again.

By Val

My plans for the future

My name is Pa and some day I hope to become a qualified mechanic. My first plan was to get a good education and, hopefully, do my Leaving Certificate next year. To do that I needed to get help with my writing skills so I contacted Clare Adult Education Centre. I started classes last November and my tutors have been very helpful. My writing skills have improved and I am now feeling more confident about the future.

By Pa

My life in work and education

When I finished my education at school, my first job was as a sales assistant. From there the different types of work that followed were labourer, general operator, warehouseman, storesman and grounds man. I arrived in Ireland in 2001. After arriving, I started with a friend on the building game for four years but then got laid off. I went back to England for a year as my mum was not well but returned to Ireland at the end of 2006. I had no work for a while so I took up a course in Shannon. A job came up with FÁS for a year at the Tennis and Badminton Club in Ennis. After that, they offered me voluntary community work doing the maintenance there. I spent two years in this role. During this time I had the experience of working with a friend who was a tennis coach.

I was reading *The Clare Champion* one day and saw an ad for a community care course, so I applied. I got a reply to go to the Adult Education Centre and to talk about the course. At the end of the conversation I was told that I would be accepted.

The course was for two years. It would be the longest time that I had ever had to study since leaving school. I came because of the experience and knowledge that I would gain and, hopefully, get a job out of it at the end to care for someone.

When starting the course I was nervous and did not know what to expect so I kept myself to myself. There was the normal thing that you would get from people winding you up or taking the micky that I was used to so, no matter what, I was not offended. In the second year things got easier once I learnt how to lay out assignments and had some work handed in. By the time I went on work experience later in the year, the nerves had all gone. The stress was no longer there. I began to adapt better to everything. The peace of mind when you enjoy what you are doing is a great feeling. You can relax and start to get enjoyment out of the work and have a laugh and a joke at the same time. The work experience was good because it prepared me for the work that I would be doing when I got my qualifications. The satisfaction after all the hard work is rewarding as there is a lot of time spent studying to achieve the certification.

I learned a lot on the course. My computer skills improved and I developed my reading skills. There was a good social scene on the course which I enjoyed and I made many new friends

My goal at the beginning was to get the community care QQI Level 5 Award and to get a job. Now I have achieved my goals and I started work as a carer for the Irish Wheelchair Association four months ago.

By Kevin

Catalonia

My country is smaller than others and its name is Catalonia. We have an incredible culture and scenery as well. You can drive through the country and find beautiful beaches and pretty tall mountains. The most famous city in Catalonia is Barcelona.

Our favourite meal is "pa amb tomàquet" which is a slice of bread, toasted and then we brush garlic over it, then cut tomatoes and sprinkle with oil and salt. It is very tasty and we eat this all the time.

We have beautiful weather. In winter time, we can go skiing in the mountains in the north. In the spring time, we sometimes have days when you feel really good because the temperature and the wind are perfectly warm. In the summer we have sunshine and warm sun and it is so pleasant to go to the beach and sit in a chair, drinking beer and eating tapas. In the autumn time, you can visit all the many different festivals in each town and meet lots of people as well.

On the 23rd of April the whole of Catalonia celebrates St. George's Day. That day is special because the man and the woman show their love for each other. The man gives a red rose to his girlfriend or wife and the woman gives a book to her boyfriend or husband. It's a day for culture and love too!

By Sandra

Krakow

Krakow (pronounced Krakov) is one of the largest cities in Poland. It is situated in the south of Poland on the Vistula River. Krakow was the official capital of Poland until 1795 and it has a very rich history. There are many amazing monuments and historic buildings in the city such as the Wawel Royal Castle which dates from the 16th century, the Wawel Royal Cathedral and the Mariaki (St. Mary's) Church. The Old Town dates from medieval times and in the centre is the main Market Square. At the heart of this square stands the Sukiennice, or Cloth Hall, which was once a major centre of trade for local goods such as textiles and salt. Today, the Sukiennice is a big market for tourists.

In Krakow there is also the oldest university in Poland – the Jagiellonian University which was opened in 1364. It is one of the oldest universities in Europe and Copernicus was one of its famous students.

The city has many museums, libraries, theatres, cinemas, galleries, restaurants, cafes, shops and student clubs. Krakow is a beautiful city and I invite you to visit it.

By Barbara

Proud to be Indian

I am proud to say that I am an Indian. I am proud to be from India, a country with ancient culture and history. India had been under foreign rule for about two hundred years until it achieved its freedom on 15th August, 1947. I was born in free India. Since my childhood, I have heard and read about the courage and sacrifices of the Indian freedom fighters. I have been inspired by the stories of the people who worked hard to build the country despite the fact that India has different climatic regions, religions, cultures and traditions.

By Rupinder

My school

As you become older you realise that there are several essential things and places that you always come back to. They are the place where you were born, your home and the school that you went to. No wonder they say that the school is your second home and the teacher is your second mother. As writers live in their work, as artists live in their paintings so teachers live in the thoughts, actions and deeds of their students. And it depends on the teacher as to what will sprout from the small seed which they once planted in his or her student.

My school was a three-storeyed building. It was quite big with a wide sports ground behind it and lovely green lawns with beautiful flower-beds in the front of it. The classrooms were all light and spacious, not gloomy at all. When I think of my school I don't really remember the walls and desks but it is my teachers and school-mates who will always be with me. I am so thankful to my teachers for what they have done for me.

By Vadim

Visiting home

When I visited my home in Poland last time, I had a really nice time. I did a lot of cool and interesting things and I met my family for a big family event. We all had a great time catching up and we talked a lot. There was a lot of laughter and smiles.

I went shopping with my sisters and bought some lovely clothes that are much cheaper in Poland than in Ireland. Then we went for coffee and cake and met many of my friends that I had not seen for some time. I also went for walks with my two dogs who are lovely and missed me nearly as much as I missed them. I also went to the hairdresser's, which again is cheaper than in Ireland.

The best part of being home was my mother's cooking. I ate fish, delicious soups, vegetables, pancakes, and lovely cakes that she enjoys baking. I really miss my mother's cooking.

Sadly, my vacation did not last long. I could only stay for one week but I'm so glad that I met my family and friends. I had a great time and I hope that it won't be too long before I am home again.

By Ella J.

Dancing

Every Saturday afternoon I go to hip-hop dance classes in Ennis. My hip-hop instructor is Mikey O'Loughlin. My friend, Shona, goes to hip-hop too. We dance to music and are learning to dance to 'Frozen'. At Christmas and summer we dance in a show in Glór. I enjoy dancing very much.

By Shauna

My country

My name is Aliya. I am from India. I came to Ireland in August 2005. The capital city of India is New Delhi. We speak Hindi, Urdu, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and English.

We have Sunni, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, and Christian religions in India. The followers of each religion celebrate their own festivals. Muslims celebrate Ramadan; Christians celebrate Christmas; Hindus celebrate Dewali; and Sikhs celebrate Baisakhi. We also celebrate the New Year. In the festival season we do a lot of shopping, buy the new clothes and make the delicious food and sweets.

The weather in India is very warm. In the summer, we drink lots of coconut water and eat various fruits. In India we do not use Euro currency; instead we use Rupees.

By Aliya

My first day in Ireland

My name is Pritpal. I am from India. I came to live in Ireland in 2002. One day, my dream to fly in an aeroplane came true. I will never forget my journey from Delhi to Shannon.

Just before I left Delhi Airport, I was so confused and nervous. I had never been away from Delhi. Before visiting Ireland, I thought Ireland was one of the most beautiful places in the world. I thought the greenery and the beauty was very attractive to me. I was really happy and excited, but in the corner of my heart I felt a huge sadness for leaving my friends and family at home in India.

When I was on the aeroplane, I didn't even know how to put my safety belt on during take-off and landing. I just sat and waited to see my new destination in Ireland. I looked out from the window seat and I was fascinated by Ireland's lush green landscape.

I was so excited because I had never seen greenery next to the sea. Ireland is more beautiful than I imagined. When I got off the plane, I was so amazed to see beautiful people in front of me with fair complexions and lovely short dresses. The immigration officer was very kind and spoke slowly so as I could understand him. I really appreciate his kindness. He made me feel very relaxed and comfortable.

When I walked outside the airport, a cool breeze hit me on my face. I was shocked. I wasn't expecting such cold weather. I was in summer clothes. I travelled by car from the airport to Shannon town. I thought the roads were not as crazy as in India. Shannon is a small town compared to Delhi, with little traffic to contend with, which I found especially helpful. I started to drive around the town, and learned to understand the road signs: *Look Right, Keep Left*.

Most drivers in Shannon were very patient, and people followed the rules and regulations of the road. When I was out for shopping in town people looked calm and friendly and often greeted me without even knowing me. This was something I really loved here.

When I viewed my first apartment to rent, I saw the apartment was fully furnished with all the appliances in place unlike the apartment I lived in in Delhi. I didn't know how to cook on an electric cooker. When I

turned on the switch on the cooker, I wasn't sure what ring was turned on. I placed my hand on each ring and got burned from the heat. It didn't take long to learn after being burned once.

When I went for shopping, I didn't know the different types of vegetables on the shelves. I ended up cooking iceberg lettuce instead of cauliflower but, with time, I have learned to understand.

My first day in Ireland was truly exciting. I was in awe at its beauty, how well everything was managed and at how everyone was friendly. I love Ireland but I don't like the cold weather in winter. People here are helpful, beautiful and kind hearted. So, my first day in Ireland was eventful and awesome!

By Pritpal

Healthy eating

I have been eating healthy food so that I can lose weight. I have lost a lot of weight now by giving up coke – I used to drink a lot of it every day and it was not good for me. A bottle of coke has over seven teaspoons of sugar so now I don't drink any. I had to go to hospital with my stomach because of the coke but I feel much better now.

I also eat a lot of vegetables and chicken and ham but I don't eat chips. I can eat potatoes, but chips have a lot of fat and they are not good for you if you want to lose weight.

I feel happy with my new weight as I don't feel tired or bloated as much as before. Healthy eating is good for me.

By Frances

My first impressions of Ireland

My first impressions of Ireland were that it is an amazing country, full of friendly people and a photo opportunity around every corner. To be honest, my opinions haven't changed since the day I came to Ireland. I like Irish people and I think the scenery gets better the more I see it.

When I first saw the land from my window seat in the plane, it was just as how I imagined it to be, a breath-taking sweeping green landscape. A few minutes later, when we touched down, I saw thin foggy clouds covering the skies. I felt quite cold walking out of the airport too. The day continued to be misty and brought me to my first impression - the weather. Some people might say the weather in Ireland is so unpredictable. They are right; you don't really know what the day will bring even if you have lived in the country for years. I cannot describe the weather in one word. The one thing I was sure about - was the wind made me give up about my hair.

In spite of the wet cold day, my most unforgettable impression was the green grass. It is true that the grass is greener in Ireland. Coming from Moscow, it was unusual for me to see such healthy vegetation in April. The other thing I love about this country is the way the green grass makes the air smell fresh. Maybe it's the mixture of rain, the nearby ocean and the grass that give such a wonderful aroma. Who knew one could love a country for its beautiful smell?

I lived in a city with busier streets and more people walking around than here. It had never crossed my mind that one day I would live in such a beautiful and tranquil County Clare. When my husband and I were driving to our first home, I was totally immersed in my surroundings.

I am really so happy to be in Ireland. I love the country and how easy it is to get around. Now, I feel Ireland is like a second home to me.

By Nadine

Seán Keane

Last Friday night I went to a concert in Lahinch with my friends, Kathleen and Mary. It was Seán Keane, who is a lovely singer and I was lucky enough to meet him after the show.

I love listening to Seán; he is very nice. He wore a blue shirt, brown jeans and a buckle in his belt. He is a lovely singer and my favourite song is 'Paint Me a Picture', which is a song about Ireland and it is beautiful.

When I met him after the concert he told me I had a lovely smile. I wore my new glasses so I could see him properly. I wore my special blue jeans with flowers on them, a blue and black top with a big bow on it and my brown boots.

There were a lot of people there and we all enjoyed singing to his songs. We had a picture taken with him afterwards. He is very nice and I love him.

By Breda

My daughter, Chelsea

My name is Declan. I am a dad. I have one daughter called Chelsea. She is 10 years old. The day she was born was a sunny day. I was there when she was born and I was very proud. Chelsea plays lots of sports; soccer, basketball, karate, camogie and swimming. Her favourite soccer team is, of course, Chelsea. She also likes Match Attacks and computer games. Chelsea loves animals and has two dogs called Tubby Mo and Mini Me. She is in fourth class and her best subjects are English and History. When she grows up she wants to be a zookeeper or a brain surgeon. I just want her to be happy whatever she does.

By Declan

Giving up smoking

I am working in the Garda Station in Kilrush one day a week on Wednesday mornings. I usually clean the garden area and put the two bins out for collection. I do the recycling as well and then put the bins back after they have been emptied.

They are very nice to me in the Garda Station; one of them gave me an Easter egg. I like to do my work because it makes me feel happy and I get more money that I can save in the bank. I don't spend much money but I do smoke so this costs a lot of money. I am trying to cut down as I have tried giving up in the past but it didn't work for me. I tried the electronic cigarettes but didn't like them. So now I have decided to just cut down as much as possible and I only buy one box of tobacco for the week. I keep it in the house and don't smoke out in the town. I don't know why I started smoking but it is very hard to give up now.

By John

Trip to Killarney

I went to Kerry over the Easter holidays for the day. We went on the bus to Killarney from Kilrush so we had to set off early but I don't mind as I'm always up early.

The weather was beautiful, really hot and sunny. We had lunch in a hotel, a big dinner of pork, chips and vegetables with gravy followed by a big ice-cream. After that I went shopping to Penneys and bought a necklace, cap and sunglasses for just €5 – a real bargain!

After that we went to a church and I lit two candles, one for my brother, Paul, and one for my sister, Bernie. Then we had a walk around the town. I bought a few things for my niece – a lovely dress and a little toy train. I looked at the shoes and track-suit pants but decided not to buy these.

We had a lovely day in Killarney and came home tired but with lots of bags of shopping.

Yesterday, I went to the church for communion and a benediction. It was lovely. I went to two Masses and then I went up to my mother's grave. I was a bit upset to see everything knocked over by the wind but my brother helped me to sort it out and it looks lovely again.

By Christina

The Wizard of Oz

I went to see *The Wizard of Oz* musical in Glór in February this year with my friends, Susanne and Gloria. It was a lovely musical and I really enjoyed it.

The story is about a little girl called Dorothy and her dog called Toto. During a big storm they get sucked up in a tornado and taken to a magical land called Oz. To get back home she has to find the Wizard of Oz who can help her. On her way there she meets the Tin Man, Straw Man and the Lion Man. The Wicked Witch of the West tries to stop her but Dorothy finally makes it to the wizard. He tells her that she just has to think of home and click her shoes together and she'll be there. Dorothy and Toto wake up under her bed in her house.

My favourite song was 'Follow the Yellow Brick Road', but it was all really good. I enjoyed the Wicked Witch the best, especially when she first came on her broomstick. She ended up getting melted by the wizard!

By Ann-Marie

Spring

Spring is the time of the year when nature wakes up from winter's sleep. The air is fresh and special. The days become longer and the nights become shorter. Late spring is my favourite time of the year. I love walking in the parks to see the flowers blossom and listen to the birds singing. I love the scent of flowers, fresh green grass and the brightly coloured leaves on the trees.

Spring in Ireland is so beautiful. There are many large public parks and gardens where you can go walking with your friends or family. I have been in wonderful gardens in Cork, Dublin, Kerry and Clare that left unforgettable impressions in my heart. As the days in spring get warmer, it inspires life and love in me. I feel younger!

In Russia, where I am from, we celebrate interesting festivals in spring. Maslenitsa carnival is a week leading to Lent. During this week we bake pancakes and visit each other's homes. The 8th of March is International Women's Day. On this day men give flowers and presents to their mothers, grandmothers and sisters. On Fool's Day, the 1st of April, everyone plays tricks on each other. Then, Easter, the Christian holiday of revival and love, is also at this time of the year. During Easter, I go to a church where we bring painted eggs and special bread called Kulichi to be blessed by the priest for a new and prosperous life. The 9th of May is another great day for our country. We celebrate Victory Day to remember the end of World War II. This year, Russia celebrated the 70th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany. We honour the veterans and lay flowers on the monuments of those who gave their lives for our freedom.

I love spring in Ireland and Russia! This is a time of hope and new beginnings!

By Tatiana

Growing up too fast

Recently, my friend and I were looking through Facebook pages of family members. She showed me pictures of a girl who I thought to be 14 or 15 years of age, judging by the makeup and clothes she was wearing. On looking closer, I was horrified to discover these were photos of my 12 year old niece who's about to get her Confirmation. She looked like she was dressed up to go to a nightclub. I couldn't believe this was my 12 year old niece. Oh my goodness!

What's happened, that society has changed so much recently? I believe that celebrities who are famous for nothing more than looking good have a very bad influence on the children of today. It's a far cry from when I was young and we were influenced by saints. I really pity the parents - if they don't dress their children the same as everyone else, the children will get jeered at and even bullied in school. I know of a 9 year old child who wouldn't go on her school tour without an expensive item of clothing that her parents struggled to afford. She gets all her style ideas from the television programme *Xposé*, which she watches all the time.

It's a far cry from my childhood when we had a 'Sunday Outfit' for Mass, which we had to take off when we got home. I got one pair of plastic sandals for the summer and a pair of boots for winter, the same as every other child. In many ways we had too little but now there is far too much. Where will it all end?

By Bernie

The observations of a Brazilian in Ireland

Emigrating to another country requires a lot of things that go beyond visa documents and determination. Emigrating requires letting go of everything we learned in our country, to go learn and acquire the habits and the culture of the country we're in now.

There aren't too many differences between Ireland and Brazil. Maybe not many, but they exist and it is easy to make embarrassing mistakes. I'll list some gaffes that I've committed or have heard and some differences and similarities between the two countries.

When I arrived in Dublin, the first thing that scared me was the fact that the roads are opposite to what we are used to in Brazil. At first it was very difficult to drive on the wrong side of the road, but after a while I understood.

I was also impressed with the constant rain, and especially with the fact that people do not stop walking in the street as it rains; they continue as if nothing was happening.

Also, I think the cost of living here is lower than in Brazil; for example, the food and clothing are cheaper here.

Brazil is too big! It would take two days and 12 hours to go from northern Brazil to the south. Here in Ireland, in seven hours we can go from the top to the bottom of the country! This size difference is so ridiculously large. Another example I can mention is the population of Ireland multiplied four times would equal the population of the city of São Paulo in Brazil.

Despite being a small country, Ireland has many different lifestyles. Do not expect anyone from Co. Clare to talk or act like someone from Dublin. Do not expect someone from Cork to be like someone from Donegal and so on. Anyone who only knows Dublin, knows very little of Ireland and will have to take care when using the 'Dublin lifestyle' as a standard. Ireland is small, but every city, county and region has its own characteristics and it sets them apart from each other very much.

One of our Brazilian customs is that in Brazil we love baths. We learned as children that a happy child is a child who has taken a bath and smells refreshed. Children get to take two a day, one to go to school and one on coming back a little dirty and tired. In the summer I got to take three and my mother never scolded me and said I would use all the water in the world. This is not so here. The Irish bathe, yes, of course they do, but not necessarily every day. What is common is day-on, day-off. I've made the gaffe of saying, 'Why haven't you showered today?' to hear a friend say, 'I took a shower yesterday.' He said bathing every day spoils his hair and skin. They learn this as children; doctors teach this as well and it will not be me that will change the concept, right?

A Brazilian (unless that is in southern Brazil) is not white in Ireland. You are Latin, which creates confusion, because in Brazil the word 'Latin' is applied when we want to refer to the entire South American region and Mexico, but not to Brazil. Someone is a Brazilian white guy, black, mulatto, Caucasian, etc. Basically, they are right and we are wrong because Brazil is in Latin America, even though Brazilians speak Portuguese and not Spanish. I thought I was white, but I'm Latina.

Brazilians like to kiss and hug. We hug and kiss everyone, even the person we just met, who is a friend of a friend, or the friend's cousin. Here people I see almost every day, we greet and say goodbye with 'Hi,' and 'Bye.' No one touches anyone.

I don't drink, but normally Brazilians drink too much. Only the Irish drink a lot more than the Brazilians; many Irish people drink until they fall and get sick. Brazilians usually know when to stop.

I do not know why, but saying, 'Bye,' and hanging up the phone is considered rude in Ireland. When the phone rings and the person is Irish, we can never just say a, 'Bye,' and hang up. They will find that something is wrong. The right way is to say, 'Bye bye bye bye bye bye,' numerous times, lowering the tone of voice or saying a 'Byyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy,' and let the voice fade away.

And when talking about food - I even like the Irish food, nothing against it - but nothing compares to Brazilian food. I prefer the rice and beans every day in place of potatoes, and nothing compares to a Brazilian barbecue.

The Irish are open, helpful and very friendly. Of Northern Europeans, the Irish are the people who most resemble the Brazilians. They are always ready to help, to meet friends and to party. With the Irish there is never a bad time to be happy - literally!

And finally, a curiosity. Did you know Irish people went to Brazil at the time of the Famine? There was a time when an Irish colony lived in Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul. At the time, it was because of an urgent need. This was in the 19th century, a time when the 'Great Famine' devastated Ireland. The colony was named Dom Pedro II and had about 300 people who crossed the sea in small sailboats. It is said that these people came from County Wexford in the southwest of Ireland.

Today you can still find some evidence of this story in the city of Pelotas in southern Brazil, where descendants of the pioneers live. Some families remained in the country: Sinnott, Stafor, Monks, Brian, Ennis, Carpenter, are some family names found here still.

In these two years, this green and icy island, even with the difference of our land, has given me and taught me so much that is hard to describe. In addition to the English language, this place has given me stories to tell, and mainly it has shown me what I'm capable of.

By Bruna

Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve in Poland

In Poland, Christmas Eve is a special day. In the morning, we decorate our Christmas tree. When the evening comes and children notice the first star, we gather in a family circle. We share water. Then we have a traditional supper. Usually it consists of twelve dishes, which symbolise twelve months of the coming year. Fish and other food is on the menu that day. After supper, we sing carols and children open their presents that were put under the Christmas tree by Santa Claus.

Another day that is traditionally celebrated is New Year's Eve or Sylvester as we call it. Unlike Christmas Eve, we spend it with our friends. It's not a public holiday so in the morning everyone goes to work. The celebration starts in the evening. People meet at parties in clubs or discos. They chat, listen to music and dance. At midnight, crowds gather in the main square or street to celebrate the coming of the new year. All the bells ring; everyone cheers, sings and toasts the New Year with champagne.

By Elizabeth

My amazing memory from childhood

I was born in a small village. My best memories are from when I was 7 or 8. I had a friend back then. His name was Greg. Before that, we went to the same school. We always had so much fun with each other. Back then, there were no computers or anything like that so all the kids spent most of their time outside. One day I remember it was nice and sunny. I didn't want to stay at home so I went to Greg and said, 'Let's try to find some treasure!'

In my village there was a big castle and that's where we started looking for the treasure. We got long sticks and we put them to the ground to help us with finding the treasure. We found a good place, with a big hole, and we started searching. I didn't know how long it would take us. I put the stick to the ground and I felt something hard - something that didn't feel like ground. It was way harder. We started using our hands and we found a wooden box. I said to Greg, 'Go and get our parents. I will stay here and look after our treasure.' My parents came. They didn't know what exactly was happening. They got shovels and helped us dig. They dug out a wooden box. Then, they opened it and what was inside it was unbelievable. Necklaces, some plates, little boxes and more and more. Everything that was inside the box was made of silver. I had never seen anything like this in my life.

After us, there were many people digging but they never found anything. A very wealthy German family lived there but they had to move so they hid their treasure.

This memory is stuck in my head. I will never forget it.

By Anetta

Times I leave my home

I leave my home twice a week. I go to Ennis on a Friday and Kilrush on a Thursday. I do not have a car so I cannot drive. I do not have a bike so I cannot cycle. I can walk but it is too far.

What are my choices? My neighbour, my local taxi man or the bus?

To go to Kilrush from Labasheeda, I leave my home at 9:20 a.m. to board the bus at 9:30 a.m. There are two stops between Labasheeda and Kilrush.

The bus is normally half full, usually with the same people every week. I have travelled this journey for 5 years and have made a lot of friends. Some of us meet up for a cup of tea and chat. We do our weekly shopping, banking and exchange books in a few short hours. Sometimes, we treat ourselves to lunch.

On Friday I travel to Ennis. I get the bus from Labasheeda at 11:50 a.m. and arrive in Ennis at 12:40 p.m. The bus is usually half full; many of us have travelled this route for many years and know each other well.

The bus drops us at the back of Dunnes Stores. First, I go to YOLO for my lunch. There is a very good selection on the menu. My lunch on a Friday is a treat for me as I do not have to cook or clean up.

When lunch is over I walk to the Adult Education Centre to my class at 2:00 p.m. My class finishes at 3:00 p.m. I go shopping in town. At various times throughout the day, I meet many people from the bus.

The bus leaves at 5:15 p.m. I arrive in Labasheeda at 6:00 p.m. That finishes my travels for the week.

By Tony

Easter in Poland

The blessing basket contains, among other things, coloured eggs, bread, salt and white sausage. Everything in the basket has a meaning. The eggs represent Christ; the bread, salt and sausages, good health and enough money in the coming year. The family Easter breakfast on Sunday morning is important for Poles. Another Polish tradition connected with Easter Monday is watering. People throw water at each other and this is a wish for good health too. Even strangers on the street are not safe from a bath of cold water on Easter Monday.

By Bogna

Work placement

This is my story about where I did my work placement and how it went. I did the work placement in a shop selling grocery items. The shop is called the 3As Afro Shop. It is in Carmody Street, Ennis, Co. Clare and it was opened ten years ago by the owner's wife.

It was a good experience for me to work in a shop dealing with many people from different ethnic backgrounds. I enjoyed doing it because it gave me more experience in how I should interact with people. For the two weeks, I was learning a new skill. I now have customer service skills. The customers always liked me to serve them and some even said they liked my attitude.

I learned from the manager how to do things correctly and I achieved a lot. I miss the staff and the customers miss me too.

By Adrian

A day I will never forget

I was very excited when I got the visa to Ireland. A few days later, on 28th of February, my seat was confirmed. I was so happy. On the day of departure, my family accompanied me to the airport but my flight was late. After three hours long wait, my flight took off to Ireland via Abu Dhabi. When I reached Abu Dhabi, I was surprised to see that the airport was so big and modern. My connecting flight was at 2:00 a.m. so I strolled around the airport. I went into many shops to see what I could buy. After trying on some necklaces, rings and earrings, I bought nice earrings. I enjoyed the shopping, cafés and people. At 2:00 a.m. I went to gate number four for my flight to Ireland. After a seven hour flight, I reached Dublin Airport, where my husband was waiting for me. A big smile on my husband's face made me so happy. I was so excited to see my husband at the airport and always remember the day that I was reunited with my family.

By Aneela

Poznan - my town

Poznan is one of the oldest and largest Polish cities. It is located on the Warta River and Lake Cybina in Wielkopolska. It is the capital of Greater Poland and the Wielkopolska province. It has a motorway and rail junction; it also has an international airport. Poznan, in the past, served as the state capital and seat of the rulers. Today, the city is a major economic, academic, scientific, and cultural centre. Poznan travel guides call it the capital of Polish music, because many boys' and men's choirs are from here.

I really encourage you to explore the city. There are many interesting buildings, such as the Poznan Cathedral, and the National Museum. There is a renaissance town hall built in the mid-sixteenth century. It houses a museum of the history of the city of Poznan. The main tourist attraction is the Town Hall clock tower. Every day at noon at the top of the tower, two doors flip open; two goats come out and they butt their horns.

There is a huge activity centre in Poznan called Malta. There is an artificial lake and botanical gardens, both inside. There is a ski jump outside.

Poznan is a beautiful city!

By Agnieszka

French flag - blue, white and red

Each of the colours of the French flag actually refers to a king of France.

Blue is the colour of the dress worn by Charlemagne at his coronation in Reims in 800. The azure gown adorned with golden lilies, has long been the colour of royal clothing.

Red refers to the colour of the banner in the reign of Hugh Capet. The red banner symbol was the protector of the people. More generally, the red banner is a small symbol of a rallying banner for medieval battles.

The white colour gradually became the royal colour symbol of purity and light. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the royal flag was white with lilies.

It was the French Revolution in 1789 that brought together these three colours, to make the tricolour flag that we know now.

By Françoise

50 Shades of Grey by E.L. James - a review

50 Shades of Grey is the most talked about book and movie of this year. The fiction story is romantic, erotic and totally addictive. I have read this book twice. Author E.L. James is a former TV executive from west London. *50 Shades of Grey* is her first novel and it's been very successful. She has sold over 100 million copies worldwide.

It's a love story between literature student Anastasia Steel and Christian Grey, who has his dark secrets and who is consumed by the need to control people. Christian Grey is a billionaire; he is successful, charming and breathtakingly handsome. Anastasia is an innocent and inexperienced young woman. The book is about their passionate love affair. As Anastasia discovers more and more about Christian she wants to get away from him, but it's too late as she has fallen in love with him. He is a very lost man, with a terrible childhood and no one can help him to get out of his dark past. But finally he meets Anastasia, who is ready to go all the way with him and show him what true love is.

I like this book very much with all the kinky stories in it. I think Christian Grey is one of the great romantic characters in fiction. I found him a very dominant person who loves to take risks and who goes for what he wants and gets what he wants.

By Elina

Poland

Poland is the country in the centre Middle of Europe. The climate is mild. Poland has a lot of beaches and mountains.

It has a population of about 38 million people. The capital city is Warsaw. Most people speak Polish as their first language. Some people speak in dialect.

The Polish eat a lot of potatoes, breads and pork. The Polish drink a lot of water, coffee and vodka. The biggest industries are coal mining, ship building, chemicals and machinery.

Poland has been independent since 1918. The national holiday is 11th of November, Independence Day. There are other holidays - Christmas, Easter and Constitution Day, which is on the 3rd of May.

I come from Poland and I speak Polish. My parents taught me to respect other people. I think culture is the values people have in common, the ideas we have about ourselves and all beliefs people have about their group. Polish people are very hospitable, hardworking, family oriented people. Polish people can also seem helpful and reliable.

Religion is a very important part of Polish life. Almost all of the population is Roman Catholic. In 1978, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla became the first ever Polish pope.

By Joanna

Lech, Czech and Rus

This refers to a founding myth of three Slavic peoples - the Poles (or Leckites), the Czechs and the Rus people (the modern Russians, Ukrainians and Belarussians).

The three legendary brothers appear together in the *Wielkopolska Chronicle*, compiled in the early fourteenth century. There are many versions of that, but Polish is like that. There were three brothers. They went hunting. Czech went to the west and Rus went to the east, but

Lech travelled to the north. While hunting, suddenly he found himself face to face with a fierce white eagle guarding its nest from intruders. Lech decided that this was a good sign - seeing the eagle against the red of the setting sun - and he settled there. He named his settlement Gniezno (Polish 'gniazdo' means 'nest') in commemoration and adopted the white eagle as his coat of arms. This symbol remains a symbol of Poland to this day and the colours of the eagle and the setting sun are depicted in Poland's coat of arms.

By Maria

Life in Togo and Ennis

I was born in Togo in West Africa. Togo is smaller than Ireland. The country has a population of 6.7 million. My father is a farmer. He works on the farm in the winter. Winter in Togo is from April to September. French is the official language of Togo; however, there are many indigenous languages spoken in Togo. For example, my husband comes from a different part of northern Togo and did not speak the same language but we understood each other.

We start fasting at the beginning of June. We finish at the beginning of July. After that we celebrate. We go to prayer at nine o'clock in the morning. Then we cook and eat together for the rest of the day. We have a fashion show for the month of July.

I came to Ireland in 2009 with my husband and our three children. We live in the town of Ennis. I started English classes in the Adult Education Centre in September. I had never learned English before and wanted to learn very much. At the start, I felt scared but I feel more confident now. I like my English classes. We learn a lot. This is my second year. In the future I want to get a job as a carer.

Ireland is a beautiful country and I like living here but my heart is still in Togo.

By Baba-Yara

Work, travel, learn

I am Mathilde. I come from France. I have been in Killaloe since September 2014. I am an au pair in a family with three children. Benjamin is 4 years old, Elvinia is 3, and Genevieve is 4 months old.

I am lucky to have found a family in Killaloe because I really love this place. I like looking after children even if sometimes I feel it is a difficult job to do. I would like to be a teacher and I am now learning the skills I need in the future. I have improved my English and learned to be patient while working with the children. It has been a great opportunity for learning.

Although I am busy at work, I still have time to enjoy this adventure. I visit the countryside as often I can and go to set dancing once a week. I also travel to Ireland's most visited natural attraction at the weekend when I'm not working. I'm living a great experience in this wonderful country.

I will finish my job at the end of June. I need to go back to France and finish my studies. I'll be happy because I miss having my own place. I will probably miss the kids but what I will miss more is Ireland. I have met a lot of nice people and I have been in beautiful and breathtaking places in this country. Such a great experience!

I think I don't want to be an au pair again because it is not easy to live with the family all the time. There isn't a real division between the job and free time. I tried to take a break away from the house whenever I could get a free time. I certainly don't regret these 10 months of being an au pair. I thank the family and I will be back in Ireland soon. I will always treasure my memories of living in Ireland. It has changed my life forever.

By Mathilde

Where, why and what?

One day a four year old little boy asked his nana, 'Nana, where does your mammy live?'

Nana: Well my mammy lives up in heaven with Holy God.

Little boy: Can we go to see her?

Nana: Heaven is a long way to go.

Little boy: I will walk with you Nana.

Nana: OK pet, we will go next week.

The same boy another day while at his step-granddad's house was looking at a photo on the wall. He asked, 'Who is that little boy?'

Step-granddad: That is my little boy.

Little boy: Where does he live?

Step-granddad: He lives up in heaven with Holy God.

Little boy: Why?

Step-granddad: He was sick and Holy God took him to his house to make him better.

Little boy: Where is Holy God's house?

Step-granddad: It's up in the sky.

Little boy goes out the back yard and looks up to the sky. He comes back in and says, 'I can't see it.'

Step-granddad: You can't see what?

Little boy: I can't see heaven.

Step-granddad: We can't see heaven because the clouds are in the way.

Little boy: What is heaven like? Are there lots of people and children there? Is it a sunny day like here? Does Holy God have a lovely garden like yours?

Step-granddad: Holy God's garden is much nicer than mine. Will we go to the shop and get some ice cream?

Little boy: Yeah.

By Joe

The baby in hospital

The baby in hospital was sick
And one thing to do was get well real quick
The nurses are wonderful and take good care
They can't stay long because it's not fair
And also they've had a really long day
The doctor comes around to check up on you each day
Even more often than they usually say
You get medicine to help you really quick and try to get back on your feet
When the baby comes home it needs sleep and rest
And also Mom and Dad's love is always the best

By Santana

A Christmas story

Christmas is my favourite time of the year. It is Christmas morning, and still dark outside, but the children will be stirring very soon. Time to get up and make the sitting room ready. I pull on my dressing gown and slippers and tiptoe downstairs. Christmas tree lights on, check; fire lit, check; camcorder ready, check!!! 'Mummy, can we come down?' they squeal. I go to the bottom of the stairs, camcorder ready. 'Santa has come. Come on down.'

Every Christmas we recorded the children skipping down the stairs, giggling and squealing, ripping open their presents, year after year of wonderful precious memories. Tapes are now gathering dust in the back of the cupboard until Christmas evening, when everyone is stuffed and tipsy!! The tapes come out!! Our children are all grown up now, having turned into fine young adults. Amid howls of laughter, joking and, yes, even a few tears, we spend a lovely few hours watching years gone by.

By Caroline

Thanks Smokie

My name is Vitolds. I am from Latvia. I came to Ireland in 2004 to work and live in Ennis. In that same year there was a Smokie concert in Glór, so I purchased a ticket and had the chance to see them live. I was very delighted and happy because I am a Smokie fan since 1979, when I was 15.

After the concert I met them in person and had some pictures taken with the band. Back in the old days there were no CDs but I still have some old cassettes.

Thanks Smokie for my memories.

By Vitolds

A happy grandmother

I am a grandmother of three grandsons, David is 14 years old, Niko is 11 years old and Matthew is 4 years old. Two months ago, I became a grandmother of my first granddaughter. Her name is Gabby and she is a lovely little girl. She has nice blue eyes and long dark hair.

She likes music because when I am singing she is smiling, but when I stop she is opening one eye and looking for me and she is waiting until I start singing again!

When I am in the shops I have to buy some dresses for my granddaughter. She looks so pretty in pink dresses. I think when she grows up she will be very pretty and smart just like my grandsons.

She is coming to me nearly every weekend so I can see how she is changing. When I look at her, I can't wait until she will start talking and walking. I love small children; they are so funny when they start to talk. All my grandchildren loved it when I was singing, dancing and playing with them so I think Gabby will love this as well.

I love my grandchildren and I am a very happy grandmother!

By Ella


If I could go anywhere

If I could go anywhere in the world, that would be New Zealand. I am interested in the geography and history of this country.


I read about and saw pictures of New Zealand. New Zealand's geography formed the country's unique species and vegetation. I read that most forests are dominated by birds. The absence of mammal predators on land led to some birds, like kiwi and kakapo, evolving and living on land instead of flying. New Zealand was one of the last lands settled by humans. The Maori were the first people to reach New Zealand, followed by the European settlers. I admire the Maori culture and wood carving.

I would like to learn more about New Zealand and visit the country one day.

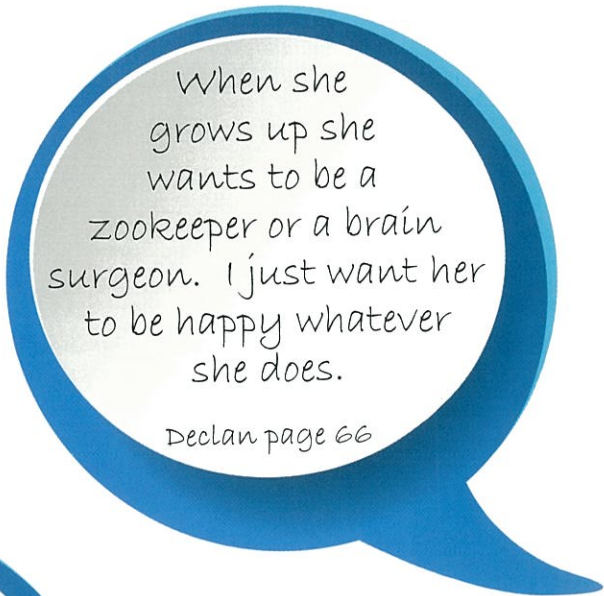
By Aiste



Come on Ahane,
the spuds
are boiling!
Colm page 15




It's better to
collect experiences
than things.
Samanta page 44



When she
grows up she
wants to be a
zookeeper or a brain
surgeon. I just want her
to be happy whatever
she does.

Declan page 66



I love spring in
Ireland and Russia!
It's a time of hope
and new
beginnings!

Tatiana page 69