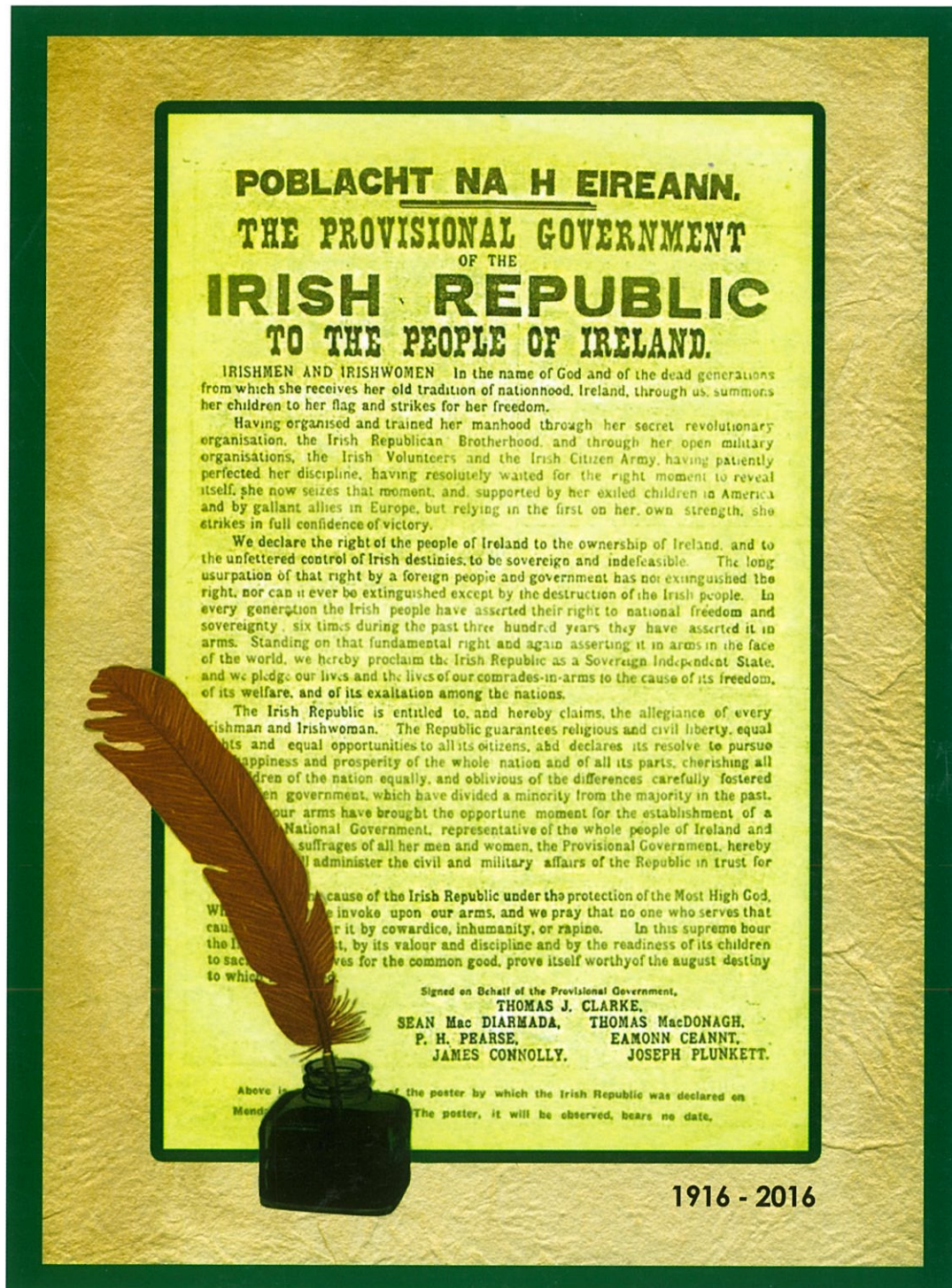


Simply Said 2016



Issue 28

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

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

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Foreword

Welcome to the 28th 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, everyday 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 who is published here.

This edition has an impressive 129 articles contained within its pages. This year's writers were inspired by many things, such as history, community, travel and memories.

The writers have shared their knowledge of cooking, art, animals and nature, and woodwork with us. Some of this year's writers have shared recipes for dishes from their home countries. In addition to this, we read stories and poems about people's families, their holidays and their favourite time of year. The articles are thought provoking and uplifting. Some will make you laugh and others will make you cry.

The image on the cover of this year's Simply Said was chosen to commemorate a historical year in Ireland's history. The 1916 Proclamation is an important document co-written and signed by the leaders of the Rising. Many of these men were also famous for writing stories, poems and plays.

Thank you to all tutors, especially the volunteer tutors, who encourage learners to value the knowledge that they have and support them on their learning journeys. Thanks 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 2016*.

The CABES team

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Czech Republic and Ireland

Czech Republic
Castles culture
Striving earning learning
Freedom and democracy in my heart
Smiling relaxing calming
Beautiful countryside
Ireland

By Karel

Gertie the goose

A long time ago, we had a pet goose called Gertie. We got her as a gosling, don't you know. She was only five weeks old. She would go into your ear, she was so nosey. She used to terrorise us. When my late mother would go shopping and when she would return with the messages, Gertie would investigate the bags and boy were they investigated. When anyone would call, especially if it was a woman, she was so nosey she would put her beak up under her skirt, and if a man came in, God help him!

It was impossible to put her to bed. She would come into the house sometimes and she would search around for my mother for a bed-time story.

We had a sheepdog called Shep, and Gertie would follow him everywhere. He was training her to be a sheepdog, and he had some job. When the cows saw her all hell broke loose! The cows would chase her all the way back to the house, and I mean chase her and the real sheepdog, Shep, would take over then. When the cows would be calving, Gertie would be the first one down to the shed. She was like one who was going to have a baby herself. When my father would go and check the cows Gertie would follow him.

One day a cyclist called. She was taking photographs of the calves, when all of a sudden, out of the blue, came Inspector Gertie and she nearly stripped her! That was the last time anyone came to take photos, I can tell you.

We used to have a shed at the back of the house. When the big snow came, we had to put Gertie in this shed. She would come in to the house at night to get her blanket and she would return to the shed and make a fierce racket covering herself with the blanket. Eventually she would succeed.

She had her own little chair and she would sit on it and have a chat with my mother. They made their plans for the day and for the week, God help us!

She eventually left us, thank God, to join a flock of her own nationality, where she died of old age and that was the end of Gertie.

By Catherine

Coffee in Croatia

The most important drink in Croatia is coffee. It is really part of Croatian culture.

People drink coffee at any time of the day, but mostly in the morning because it helps people to wake up quickly. During the day, they drink coffee at home, in the office and in public places like coffee shops, etc. It takes up a big part of our social life. We usually drink black coffee which is known as 'Turkish coffee'. It is a dark and strong hot drink. Nowadays, people, especially young people, prefer to drink cappuccino and other brands, which is a long way from 'real' coffee.

When you are in a bad mood, just call a friend to enjoy a cup of coffee with you and good atmosphere will come by itself!

By Ranka

A film review of *Pretty Woman*

'Welcome to Hollywood. What's your dream?
Some dreams come true, some don't
But this is Hollywood, always time for dreams
So keep on dreaming
Words that ring so true'

Pretty Woman is my favourite movie. I've watched this movie many times, but sometimes I think that this story can't be true.

The movie was directed by Garry Marshall in 1990 and the book *Pretty Woman* was written by J.F. Lawton. It's a romantic comedy. I love the Cinderella story and I also like the songs, especially the main theme – 'Pretty Woman', and 'It must have been love' by Roxette.

All the characters in the film are convincing, original and sympathetic, feeling comfortable with each other - Garry Marshall did a great job. Richard Gere plays Edward Lewis and he is ideal for the role as he was a 1980's Prince Charming. He is a millionaire who buys companies that have financial difficulties. Richard Gere gives a good performance as a businessman who hires a prostitute named Vivian Ward. Edward Lewis falls in love and wants to be with Vivian. Vivian changes his business priorities and his life as well. Julia Roberts plays Vivian, an attractive and smart hooker with a heart of gold. She gives her character a great sense of humour, charming Edward with her honesty. She is appealing and amusing, making any man feel comfortable.

I think Julia Roberts gives an excellent performance as Vivian and I don't think any other actress could have done better. *Pretty Woman* is one of the best romantic comedies from the past and definitely one to watch again and again. 10 out of 10!

By Tatiana

Awareness

Awareness comes to me with pain
It comes to me with all the emotion in my body
I am grand until the awareness
And then the story of the day sets in

By Dympna

My trip

On the 21st of December I went on a plane from Dublin to Washington D. C. It was a very long trip; it took 8 hours and 30 minutes. I arrived at the airport at 6:00 p.m. Washington time. I met up with my brother Brendan and my nieces Paige and Brooke at the airport. I was delighted to see them because we hadn't met since the summer.

It was my first Christmas away from home. The weather was lovely and the sun was shining every day. I went to Mass on Christmas Eve. There was a choir there. It was lovely to hear all the children singing and dancing. My nieces were both in the choir and Brooke sang a solo. The church was packed with people and families were taking pictures in the church. On the way home I saw some of the bigger shops that were open on Christmas Day.

We got up at 7:30 on Christmas morning as the girls were all excited about Santa coming. The girls were delighted with what they got for Christmas. We all helped to get the dinner ready. We ate our Christmas dinner at 3:00 in the afternoon. After dinner we all sat around the table and had a chat. Then we cleaned up, watched movies, ate sweets and had a few drinks. The best part of Christmas was being there with my brother and his family.

I was really looking forward to going shopping in Washington. We did loads of shopping and I really enjoyed every minute of it. My brother lives near a big shopping centre. It had two floors and it was the biggest shopping centre I have ever seen before. There were lots of

different types of restaurants and shops selling jewellery, clothes, and shoes. I got lovely black, leather, high-heeled boots and I bought lots of fabulous clothes. I spent most of my money in the shops.

The White House is the most famous building in Washington, so I was hoping I would get to see the inside. Brendan, Paige and I went to visit the building but visitors were not allowed inside. We were allowed to take pictures of the building and we walked around the outside. I took lots of photos and the White House was just as lovely as I had expected. The weather was so warm we didn't even need our jackets. The gardens looked lovely and there were restaurants and souvenir shops near the gate. I bought a lovely pink and black jumper that said Washington on the front.

I love films and one thing I wanted to do was go to the movies with the girls. They wanted to see the latest film *Into The Woods* and so did I. The cinema was huge and there were 12 different screens. We went there in the evening time. We had popcorn - a giant tub each and large drinks - we shared a full litre of coke. We sat at the very back of the cinema in huge, red, soft seats. The screen was enormous; I had never seen one as big in my life. The film was like a musical and there were lots of songs. Lots of fairy tales were put together to make the story and there was an extra big happy ending. The sound was really loud and I could hear everything so clearly. I really liked that. The girls enjoyed the film as well - they thought it was magical.

I was sad to leave Washington. I really didn't want to come home. I flew from Washington on Friday the 2nd of January at 9:30 at night and landed in Dublin at 10:00 a.m. the next day. I was wide awake for the whole journey. I was really tired when I got off the plane and I was really looking forward to my own bed. I am saving up for another holiday. I want to go back and visit my brother in Washington.

By Pauline

Art is important

I think art is important because it encourages kids in reading.

By Janet

Summer holidays with my family

On the 6th August 2015 my nephew Josef and his grandmother came to visit me from Germany. They stayed with my brother in Tulla and I saw them when they came to visit me in my house in Ennis. Josef's grandmother had knitted a pair of socks in Germany for me and my mother.

Because it was the summer, my brother had time to take them to lots of different places. They visited Connemara and Kerry. I went with them when he took them to visit the Battery in Labasheeda and the house in Kildysert where I used to live. My old neighbour recognised me. The Battery is a lot of stones built up like a house and it's very old. It is one of six Napoleonic Batteries built along the Shannon Estuary between 1806 and 1815 by the British War department to stop a French invasion.

On Sunday, I bought everyone lunch in the Armada Hotel and after lunch we went to visit Margaret-Mary's parents to say hello. Margaret-Mary is my sister-in-law. After this my brother took them to the Cliffs of Moher.

Josef's grandmother flew back to Germany a few days later. Josef stayed three more weeks, two weeks with my brother and one week with my mother and me. Josef wanted to cook for us and he is a good cook. He also dug the garden and tidied up for me. Josef and my brother went to Doolin Cave together and they also learnt to surf. I bought some headphones for him from the internet for his touchphone. I took some lovely family photos while they were visiting.

By Susanne

My favourite time

My favourite time is spring because everyone smiles and is happy. I like the flowers and it is warm.

By Khadija

My birthday party

I had my 40th birthday party in Linnane's Pub in Kilfenora. It was a surprise party. My family and friends were there. There was great music and lovely food. Pauline, my sister, played music with the group on the night. The cake was lovely and I got lots of presents and cards. It was a good night.

By Michael

Kyle's christening

I have a new nephew. His name is Kyle. His brother, my other nephew, is Robert. Kyle's christening was on recently. We went to Tralee for it. We stayed the whole day. He was crying at the church but he is a good baby. His father, Gerry, said he will grow out of that. Afterwards, we went to a nearby restaurant. We had sandwiches, chips and finger food.

I help mind Kyle and Robert. I am delighted to be their uncle. Sharon and Gerry are great parents. They all live in Tralee with Amber the dog and Angel the cat.

By Adrian

George Washington

George Washington was the first president of the United States of America. He was born in Virginia in 1732. He was commander in chief of the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War (1775-83) and served two terms as the first U.S. president, from 1789 to 1797. He had strong leadership qualities and he was known as 'the father of his country'. He established the tradition of a cabinet of advisors. He died in 1799 age 67. May he rest in peace.

By Gerard

The fish soup of Baja

The most important food in our Hungarian culture is fish soup. It's a traditional food in my town, Baja. It is the capital of fish soup.

This soup is a very simple food. Lots of people made their living by fishing in my town a long time ago. Because they had five fingers, they found out five things are needed to make good fish soup: fish (carp), water, onion, paprika, and salt. These things were available to them and a cauldron, too. They didn't exaggerate the preparation of this food, either. They placed everything into the cauldron and lit a fire under this, then cooked it. Because this food is so puritan and simple, we should pay special attention to the quality of raw materials, so that nothing obscures the true flavours. The fish should be the best possible: not too fatty and not too big. The onion should be old, not fresh this year. And the paprika should be only homemade. In addition, the cauldron should be a cauldron for fish, which is wider at the bottom, narrowing toward the mouth. Don't cook this soup on gas, but only on the fire with wood.

Ingredients:

For every 1 kg of fish you will need:

1 large onion, chopped

1 heaped tablespoon of homemade paprika + 1 tablespoon more

1.2 litres of water

1–2 pieces of cherry peppers

Salt to taste

Method:

- Clean the river fish. Score its skin. Cut the fish into 2 inch chunks; its head in half. Place the fish chunks into a bowl and salt them. Cover it and store in the fridge for 1-2 hours.
- Chop the onions and place them into the cauldron. Add the fish, pour cold water into it and boil it intensively. After 10 minutes place the paprika and the cherry peppers on the top. Then boil again for 30 minutes.
- Meanwhile cook the freshly kneaded pasta (called pasta 'matches').
- Serve it with the fish soup and offer the fish on a separate plate, arranging them tastefully.

A culinary festival, called the Fish Cooking Festival of Baja is organised in July of every year. In this case, fish soups are cooked in more than 2000 cauldrons. This festival has been registered by the Guinness Book of Records.

If you are visiting Hungary, be sure to taste this food. You'll get an unforgettable culinary experience!

By Monika

Wedding day

My mam got married last July. It was also her birthday and it was an exciting day.

I got my hair done up in the morning and I had bought a new outfit and handbag. I met my family and we got a bus to the registry office. Everyone looked lovely and had a good day.

We went for a meal in Dromoland and there were lots of people there. I met my cousins, aunts and uncles. There was great music and a DJ; everyone was dancing. There was a tea party and sandwiches after.

When I went to bed I found it hard to sleep. I did not want it to end. It came so fast and went so fast. I did not want to come home. It took me a week to recover!

By Sylvia

Art is important

Art is important because it encourages imagination.

By Monica

P.S. I love you

P.S. I love you tells the story of a New York City girl, Holly, and an Irish man, Gerry Kennedy. The film is based on the book of the same name written by Cecilia Aherne, an Irish novelist. *P.S. I love you* was her first novel and she wrote it in her 20s in 2002. It was published in 2004 and was a number one bestseller. The film was directed by Richard La Gravenese and released in the United States on 22nd December 2007.

At the start of the film, we watch a quarrel between our heroes. It is about having only a small flat, not enough money and planning for a baby. So we see an ordinary family with typical problems. But suddenly, we find Gerry succumbs to a brain tumour and Holly is now alone and depressed.

On her 30th birthday she gets an unexpected present from her deceased husband, an audio message that tells her not to give up and that she'll get other letters at certain times.

Over the year, Holly gets several letters from Gerry (all ending in 'P.S. I love you.'). All her friends and her mother worry about it, but every letter helps take Holly one more step into the future. Through these letters, the audience can see their first meeting, their friendship, love and how they live together. We can see how Holly, from her memories of a past life, gets her new life.

It's a great, romantic film and I can watch it again and again. Relationships between Holly and Gerry remind me of relations between me and my husband. He also helped me to find myself.

I watched this film once again when my husband got an invitation to work in Ireland; that was my first meeting with that country! This story shows us that life is short and we should live for the day.

By Kamila

The apartment

I left Woodlands on Monday 8th May 2015 to move into my new apartment. There are six other people living in the apartment with me. The six others moved in a week before me.

The apartment is very nice and has a number of bedrooms and bathrooms. There is a big kitchen where we cook, eat and sometimes watch television.

We are looked after by Sheila who helps me bake on Mondays. We have to keep the apartment neat and tidy. Everyone has their own jobs. My job in the apartment is to wash the dishes after the dinner every day and when we have finished the baking.

The names of the people living in the apartment are David, Angela, Helen, Jill and Louis.

A lovely grey cat comes to visit the apartment. He sits on the window sill.

I like living in the apartment very much.

By Teresa

My little village in Poland

When I was little I lived in a small village in the west of the country. About a hundred people live there today. I liked living there and I like to go back there because my family and my friends live there. When we were little children we played various games and spent the whole day together. During the summer you can swim in Lake Bninskim with your family. You can make a fire and sleep in a tent. In winter you can ride a sled, and have sleigh rides too. Maybe this is a small village, but it certainly is not boring.

By Kinga

Rock on

On Wednesday 18th of November 2015 our group went to Glór to see an exhibition of photos by John Kelly. The name of the exhibition we went to see is *Between You, Me and The Wall*.

My favourite photo was the *Rock Concert* because it's a photo of people relaxing at the Burren listening to the beautiful singers.

I saw lots of other photos there as well. There are 36 photos altogether in the exhibition. There were funny ones, sad ones and ones that made you think as well. The photo of Davy Fitzgerald is a good one because he looked evil in it and it was also raining out in the photo.

It took a whole hour to look at the photos and then talk about them as well. My feet were killing me from standing around and walking around the same spot the whole time that we were there. At the end of it all I was so glad to go home and put my feet up on my stool.

Going to see that exhibition was good because some of the photos I liked and some I didn't like but I did enjoy our day out at Glór. The one photo I did not like at all was the one with the horse in it. That one made me sad and mad at the same time.

I thought I might see 80 photos at the exhibition but there were only 36 photos altogether. There was a mixture of photos of different types of people and there were some with animals in there too.

To anyone that is interested in a photo exhibition, I would recommend you to go see John Kelly's exhibition. It's called *Between You, Me and The Wall*.

By Tracy

The Mayo team

My name is Michael and I was born in Castlebar hospital in Co Mayo. I lived in Achill Island in Co Mayo up to two years ago when I moved to Clarecastle in Co Clare. I am very fond of the GAA especially the football, hurling and the ladies' football teams of Mayo. I also love the Clare teams.

Down the years Mayo has produced many very good teams and some very competitive ones as well but, unfortunately, Sam Maguire has gone to Dublin, Kerry, Cork, Tyrone Donegal and Armagh and other counties but he has eluded Mayo since 1950 and 1951. There have been some wonderful games all around Ireland in venues such as Croke Park, Killarney, Cork and in Connacht - Tuam, Castlebar, Roscommon and Sligo. Mayo beat Sligo in the Connacht Final in Roscommon in 2015. There was a great party after, with the Brendan Nestor Cup. In the quarter final Mayo had a great win over Donegal in Croke Park and advanced to the semi-final where Mayo lost narrowly to Dublin after a replay. So ended Mayo's dream for 2015.

On last Saturday Mayo beat a very strong Dublin team in the All-Ireland under 21 football semi-final. They will meet Cork in the final this Saturday in Ennis. Won't you wish us luck?

By Michael

Dresses

I like sewing and design. I like to look at nice clothes and copy them. I like to make new clothes for my children. I have made pyjamas, bags and cushions. I look forward to making new things.

By Souad

My story

I have been living at home in Ballyea for 33 years. I lived with my parents Paula and Francis; my brother Michael, and my three sisters Collette, Louise and my twin Claire. I grew up with them. My brother, Michael, got married. My sister in law is Patricia. They have three lovely sons Diarmuid, Sean and Darragh. My sister, Louise, got married in Australia. We went over for the wedding. Claire, Dad and I surprised her. My brother in law is Adrian. They have two lovely sons, Daniel and Ben. I am so happy to be part of my family's life. I was also part of the Ballyea community. I was in the choir. I used to read at Mass and I also helped out with the play and pray group. When I used to go to Mass I met people. I enjoyed that. I went set dancing in Clarecastle, which I loved. The people were really nice and we had great fun and a laugh.

In April 2014 I had to make a big decision to live independently. Mam and I talked about it and we both decided it would be best for me. I found it tough to make that decision. I was worried and nervous about it. I found out I was moving on the 8th May 2015. My support worker, Sarah, brought me to see my apartment in Roslevan. I loved it and I got excited.

Mam and Sarah helped me to buy stuff for my apartment. I found out I was having a key worker, Aisling. Aisling and I met a couple of times; we got to know one another. Aisling was explaining to me what she would be doing as my key worker.

On the 8th May I moved into my apartment. I was delighted with myself. I did it gradually because it was my first time moving out of home. I learned a lot when I moved in, like paying bills and other stuff. I met new staff that were working in the apartments. I met other tenants in the apartments - Ann, Jill, Angela, David, Hughie and Teresa. I got to know them. I became friendly with them.

I moved in full time on the 7th June. I was in the care of the Brothers of Charity. I found it hard. My anxiety came at me. Although I decided I would live on my own, I was feeling lonely, not well, and I got stressed. It was all new to me. I got loads of support from the staff and my family. I spoke to them about how I was feeling. I got through it with their support. I got to know the place and I learned how to cook and

bake, which I really enjoy. I met new friends in Knockaderry. I got to know people there and the staff. I started to do art. I love it. I went to the Brothers of Charity Christmas Social, which I really enjoyed.

I was reminded recently how far I have come. When I first moved in I felt anxious over doing a large grocery shop. I was worried about the dates on the food and how long it would last. I was buying small amounts of food on a daily basis. Now I do my large shopping once a week with support and I love seeing the fridge full of food!

I had a housewarming on 27th January 2016. It was a great evening. My friends from the apartments, a few of the staff, my sister Claire and one of her staff came. We had a great night. I have settled in really well in my new home. I go to discos and I meet people there. I started going to advocacy meetings. I made new friends and more new staff. I love my new home and I love being part of the Brothers of Charity service. The staff and other service users are really nice. I love the staff and the friends I have made. I can cook by myself. I made dinner for myself and one of the staff, my key worker, Aisling. I never thought I would live in my own apartment and do stuff for myself. I am very happy and proud of myself. I love my home and being independent. I enjoy having my own space. I am a confident person.

By Helen

Slovakia and Ireland

Slovakia
Big castles
Labouring living learning
My dogs in two countries are in my heart
Fishing walking working
Rivers pubs
Ireland

By Marian

Universal love

I am Maria and I come from Bulgaria. Before I started writing this I saw the title of this story in my mind instantly, when my lovely teacher Kerry suggested we get involved in this really interesting and very useful book.

When I came for the first time to Ireland, one year ago exactly, I expected to feel strange and different. It was exciting, but I felt inner peace and confidence, because I knew that this change will be good for me and my family. With great surprise I discovered that in Ireland I feel like I am at home. Just people speak a different language and are much more open and smiling from people in my country. After the first week in this lovely green country I realised that no matter where you live, you are at home, on the Earth.

I realised that my real home is the Earth and this feeling increased when I started to attend English class in the Adult Education Centre, here in Ennis.

My class is a wonderful class with the best teachers for me, Tom and Clare. One day, in the class I understood that we are so many people from different countries in the world, collected in one room, at one table. I felt something really beautiful inside of me. It seems like all the world was in front of my eyes and I can reach every part of it through the people who had come from all its parts. And exactly then I realised something very deeply with all my cells of my being.

It doesn't matter where you come from? It doesn't matter what your name is, job, even what you did yesterday. The only thing which matters is who you choose to be now? Who are you really? And if you have enough courage to remove all your notions, you will realize that you are love, in your purest and clearest form.

When all our illusions disappear, we will see only the love in us and in each of us. Everyone is love. We all are different manifestations of love. All our life depends on how well we understand our real self for us and others. Our lives depend on how we allow ourselves to live according to our true self, beyond the illusions. And how could I feel a foreigner in Ireland when I am surrounded by so many like me, so many manifestations of love?

I and you, and each of us are at home in Ireland or in any other country in the world. Our home is the Earth and we are from one family, one really big human family. We are one thing in different forms. This is a universal love.

By María

Rebecca's Communion

My goddaughter Rebecca, who is also my niece, made her Communion on 18th May 2013.

The first thing Rebecca did when she got up was to have her breakfast. Then she had to get her hair done in the hairdresser. Afterwards, she went home to get ready. Then she went to the church for the Mass. It was on at 10:30 a.m. in Ballyea church. When the Mass was over she got a few photos taken.

We all went back to the house after the church. We had a marquee and also bouncy castle. All the kids enjoyed themselves. There were also photos taken in the house. We had lots to eat. We had chicken curry, beef stroganoff and chicken nuggets and chips for the kids. We had cake, banoffi pie and apple tarts for dessert. There was also lots to drink. Rebecca looked lovely on the day and she got lots of presents. Everyone enjoyed the day, especially Rebecca.

By Joan

Art is important

Art is important because, like music, it is an international language.

By Jean

My greatest night as a Liverpool fan

What turned out to be my greatest night as a Liverpool fan began in February 2005, when my friend applied for 2 tickets on UEFA.com for the Champions League final. It was to be held in Istanbul in May of that year.

In March we received news that we had got lucky in the UEFA lotto. We had won 2 tickets for the final in Istanbul. Now all we needed was for Liverpool to reach the final.

At the start of May Liverpool beat Chelsea in the Champions League semi-final to book our place in the final against AC Milan. Now our trip of a lifetime was on.

On the 24th May we set off on our trip to Istanbul. We flew Shannon to Brussels. We travelled by bus from Brussels airport to Cologne airport. We flew Cologne to Istanbul.

On our arrival in Istanbul my friend and I made our way by taxi to our hotel. It was a small family hotel run by a great family, that made us feel so welcome.

May 25th 2005, the day of the final, we made our way to the centre of Istanbul to a place called Taksim Square where all the Liverpool fans had gathered ahead of the final. What an atmosphere! Lots of singing and colour. The only place to be.

When the time came to make our way to the Ataturk stadium we got the bus from Taksim Square. We arrived and made our way into the ground. What a cool looking stadium which holds 80,000 fans. The atmosphere was brilliant between the two sets of supporters.

The match kicks off. What a nightmare start for Liverpool. One down in the first minute. Three nil down at the break. I didn't know what to think. It looked all over but Liverpool struck back to level in a seven minute burst. Captain Steven Gerrard headed the first, with Smicer and Alonso also netting. The game ends 3 - 3. After a goalless extra time the match goes to a penalty shoot-out.

First up is AC Milan, Serginho - his shot is high and wide. Hamann is first up for Liverpool - he scores. Next up for Milan is Pirlo - his penalty is saved. Cisse puts Liverpool two up. Tomasson scores for Milan. Riise for Liverpool - his penalty is saved. Kaka for Milan makes it 2 - 2. Smicer makes it 3 - 2 to Liverpool. Last up for AC Milan is Shevchenko; he has to score. Liverpool goalkeeper, Jerzy Dudek, saves to give Liverpool victory. Liverpool are champions of Europe. What a match! What a trip! My greatest night as a Liverpool fan!

By Uncle Bob

The man who saved the world

Hi, my name is Matthew and today my story is about a man called Lieutenant Stanislav Yevgrafovich Petrov, who was born on the ninth of September 1939 in Vladivostok, Soviet Union. Mr Petrov worked at the Soviet Air Defence Forces. The job he had was at the Oko nuclear detection system. It is important to note that when Mr Petrov was working, there were huge tensions between the USA and the Soviet Union. War was a high risk factor at the time. On the 26th September 1983, the computer radar system detected a missile heading towards the Soviet Union. Within ten minutes, another missile was detected. The alarm bells were ringing in Mr Petrov's head and his comrades were panicking. The decision to launch a counter reaction strike was not in Mr Petrov's hands, so he rang his commander General Yuri Votintsev. There were words said between the two men and the impression given by the general was to react swiftly. Mr Petrov had other ideas of his own. After putting down the phone to his commanding officer, he was informed by his comrades the computer detection system had spotted seven missile warheads coming towards the Soviet Union. Each individual missile could be seen on the computer with a timer on it showing when it would hit its target. It dawned on Mr Petrov that the technology the Soviet Union was using was new and he didn't entirely trust it. He wasn't just under pressure from his comrades, his superiors also wanted him to give the go ahead for an attack on U.S. soil which would have resulted in the loss of millions of lives. Mr Petrov decided not to give the orders to launch a counter strike. This was the right decision as the computer was giving incorrect readings.

In my opinion, the fate of so many people's lives rested in one man's hands for a couple of moments. Thank God it was the right man. The aftermath of the incident left Mr Petrov with a lot of questions to answer and under intense scrutiny for his judgement from his superiors, even though Mr Petrov made the right choice. The truth was they were too embarrassed; the great Soviet Union got it wrong. There were bugs found in the missile detection unit and the other major contributing factor to the inaccurate information was sunlight on high altitude cloud which caused a mass confusion to the satellite system. The technology had let them down. The thing I found interesting about the story was that General Yuri Votintsev praised Mr Petrov for his great work and promised him a reward from the Soviet Union which he never received.

I remember the way I found out about Mr Petrov. I was sitting at home one day, flicking through the TV channels looking for something to watch. A film started on True Movies called *The man who saved the world*. I was watching the film away thinking it was very boring but then started to enjoy it. This man is really loved by American people for his act of bravery. He met famous people like Robert De Niro, Matt Damon, Kevin Costner and an array of other famous actors. I was thinking to myself, 'What would I do to be in his shoes, winning all those awards and travelling across America doing interviews with TV reporters?' The famous Kevin Costner said 'You are a man amongst all men,' to Mr Petrov. Never a more true statement. A great man. After returning from America Mr Petrov went to see his mother, whom he had not seen for a very long time. She was 90 years old and burst into tears when he arrived at her door. Despite a difficult family life everything started to work out well for him again.

Mr Petrov is alive and well today, aged 76 and living in Russia.

By Matthew

Art is important

Art is important because it encourages relaxation.

By Gráinne

My happy childhood

As a child I lived in a small town, Siemianowice. I have a younger brother, Peter, and a lot of friends. After school we spent our free time outside. We didn't have a lot of toys but we had our imagination. We didn't have computers but we had paper and crayons. We were never bored.

We spent holidays with my grandparents in the countryside. We rode on horseback; we fed the chickens. It was a very happy time and I will never forget this.

That shows, you don't need very much money to be happy. Now, I have my own family. I try to be a good parent for my kids like my parents were for me and my brother. I teach them what is important in life. Not money, not cars, not computers but love and family are the best things we have.

By Aleksandra

All my life

All my life I have loved to make everything handmade (something from nothing). I love art and craft. Every time we go to a birthday party I make a birthday card. I think that is very nice, a very different gift.

Now I have my lovely, new sewing machine with embroidery and when I have time (but I don't very often because I have a little child - she is 3 years old and has too much energy) I sew everything. I have a lot of ideas and I never know what to do first.

From the age of nine I have done beauty, nails. I love that too. Everything I do, I do with passion. This is very good because my husband is like me. He loves to do everything with wood. He did our shoe cabinet and the desk in my beauty salon. They are beautiful.

By Izabela

Our life in Ireland

I was born in Poland in 1991. When I was a small boy I liked playing football with my friends and riding my bike. I lived in a village with my mother, father and brother. I didn't like school from the first day. When I was 18 I was very happy because I could leave school and start work. One year later into the world came my daughter, Ola. I was very happy with my girlfriend, Kinga. When Ola was 3, I was given work in Ireland. Three months after, me, Kinga and Ola flew to Ireland and we lived together, and we got married. We have been in Ireland 3 years now and we won't go back to Poland because it is better here. Ola has friends and likes going to school. We are always learning English and we go to school, to the Adult Education Centre in Ennis. It's good.

By Jarek

Almost missed it

This happened a year ago. I spent two weeks for the summer holiday in Tenerife. I was there with my husband and my two daughters.

We had a very nice time: good weather, sea food and swimming in the ocean. But we had some bad luck and we spent a few days with 'Calima' – rain and dust from the Sahara.

At the end of the holiday, we were packed to go back home and everything was ready. The flight was at 4:00 a.m. so we went to bed for a few hours. We set the alarm for 2:00 a.m., but it did not go off. I woke up at 3:20 a.m. and I was terribly scared. I told my husband that we had missed the flight. At the same time I cried to my children, 'Girls, we have to get out.' The children, dressed in pyjamas, ran to the car. My husband took the bags and went to the car too. We left the apartment 10 minutes after we woke up. It was the first time I had asked my husband to drive faster. In 10 minutes we were at the airport. We had luggage to check in, so my husband with the girls went to return the car, and I ran to the check in desk. Nobody was at the airport. I ran to the opposite side of the airport and I found a

cleaner who told me where I had to go. I begged the staff to let us on the flight.

The ladies were very polite and we were allowed to go on the airplane. When we were at the last passport control before going on the airplane we were crying from happiness.

By Lidia

Our new home

When my children arrived in Ireland they felt cold but they were happy to see me and my husband. We had been apart for two years. I was worried because they didn't speak English. Then I talked to the teacher; he told us not to worry because they would learn in a few months.

It was true what the teacher said. They have been here five years now, and they speak perfect English. They are very happy in Ireland. I am happy too, and we are very proud of our children.

By Nubia

A better life

I do not have creative inspiration, but I'm trying. I'm Przemek and this is my short story.

I was born in Poland in 1993. When I was a small boy I played with my brother and our friends. My family – me, my brother and our parents - lived in a village. When I was 10, probably – our parents bought a dog, a puppy actually. Together with the dog, we walked and played. It was fantastic. The dog died 2 years ago. I was very sad about this.

I was 18 when I got my driver's licence and bought my first car. When I was 20 I finished IT school, passed the final exam and I picked up my certificate. I was very happy! Two years ago I went to Ireland from Poland to start a new life, a better life.

By Przemek

A happy ending

I am going to tell you a story I would like to forget as a nightmare. It happened many years ago to my youngest child. I remember like now that it was a very sunny day and I was doing a spring clean of my house when I heard my phone ringing. My child, Lukas' teacher was ringing me to say that my son had been injured while skating without a helmet.

I put on my shoes and ran to collect him from school. On the way home I asked him many times how he felt. He seemed OK in spite of having a big bump on his head. At that time I thought that his injury was not so bad. Oh how I was wrong! That night when my son was deeply asleep I heard a strange sound from his room. I went to check what it was and I saw a terrible picture. My son's hands were shaking after each breath.

I immediately called an ambulance and they took my son to hospital. I had been waiting for test results for an hour and thank God they were clear. After that he was checked for brain injury and neurological problems. The doctor told me that he had got a light brain injury. After his words my imagination started drawing horrible pictures of my child. Maybe everything was written on my face because the doctor tried to calm me down. I think at that moment I was in shock. Luckily, the doctor was very good as a specialist and as a psychologist and I calmed down. This story has a happy ending but I wouldn't like to relive it.

By Vera

Art is important

I think art is important because it is stress free and helps me to relax.

By Tamia

A disastrous journey

The journey happened last summer. My sisters and I had decided to spend two weeks in Granada, in the south of Spain.

It was the first time we had been to Andalucía; indeed, we had already been to Sevilla two years ago. We spent one week in Sevilla and we ended up in Granada for the second week. But for this journey, we had decided to travel by car; it takes 14 hours from Marseille to Granada.

We were worried about getting lost and at the same time we were excited, we were looking forward to travelling by car. Also, we had decided to take a map because we had some bad experiences with the GPS.

The first part of the journey was fine. We left Marseille at 1:00 p.m. so we travelled by night to avoid the traffic jams. There were three drivers so we shared the driving and I was the first. I was supposed to drive from Marseille to Andorra, which means 5 hours.

Everything went well until the second half of the journey. My sister was driving in the motorway and suddenly we saw many signs with different directions. So we started to panic and missed the exit for Murcia, which leads to Granada.

We headed inland instead of staying in the coast. We knew that we were lost but we couldn't turn around immediately so we continued and we followed the map until the next sign of the motorway. It was so boring, it looked like the desert.

After 3 hours, the roads were becoming dangerous and narrow and the mountains were huge, it was so stressful driving there.

We had no idea where we were heading to. Hopefully, there would be service stations every 20 miles. We were worried about running out of fuel in the middle of nowhere.

We stopped around 3:00 p.m. to have lunch and think about the situation. We found out that we weren't totally lost; we had taken the long way.

After that, we drove about 2 long hours and finally we found the direction of Granada by the motorway. It was a real relief. We were so tired because Granada was still 150 miles away and we had to stay focused until the end of the journey, otherwise we would get lost again.

We realised that it wasn't easy to drive to Spain, especially the south, because it's a long way. The return was easier; obviously we got lost again but not like the first time.

By Wided

My parents

My mother, Maria, is 68 years old and my dad, Zygmunt, is 72 years old. They live in Męcikal, a small village in Poland. They've been together for 49 years. They have 4 sons and me, their only daughter. I am the youngest. They have 9 grandchildren and 1 great granddaughter.

Mum was a housewife and looked after us children. Dad worked in the woods all his life. He worked with horses every day. I am very proud of my parents. They always took care of us all and still do. We can always count on them. I love them very much!

By Lucyna

Sewing

I am learning sewing. This class is the best for me because I can relax and I really enjoy it. We have a lovely teacher who makes our life colourful. I have made a nappy bag for my first grandchild. It's the best reason to learn something useful. Everything for me is a challenge because I am still learning English.

By Tania

A strange day

In August 2015 my partner and I went to Turkey on holidays for two weeks. I like going to Turkey because it's hot and sunny. The people there are so nice. The food is not great - at least I thought so, my partner loved it.

When we were there it was in the middle of the refugee crisis in Turkey and their neighbouring country, Greece. During the first week we went on a day trip to the nearest Greek island expecting nothing more than a pleasant day out.

When we got off the boat we could hardly believe what we saw. There were people everywhere; lying under trees, on the sides of the roads, sitting on the footpaths, in the parks. Men, women and children carrying all they owned with them. We were shocked and sad to see so many homeless people.

I noticed one man sitting on his own looking very sad. I thought he might be hungry so I spoke to him. I asked him had he eaten. He said he had. I offered him some money but he refused it. He said he had money but that his wife and child had drowned on the way to Greece. I was horrified.

There were all sorts washed up on the beach - shoes, rubber dinghies and clothes among other things. We saw people washing their clothes in the sea. My partner and I felt so helpless. I was crying with frustration because there was very little we could do to help.

We walked up the town and went into a shop to buy some souvenirs. There was a migrant family in the shop with at least 3 children. The father was counting his money and it was obvious he hadn't very much. I asked the mother could I buy some ice cream for the children and she smiled at me. Meanwhile, the father was looking at some tents but walked out of the shop without buying any. He obviously hadn't the price of one. I ran after them and asked them to wait while I went back to the shop and bought a large tent for them. What else could I do? They had no shelter. They were astonished and very thankful. I didn't do it for the gratitude. I just felt so sorry for them not having a home.

We spent the rest of the day walking around and chatting to the people and buying lots of ice cream for the children. We played marbles, using stones, with one group. It was a strange day. I started out crying with helplessness at the misery around me but ended the day feeling more at peace because I had done something to help.

By Bernadette

My son

My son J is 10 years old. He loves to do sports. He loves all kinds of sport such as soccer, hurling and football but his favourite sport is boxing. He started boxing when he was 8 years old. He loves training and especially sparring. He is not yet tournament age but he can have exhibitions.

You have to be 11 years of age to box in tournaments. An exhibition is a no contest bout for underage boxers and both lads get a medal for participating.

The first fight J had was an exhibition. It was a good bout. In the next fight he had, he was boxing a bigger lad than him. I thought he was going to get hurt but he didn't. He boxed brilliant. He gave his opponent a standing count in the first round. In the second round he gave him another count so the referee stopped the fight. The judges gave their decision and declared J the winner by stoppage. I was so proud of him and, hopefully, there will be more wins to come.

By T

From Istanbul to Ennis

My name is Nazi. I have four brothers and two sisters. My sisters' names are Saniy and Makbule. They live in Istanbul and I miss them.

I came to Ireland in 2006. My first day in Ireland was terrible. I had no English and I missed my family. Now I have one son and one daughter born here. I like Ireland because it is very quiet.

By Nazi

Going blank in English class

This is my story about the white colour in my head in English classes. My first English course in Ireland was very, very hard for me. This is because I have three children, Joao Victorio, 10 years old, Juan Gabriel, 9 and Joao Miguel who will be one year old tomorrow. The problem is I don't remember words! My teacher is very good but my head is like the colour white sometimes. I think next year, 2017, will be better for me because Joao Miguel will be older and I will be able to think better.

By Vanessa

A day in Killarney

The Dublin coach left Labasheeda at 9:30 a.m. for Killarney. We went around by the road to Killarney and arrived there at ten past twelve. We went to Muckross House for our dinner. After dinner we went for a walk around the grounds. We also went for a drive on the jaunting cars out to the waterfall. I did a small bit of shopping as well. Then we left Muckross to go to the cathedral. We stayed there for a little while and had a look around before we left for home. We got home around 7:30 p.m. It was an enjoyable day out for the crowd from Labasheeda.

By Tony

Dresses

I am doing a sewing class. I am so happy I attend this class. My teacher who teaches us is very good. I have made 2 dresses for my daughter. I love to learn and will do more cutting and stitching. One day I was in hospital for my daughter's check-up and a nurse asked me, 'Your daughter's dress is beautiful. Where did you buy it? I want to buy one for my daughter.' I told her I made this dress myself. She said, 'I love her dress.' I felt proud of myself because I made it.

By Meenakshi

My lucky day

I would like to tell you about my lucky day. It was on 16th December 2015, a Wednesday.

I got up at 8:00 a.m. because on this day I have English classes. I am always in there from 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. After school I went to Dunnes Stores to do some shopping. When I was on my way back home I remembered that I had to check two old lotto tickets (Daily millions and the Euro millions).

I saw a small shop inside Dunnes Stores where you can check tickets. I gave the tickets to a nice lady and she said with a smile, 'First one, Daily, sorry nothing. Second one, uh huh, you must go to the post office.' I asked, 'Is there anything wrong with the ticket?' She printed a coupon and she gave it to me. I saw on it the number two and five zeros. I looked one more time because I couldn't believe it. I actually won two thousand euros but at first I thought I won more because I didn't see a dot between the zeros.

By Pawel

Glór exhibition

I went to Glór to see an exhibition with my ITABE group. It was on Wednesday 18th November 2015. It was an exhibition by John Kelly. It was called *Between You Me and the Wall*.

When I found out that we were going to Glór to see the exhibition I was very excited. I had never been to an exhibition before. I thought the photos would be displayed in a room. For some reason, I thought that the photos would be displayed in black and white but when we got to Glór it was very different. They were displayed on a balcony that people could walk through and see the photos. The photographs were a good size and very clear. They were all in frames. They were all numbered and you had to have a booklet to give you the name of the photo. Some of the photos were in colour and some were in black and white. Some of the photos were sad; some of them were funny. My favourite photograph was number eight. It was a photograph of a mother and child.

It was my favourite photo because the child looked so relaxed in his mother's arms. The mother was so content soothing her child.

The saddest photo for me was someone had chained a wheelchair to a pole.

There were 36 photographs there. I really enjoyed it and would recommend it to anyone who would like to go.

A week later I went to Glór with my daughter and as I was sitting down having a drink, I realised that there were photos on the wall with numbers on them and I realised that it was all John Kelly's work from the exhibition and they had moved it downstairs.

By Helen

Guitar lessons

I am learning to play the guitar. I go to lessons every week. I am learning to strum and sing at the same time. Sometimes, your fingers can get sore from pressing down the guitar strings. You have to do that to make the notes.

I love music and singing. One of my favourite songs is 'My lovely rose of Clare'.

By Máiread

The 1916 Rising in Galbally

I want to share a story about the 1916 Rising in Galbally, County Limerick. The Galtee Battalion were Eamon O'Brien and his brother John Jo , Seán Lynch, Jim Scanlon, Michael Scanlon, Ned Foley, Patrick Maher and there were more recruits but these are the main names. They were recruited in Galbally on the 23rd of April 1916 in the square in Galbally. Liam Manahan was appointed commander of them. He gave each one of them a rifle and ammunition and showed them how to use them. They then marched around the square at 6 o'clock in preparation to take part in the Rising in Dublin. At 6 o'clock they received a dispatch from Eoin O'Neill who was a member of the Irish Volunteers telling them that plans for a rising in Dublin had been cancelled. The men were told to go home at 6 o'clock in the evening, that there was no rising. The battalion took part in other activities in relation to the freedom of Ireland including the raiding of the station at Knocklong.

By Mary

The men's shed

I go to the men's shed in Ennistymon every week. I meet other people there. We make things out of wood. We work for a while and then we have coffee and biscuits.

This year, our men's shed had a float in the St. Patrick's Day parade. I got to go round the town on the float. Ennistymon looked different from the float. We had a great day and we won a prize.

I like going to the men's shed.

By William

Music

I love music –
fast or slow –
like 'Lisdoonvarna' on the radio.

That's my place in Co. Clare,
Lisdoon – the Spa –
I like it there.

And so does Christy,
Christy Moore – he loves
the Burren and the Kilfenora

He loves music –
fast or slow –
like 'Lisdoonvarna' on the radio.

By Susan

Fatelessness

Fatelessness is an autobiographical story written by Hungarian novelist Imre Kertész. It is an amazing story about Georg Kores, a young Jewish boy, fifteen years old, who was taken from a bus when he was on his way to his workplace. He was transported to Auschwitz concentration camp and then to Buchenwald concentration camp without any reasonable explanation. He spent one year there, from 1944 until the liberation by the Soviet Red Army.

Circumstances in both camps were very hard, beyond imagination. Kores experienced hunger, maltreatment and sickness. Better days came when some people helped Kores to survive, placing him in a hospital.

Imre Kertész published the novel in 1975 in Hungarian cultural society because they recognised the novel as a criticism of the Hungarian vision of the Holocaust and their position on it. He deservedly won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2002. The great author died a short while ago on 31st March 2016.

I believe that it is our obligation to tell about the dark, shameful Nazi system and what it did in the past. *Fatelessness* deserves to be read again and again.

By Ranka

A student of knowledge

A young scholar was extremely hungry once. He went out to search for food, but he couldn't find any. He asked people. Unfortunately, they didn't give him any, so he went into a farm and he grabbed an apple and ate it. Then the scholar regretted his action. He was saddened about what he had done. He asked people, 'Who owns this farm?' They told him that there was a person who lived nearby. The scholar went to him and said, 'Please forgive me. I have eaten an apple from your farm. Please forgive me.' The owner said he would not forgive him, but would report him on the day of judgement in front of Allah. The scholar said, 'It was only an apple; please forgive me.'

The owner said he wouldn't forgive him, and he walked back inside the house.

So the young man waited outside the house. He waited from before noon until after noon. The owner came out. The young man said, 'I beg you to forgive me. I am willing to become a labourer, and I'm willing to work for you.' The owner said he would forgive him on one condition. The scholar asked what it was. The owner said, 'That you marry my daughter.' The young man was overwhelmed. He was happy. The owner said, 'But she has a few problems. She is deaf, dumb, blind and disabled.' The young man said, 'What!' The old father said that he'd never forgive him until he married her. Then they set a certain date for the young man to return and talk again.

Then the young man came dragging his feet, because he was saddened and upset that he was going to marry someone he would be looking after for the rest of his life. He entered the house and saw a beautiful girl and she came up to him. He was looking at her, dumbfounded and flabbergasted. The young girl asked him if he was surprised. He answered, 'Yes. Your father told me that you were blind, deaf, dumb and disabled.' She replied, 'My father has been looking for a spouse for me for a long time. When he saw that you are fearful of God and honest, he decided that you are the right man to marry me.' She continued her speech and said, 'Yes, I am blind from looking at bad things, and I'm deaf from hearing bad things, and I'm dumb from speaking bad things, and I am disabled from walking to bad places.' They were married and their son was one of the greatest scholars. His name was Abu Hanifa.

By Cabdiraxmaan

Sport

I like sport. I like running, rugby and football.

I train for races and I have won medals. I like swimming as well. I swim in the pool. Sport keeps me fit.

By Tomás

The Dublin journey

I went to Dublin on Easter Sunday this year. I went on the train from Limerick with William and Michelle. It was the day of the Commemoration of the 1916 Rising. A lot of events were happening at the G.P.O., which was the headquarters for the people who took part in the Rising. We couldn't get near it. There were too many people there and some of the roads were closed. I got to see Joan Burton pass in a black car, though. She was on her way to an event.

We watched the events on a big screen on the street. The screen was very high up – as high as a chimney on a tall building. After that, we went to shop on O'Connell Street and we went to a restaurant to eat. The restaurant was crowded and noisy but the food was good. I went to a €2 shop. It was very big.

There was a Luas strike that day and I was able to walk on the tram lines. It was a very windy day and there was rain for a while. On the way home on the train, we got coffee. We had a great trip.

By John

Advocacy group meetings

I am involved in going to advocacy meetings once a month. They are all about public speaking. They tell us about speaking slowly. At present, I am doing a course with Ciana Campbell. She tells me to take deep breaths and to have confidence and take your time when you are talking. Everyone gets their turn to talk individually.

It lasts for two hours and then we have our dinner. I usually have fish, vegetables and mashed potatoes. I don't have a dessert. Afterwards, I enjoy a cup of coffee. When it is over, I go back to my house.

By Martina

Mondello Park

In March, I went to Mondello Park in Naas, Co. Kildare. I went with Richard. Mondello Park is a place where people race cars or get to have a spin in a racing car.

A man named Ken brought me for a drive in a racing car. The car went very fast and there were twists and turns on the road. I felt grand. I didn't feel nervous.

I noticed that there were mechanics around the park to fix any cars that broke down. The mechanics work in the pits – a place beside the race track. Mechanics are trained to fix different brands of cars. I was in a Ford car and there were a couple of Ford mechanics around.

After my drive, I got a certificate. My name is on it. I completed the circuit with Ken – and I would do it all straight away again!

By Seamus

Malaga

I love going to Spain on my holidays. I go with my mam and dad. We stay in the Sol Timor Hotel, Benalmadena. I love the marina and the pool. My favourite part is going to the shows in the Sol Timor Hotel.

By Shauna

Trip to Ballyseedy

I travelled by bus to Ballyseedy Garden Centre in Kerry last Saturday. There were nine of us on the bus. My mam came with me.

We had a barbecue when we got there. It was lovely. I bought a t-shirt and played with the basketball for a while. People played music. We had cake before we left for home at 5 o'clock. We had a lovely day.

By Seán

Latch On

Latch On was started in Australia. It is a literacy and technology programme for people with special needs. This course makes a big difference in our lives. Besides learning, we all became friends in the group.

We do lots of work but also have lots of fun. Our names are: Seán, Shauna, Jill, Martina, Marie, Ciara and Paul. Our class began in September 2012 and will finish in May 2016. Good memories and good laughter!

By Paul

My sister

My sister's name is Ann. Ann lives in London and comes home to visit. I love when my sister visits me. We enjoy a Chinese meal together. We do a lot of talking and catching up. Sometimes we go to the cinema and have a drink and popcorn. We also do some walking together.

We go to Loughrea and visit our mum and spend some time with her. Ann and I are good friends as well as sisters.

By Jill

This beautiful country

I'm from Poland. I live in Kilrush, which is a small town in Ireland. My favourite time of the year is summer. I like this season. The days are longer and warmer. At that time grass is very green. We have less rain fall. In Ireland in the summer there are more sunny days and you can spend time on the beach. You can swim in the ocean and relax. This summer we'll see how beautiful this country is.

By Darek

My Special Olympics in Athens in 2011

I got selected for the Irish Special Olympics team and was part of the athletic team of 12. The team flew out of Ireland on the 21st June 2011. We flew to Rhodes in Greece and spent four days getting used to training in the heat. We took an overnight ferry to Athens and arrived in time for the opening ceremony. This was brilliant with lots of people there, including my family.

My events were the shot put, 100 metre run and the 100 metre relay. I got 2 silver medals and a personal best and everyone was delighted. I was very happy.

Team Ireland took part in the closing ceremony around the stadium with teams from all over the world. We wore our medals and carried Irish flags.

We arrived home on July 5th to a huge reception in Dublin Airport. We travelled home and stopped at my club in Shannon to a great welcome. Waiting for me at home was a big bonfire at the Ballyea/Maurice's Mills roads, which was a surprise. It was organised by my aunt, brother and neighbours. We had a great party with lots of food and drink and took loads of photos.

I will never forget my trip to Athens and was honoured to be selected to represent Ireland in the Special Olympics. I was the only girl from Clare on Team Ireland. The biggest highlight after coming home was to be part of the Irish team invited to meet President McAleese at a reception and have my photo taken with her.

By Cíara

Birthday celebrations

On the 24th of February I celebrated my 60th birthday. I had a great day of pampering and partying. On the morning of my birthday I got my make-up and nails done. That afternoon I had a party in the Old Ground Hotel. All my close friends came to enjoy my day with me. We

had a lovely meal and at the end I got a big surprise when a cake and candles were brought in and everyone sang 'Happy Birthday'.

I thoroughly enjoyed my day and felt very grateful for all the lovely gifts and birthday wishes from friends and family. I especially loved the delivery of flowers from my mammy which I got later in the evening. I also took loads of photographs throughout the day to capture memories with great people.

By Marie

My problem

I had a big problem when I arrived in Ireland.

I had to drive sitting on the right, on the left side of the road. Often, when I went on the wrong side of the road, what scared me was the fact that the roads are opposite to what we are used to in Brazil. The roundabouts also turned in the opposite direction, but now I know the right way is clockwise.

After a while I understood, and today I have no difficulties.

By Sonia

My son's fight

He has trained hard for this fight to come. His hopes are so high, he doesn't want to fail. The first round he did so good winning on points. He did me proud, so he cannot fail to me. One more round to go - he's done his best. Win lose or draw; well done son; you're finished now.

By James

My favourite time of the year

I'm from Morocco. In summertime it is very hot. People go to the beach and swim, and kids play.

In autumn it's not as hot. Kids are getting ready to go back to school. In winter we get a little rain and it is not as busy as summer. In spring the flowers start to grow and it begins to get hot again.

My favourite time of the year is summertime because I can go home and see my family.

By Sana

The flower symbol of Brazil

The Ipê is a tree native to tropical America. It is found in all parts of Brazil. Its name is from the Tupí native Indians, which means 'husky tree'. In 1961, the president Jânio Quadros, declared the Ipê flower the symbol of our country.

The Ipê flowers bloom in the dry, grey days of autumn. When other trees are losing their leaves, the Ipê trees flower. Some trees are white, others are yellow, or pink, or red, or purple or lilac. The colours always catch the attention of everyone. The colours of the flowers produce a very beautiful effect in the canopy of the trees, as well as on the ground.

They form a carpet of flowers contrasting with the grey of the city pavement.

The trees can grow up to 30 metres high. The small-sized varieties of 8 to 10 metres are used as decoration and landscaping.

Ipês were used in the construction of roofs of churches in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The wood is known for its beauty and strength and durability. If not for the Ipê, many old buildings would be lost in time. Today it is still widely used in construction. Some species are also used to make musical instruments

and crafts. The purple Ipê is also used for medicinal purposes, as a diuretic. It is also used to combat infections, some types of cancer, lupus, Parkinson's disease, psoriasis and allergies.

The Ipê is useful and robust, and is one of the most beautiful trees. The flower symbolizes Brazil. The magnificent flowers help to colour wherever they are. The exuberance, purity and delicacy of the flowers make the streets magical.

By Bruna

My goal in life

I am almost 50 years of age and when I left school my reading and writing were very poor. It held me back in life. Some people say school is the best days of your life but not for me. I am not going to go into detail about it because it only brings back bad memories. My goal in life now is to put it all behind me and move on.

I have gone back to education in Ennis on a one to one basis. My tutor is excellent and has brought me a long way over the last 12 months. My confidence is coming back and I am making great progress with the reading, writing and spelling. If I was asked to write something like this 12 months ago, there is no way I would be able. This is how far I have come in a short space of time.

The only thing I am sorry about is that I didn't make the phone call to the adult education centre a few years ago. All the staff at the education centre are brilliant and it is all private and confidential. They make it very easy for people that go there. Every Tuesday night I look forward to class and learning something new.

By Seamie

My special place

We went to the canal, fishing, one summers evening. We caught some fish. There are lots of trout and salmon in the canal. You have to be very careful because of the slime on the side of the bank or you could slip into the water.

By John

Horse fairs

My name is Tommy. I live in Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare. I love horses and ponies. There is a lot of hard work in keeping horses. I like to go to horse fairs. Sometimes I buy and sell horses and ponies. On the 25th March 2016, I went to Westport, Co. Mayo and came home with 3 Falabellas. They were 2 mares and a colt.

By Tommy

Trust

Harry was a 15 year old boy. He was into boxing but had to work hard to keep his weight down. One day he was having a run in the woods. As he was running he heard a noise in the bushes. He went to see what was making the noise. There stood a trembling hungry horse with its ribcage and back bone showing.

When Harry looked into the horse's eyes he could see the look of helplessness. Harry rang Jack to come up with the Jeep and box to take the horse away. Jack was an old farmer that Harry helped out from time to time. When Harry brought the horse into the stable he put some straw down. She stood at the back of the stable shaking, tired and hungry. Harry put a blanket on her and put some oats and water in with her. Harry was so happy to see her warm and eating again, so he let her be for the night.

The next morning when Harry went to feed the horse, Jack was there. He was looking her up and down and said, 'She has the makings of a fine horse, but she needs a vet.' Jack then told Harry that he had

called his local vet to come after lunch. When the vet came, he dosed her for worms and nourishment and said she will be fine in a few days. After the vet left, Harry fed her and mucked out the stable. When he was finished he went to groom her but she went to the back of the stable and would not let him. Jack saw what Harry was trying to do. He told him, 'She'll be like that until she gains your trust and from the way she was so badly treated, it will take time.'

So the days went by and Harry kept feeding her. He was getting closer and closer to getting her trust and by the fourth day she let Harry rub her head. By the seventh day Harry was grooming her. Harry felt great that she trusted him. She put a smile on Harry's face. As the days went by she was getting stronger and livelier, so Harry let her out into the paddock to run around. When Harry let her out he could see the look of happiness in her eyes. Jack came out to see her run around. He was happy too. He said, 'Harry, you've got to name her.' As Harry looked at her, she was jumping around and it was a nice hot day. So Harry decided to call to her Daisy. Jack said, 'Daisy it is.'

As the days and weeks went by Daisy was getting better. She turned out to be a very nice tall mare. But Harry had put as much time as he could into her. One day Jack's friend, John, who kept a lot of horses, came to see Jack. As he was talking and walking around he saw the mare in the field. He said, 'That's a nice horse. Is she for sale?' 'No,' said Jack, 'She belongs to Harry.' As time went by it was getting more difficult for Harry to look after Daisy, so Jack suggested he ring John to see would he buy Daisy. Harry decided to sell Daisy to John.

Six months later, Jack rang Harry to say that Daisy was entered in the maiden hurdle in Galway. 'That's perfect,' said Harry, 'We'll have to go. I wonder will she win?'

By Michael

Art is important

I think art is important because we can choose our favourite colours.

By Souad

Philippines cuisine

Our food has evolved over centuries from our Malay-Polynesian origin to a varied cuisine with many cultural influences, due to many Latin-American and Spanish dishes brought to our country during the Spanish Colonial period. Our food has also been influenced by Chinese, American and other Asian countries. Although many ingredients have been added from centuries of foreign influence, surprisingly a very distinctive blend of its own has emerged.

In the city of Manila, where I come from, this mixture is most evident. But away from the capital city you can still sample dishes that our native Filipino people eat. Many of these foods are very close to native fare still found in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and other Asian countries.

When the Americans defeated the Spaniards in our country they introduced a little American cuisine. Although they didn't have much influence, they certainly changed the way we dined. They introduced fast food chains and canned goods which are still available everywhere.

We eat three times a day, breakfast, lunch, dinner plus an additional meal in the afternoon which is called 'meryenda' or snack. We cultivate hundreds of varieties of rice which is our staple food. Coconut milk or 'gata' is often used as an ingredient in popular dishes. Most of our food originated from Spain. They introduced tomatoes, garlic and also the cooking method of sautéing using olive oil.

Our cooking is not too spicy despite plentiful spices. Due to our vast coastline we have an abundance of excellent seafood. Meat, especially pork and poultry, is commonly eaten. Veal and lamb is not too popular but goat's meat is considered a delicacy in some parts of our country. Beef is readily available but is very expensive. We prepare food by boiling, steaming, roasting and sautéing.

The most famous dish is 'Lechon' (roast pig). This is an important dish at many special occasions. It is a suckling pig slowly roasted over live charcoals to make it crispy and tasty, often served with thick liver sauce, simmered with vinegar, sugar and herbs.

Philippines cuisine continues to evolve as new techniques and styles of cooking find their way into one of the most active melting pots in Asia.

Lumpia or fresh spring rolls

Ingredients:

2 tbsp. cooking oil	1 cup of sliced green beans
2 cloves of garlic	1 cup of cabbage, shredded
1 small onion, chopped	2 tsps. salt
500gms. minced pork or turkey	lettuce leaves, coriander leaves
½ cup shrimps, chopped	1 cup cooked chick peas
1 cup potato, julienne	1 cup carrots, julienne
1 cup roasted peanuts, crushed.	
spring roll wrappers (available in Asian Supermarket)	

Method:

- Brown garlic in hot cooking oil. Add chopped onions and cook slowly until soft.
- Add minced pork or turkey. Stir whilst cooking.
- Add shrimps and chickpeas. Simmer for about 5 minutes.
- Add the carrots, green beans and potato. Cook until nearly done.
- Then add the cabbage and cook completely.
- Drain but keep liquid for sauce and season to taste. Cool the ingredients.
- Wrap in spring roll wrappers lined with lettuce leaves and coriander. Sprinkle with peanuts and serve with brown sauce or 'Paalat'.

Home-made spring roll wrapper

Ingredients:

2 duck eggs,
½ cup cornstarch mixed in one cup of water.

Method:

- Separate the egg yolks from egg whites.
- Beat egg whites till frothy. Add egg yolks and beat to blend.
- Mix in the cornstarch in water.
- Brush a frying pan with oil and heat.
- Spoon about 2 tbsp. batter and then spread evenly in the pan.

- Cook the wrapper and lift when done.

Brown sauce or 'Paalat'

Ingredients:

½ cup brown sugar	2 tbsp. soy sauce
2 cups of liquid from cooked meat (or stock)	1 tsp. salt
2 tbsp. cornstarch in ¼ cup water	4-6 cloves of garlic (optional)

Method:

- Blend the first four ingredients together. Bring to the boil.
- Thicken with cornstarch, sprinkle with garlic (optional) and serve.

By Emyh

My dogs

Sandy and Monty are my two Jack Russell dogs. We have had Sandy for 12 years now and Monty for about three years. They both have their own personality. Sandy is very quiet and loves to watch television and he loves to go for a walk on the beach. Monty is a very hyper dog. He can play all day long and he loves nothing better than chasing birds and the postman!

My girls love them both and can't wait to give them hugs and kisses every time they come home. It's the one thing the dogs can't get from me as I still find it a bit freaky giving kisses to a dog or any sort of animal.

Having the dogs is like having two little kids in the house. But I must say they are the best guardians and companions I ever had. They really helped me through my loneliest days, especially after my husband died and the children left home for college. Having them is like having kids and a husband all in one loveable, playful, caring and stubborn being!

By Melanie

My holiday in London

My holiday in London was very enjoyable and also very educational as I visited many famous places. I visited the Natural History Museum and the British Museum. I got to see lots of extinct animals such as the dinosaurs that roamed the Earth. I learned a lot about our solar system, earthquakes and volcanoes.

I also really enjoyed going to Westfields shopping mall in Shepherd's Bush. It had hundreds of shops with all the glamorous brands and I loved seeing all the beautiful clothes with famous designer names. We went to Stamford Bridge, which was beside the Olympic Village. We went there because my boys are big into soccer. It was beautiful there at night as it was all lit up. The shopping centres and cafés make it very convenient and it felt very safe walking there at night. The highlight was the basketball match we watched as the teams were very good and my family got really good seats. We really enjoyed the evening.

The weather was really good for our trip and we took lots of photos as it was the first time we had been to London. I really enjoyed our short trip away but I was very happy to be back home safe with all my family.

By Teresa

Making new friends

I live in the village of Doonbeg which is near to Kilrush. There are lovely walks in the village and a beautiful lake where you can rent paddle boats in the summer. There are some lovely beaches nearby and there is a very well-known golf course that was recently bought by Donald Trump who is running for president in America.

I have school going children and when they were both in school, I stayed at home with them. But now my youngest daughter is in secondary school, I have been thinking of what I could do to pass the time and to help me get a job.

I decided to go to the Adult Education Centre to go back to studying last year. I did a computer course first and now I am doing communications, and food and cookery as well. We learn many things in class and I am very happy. The best thing is that I have met a lot of new friends whom I like to go and meet in the class. We have also started socialising together outside of class and we always have a really good time. We recently had a night out to celebrate the birthdays of two of the girls. We share many things and we talk about our lives and experiences. When I come home I feel very happy that I have been with my friends, and my family are happy that I have made new friends.

By Patricia

My dog Buster

My dog is called Buster. He is a King Charles terrier and he is six, nearly seven years old. We have had him since he was a tiny pup.

He is so cute and gentle and a part of our family. When one of my children is sick he likes to curl up at their feet and mind them. He loves going for walks and playing with the kids outside our house. He is so loved by all the family.

By Catherine

Shopping days

When I was sixteen and seventeen I loved to go shopping. I would go after work on Saturday. I got a bus from work to Brent Cross Shopping Centre. I liked shopping for clothes. I don't go shopping for clothes as much now that I am older.

By Geraldine

My new house

I have moved into a new house a few weeks ago. It has three bedrooms but I don't share with anyone anymore because I want to live on my own.

The house is quite big and it has a lovely turf stove in the living room and another one in the kitchen so it is very warm. My mother will give me the turf from our home place. The kitchen is big with an electric cooker, microwave and washing machine but no dishwasher. I don't need a dishwasher because there is only me to cook for.

The living room is very nice too and I've got a big television that I brought up from my old house. There is a nice garden and I will bring my hens up from the community garden once I have it sorted. I don't know if the hens will like their new home but I like my new home!

By John

My mum

When I was a little girl my mum used to take me out once a month. We would go to the zoo, circus or funfair and we would spend this special time together eating ice-cream and having fun. We were very happy and really enjoyed this time we spent together.

My mum got sick when I was 18 years old and already we could not repeat those moments. I had a wonderful mum, thanks to which I have amazing memories. Thank you Mum, you were a truly wonderful person and I will always love you.

By Natalia

Going to a concert

I went to see Seán Keane in concert in the hall in Lahinch. I really like him because he is such a good singer.

He sang many of his old songs but my favourite is 'Paint me a picture'. I also like 'Tears in my eyes', which is a sad song. He usually sings by himself but sometimes his sister sings with him. He lives in Co. Galway with his daughter but his wife passed away a few years ago. I have been to see him a few times in concert. I went in January for my birthday and he sang 'Happy Birthday' to me. We went to meet him after the concert and he was really nice and wrote a lovely message for me on the cover of my DVD.

I like to play Seán's CDs and music at home because it makes me feel relaxed. It's not sad music but it's gentle and makes me feel good. I also like to listen to Patrick Roche and Nathan Carter. They play songs like 'Rock me mamma', which is nice and jolly. I really like dancing to songs like that and we always have a good time when we go and watch Patrick Roche. He comes to all our parties.

By Breda

My work experience

I have just started to do some work experience in the West County Hotel in Ennis on Thursdays. My key worker takes me up from Kilrush and I start work at 10:00 a.m.

My job is to keep the kitchen clean and tidy so I start by putting all the ware from breakfast into the dishwasher. I wash down the sink and drainers using the flexi-hose and I make sure it's spotless by using a clean cloth and washing up liquid. Then I take the cutlery – knives, forks and spoons to the dining room so that the waitress can set the tables. I have to wear a clean, blue apron when I am doing this.

When the tables are cleared I put the ware into the dishwasher but Michael, the other worker there, helps me to do this. The trays are very heavy so I can't lift them by myself. Once the dishwasher has finished I

empty it but I have to be careful because the plates are hot. I put the plates into the presses and the glasses onto the trays, upside down.

When I am finished I get a cup of tea and a bun. I love working there because they are all very nice. The hotel is very busy, especially in the holidays and there are many people coming in and out with their suitcases. It must be a nice place to stay for a holiday but it's a lovely place to work.

By Christine

Going to a wedding

I am going to a wedding in Kinnegad soon with my mum and her sister, Teresa. I think it is a friend of my mum who is getting married but another one of my aunts is a bridesmaid.

It will be a church wedding so I had to buy a dress for the day. My sister, Caroline, bought it for me in England because she lives there. It is a blue colour and it looks really nice, I'm really happy with it. My mum is going to wear a blue and yellow dress too but she didn't have to buy a new one because she had one that she wore to a wedding before.

We are going to drive up and then stay in Kinnegad in a hotel for the night. After the wedding there will be a lot of photos taken of the bride and the groom. Then we will go to the reception where they will have a big dinner, lots of drink and a cake that they will have to cut. There will be a band and lots of music and dancing. When the bride is leaving she will throw her bouquet in the air. I hope I don't catch it because then I'll have to get married next!

I like going to weddings because it's good fun and everyone is happy. I hope it will be a lovely sunny day for them.

By Annmarie

On one fine day

When one morning I woke up, it was a beautiful day. The sun was shining bright and the birds were chirping. We decided we would go for a lovely nature walk. It was a nice bright day out in the forest. We had packed a picnic so when we got to the lake we sat down and enjoyed our picnic. When we walked back to the car we decided we would take our travels to the seaside.

When we got there, the sun was beaming off the water. It was such a beautiful sight. We picked periwinkles and clams. The children made sand castles and went catching crabs, flatfish and jellyfish. They had a most splendid day. We all treated ourselves to a lovely ice-cream cone and a flake.

As we were getting ready to leave the seaside the day got even better. A jeep with 2 horses in a horse box drove onto the beach. The horses were beautiful and snow white. The owner kindly offered to take the kids for a ride on the beach. They were so excited. It was getting late and the tide was coming in so it was time to pack up and head home. On our way home we were all starving from the beautiful sea air and we pulled in to the chipper and got a lovely bite to eat. With our bellies full we gave the kids their drinks, belted them in securely in their seats and off we went off home.

When we got back to town we treated the kids to a DVD. After we got home, emptied the car, we got the kids changed and we all sat down, relaxed and watched the DVD with popcorn and goodies. Then we went to bed. What a wonderful day to remember.

By Joseph

My best friend

I have a best friend. Her name is Aoife. We met each other at St. Anne's school when we were in our teens. Aoife and I would do everything together. We liked going to the movies, hanging out in town, getting something to eat and chilling out at the park as well. We would celebrate our birthdays together, have a few drinks and get

something to eat after. Aoife is the greatest friend I could ever ask for. I would be lost without her. We also go places together, like Limerick, Cork and Galway. It's fun going somewhere different with my best friend Aoife.

By Tracy

Effectiveness for charity

The Personal Effectiveness Level 3 ITABE Group ran a Traditional Irish Music Cake Sale and Raffle before Christmas.

At the first meeting all students discussed what jobs needed to be done and each individual took on a role and was responsible for getting sponsorship of cakes and raffle prizes. There was enormous goodwill and support from the local businesses in the community, which was greatly appreciated.

On the day of the event, all students arrived at the centre at 8:30 a.m., so that they would have plenty of time to organise themselves. All students helped to bring in the spots prizes, cakes and buns that had been donated. Tables were organised, buns and cakes were cut and displayed and raffle tickets and floats were put together.

Once break time came there was great buzz in the canteen area as students got their buns, cups of tea and bought raffle tickets for the wonderful spot prizes; vouchers for dinner and beauty salons and plenty of gift bags.

On the day, the event was supported by Mr. Des Leahy from St. Vincent de Paul and was a massive success, raising €478.76.

Afterwards, each student reflected on their participation in the event and it was felt that everyone's self-confidence, self-esteem, teamwork, communication and people skills had being enhanced by this experience.

By Joan, Colm & Padraig

Back to education

I was in and out of school all my life. Going to work and back to school again, I didn't get much of an education. I found it hard to read and write up through the years. Now I am back to education again, I can start to see an improvement in my reading and writing skills. I hope next year my literacy will be better and I will get an education qualification.

By Danny

Bingo

My name is Tina and I live in Ennis. I am 36 years old and I have been going to bingo for about 28 or 29 years now. Sometimes I win money. You can also win a car or holidays. At the time I was growing up, we were not allowed to go to pubs or nightclubs so all you were allowed to do was go to bingo or the cinema. Sometimes when you go to bingo you would hear someone say 'Check,' at the wrong time. Then you would hear someone say, 'Get a pillow and go back to sleep,' and all the people in the bingo hall would laugh.

By Tina

A bad day in my life

One Thursday afternoon my friends and I were playing a football match in my district in Mogadishu. We came to the stadium and the match started. I scored a goal. After 15 minutes a car drove into the stadium and threw shells towards the government buildings.

Five minutes later my brother came to watch the match. We didn't hear when the car threw the shells, because everybody was interested in the match. The pro-government forces answered the shells that the Al-Shabaab militants were throwing. One of the shells damaged the gate of the stadium, and then we stopped the match. Another shell came into the next gate of the stadium and near the stadium.

My brother and I were running out of the stadium. Everybody was running. Another shell came in front of us and killed many of my friends. I tried to get my brother, but I couldn't find him. Some people were hiding to save their lives. I lost my brother because when the shell was in front of us we were shocked. We couldn't see each other. The pro-government troops were throwing shells every two minutes. At last I came home and my brother had already come home. That was the worst day in my life.

By Cabdulaahi

Warm plums

I come from a small country called Bosnia Herzegovina. My family is a typical farming family growing many different kinds of fruit such as raspberries, blackberries and, most of all, plums. All of our land is on a mountain side. The mountain side is the best place for growing plums. My grandfather had, by his own hands, planted all three hundred trees and it was something he was very proud of.

One year, maybe twenty five years ago, all the farmers had a big problem with bears. These bears are herbivores and they especially love ripe plums. Everyone was trying to chase these bears away in many different ways, but they always came back into the orchards. For some unknown reason the bears did not often come to our orchard. One night my grandfather made a big fire in the middle of our orchard to make sure the bears would not attack the trees. That night the bears ate half of all the plums in our orchard. My grandfather told me that he made the fire to welcome the bears and so that they could get warm before they had the plums.

By Bozica

Childhood in Brazil

This is a story about my childhood in Brazil. When I was about three years old my father bought a farm and we lived there for about five years. We had a wonderful time there because my father used to grow so many types of fruit: bananas, pineapples, mangoes, avocados, coconuts and lots more. He also grew vegetables, everything organic, never using chemicals. We also had horses, cattle, pigs, chickens and ducks, so we didn't have to buy much stuff in the supermarket because we had everything we needed from the farm: milk, eggs, rice, beans and corn. My mother also used to catch fish in the river so we had everything fresh. She also used to make cheese, bread and other wonderful food. It was a marvellous time for us.

By Nellitta

Life on a Polish farm

I grew up on a farm in the north of Poland. We had about ninety pigs, three cows and one hundred chickens. My father was also a beekeeper as well. He had ten hives full of bees. We had many dogs and about ten cats. There was a lot of work on the farm but we also had a lot of free time. We used to make houses from straw and invent all kinds of games. I loved my childhood on the farm.

One thing I always remember was when we used to go into our neighbour's farm when he was not there. We did this because he had many sheep and a very fine ram. Our game was to get up on the ram's back and ride round the field. The thing was to always get off near the fence so that we could get out before the ram could catch us or before the neighbour came back. It was our favourite game ever. If we came off the ram away from the fence he would run at us and try to puck us before we went under the fence. One day he did catch up with me and I had a pain in my backside for a week.

By Marie

Delightful or disgusting?

I come from Thailand. Our country is known as 'The Land of Smiles' because our people are very friendly and smile all the time. When I was young I lived with my parents in the countryside on a farm. We grew many different crops like coffee and vegetables. I would like to tell you about one thing we grew which is loved by all Thai people. It is called 'Durian' and is known as the king of fruit. People who come to Thailand from the West are for some reason disgusted by the smell of this vegetable. They almost faint when they smell it. But the thing is I think cheese smells like socks you have worn for a week. In July – September we had all the fruit from the farm. I loved to climb up the tree and eat the fruit from the tree. That brings back my memories.

By Lek

Growing up in Hungary

I grew up in Hungary, spending a lot of time with my grandparents. They lived in a small village in the countryside. I spent many hours enjoying the fresh air and I often ate vegetables from the ground, sometimes without washing them and I was never sick for a day. I climbed trees and ate the fruit as I sat on a branch. I feel sad nowadays when I see kids who all day sit in their rooms and play computer games. They are usually overweight and often not in good health. My childhood was real. We did things in the real world. Today kids never know what real fresh vegetables from the ground taste like and they will never pick an apple from the tree and eat it.

By Gabriela

My childhood in Spain

I still remember the days of my childhood in Spain. I think when you are a child your life is easier because your parents are taking care of you and paying you a lot of attention. My parents were my heroes. I have a sister smaller than me. She is only eighteen months younger than me. She looked so like me that people thought we were twins.

My mother put the same clothes on us, only sometimes of a different colour. My sister sometimes behaved in a way my mother did not like. She was always breaking the toys and she stole little things. I liked going to school in the mornings because I was always learning about new things. My favourite subjects were language and literature. I started to study English when I was five and I loved it from the beginning.

By Susanna

Memories of Poland

I come from a small village in the Polish countryside. The village is near a river and a lake and all around there is a large forest. In the valley there are meadows and all around there are animals. My parents had a farm, and after school and when I had done my homework my job was to look after the sheep. Every day before school I brought our sheep to a large meadow. I had a dog who helped me take care of the sheep. Many of my friends from school did the same and then we would play football or volleyball. This was a wonderful time for me as I have always loved nature and the countryside. At that time we were so innocent. I remember those days and it always makes me happy.

By Barbara

Life in general in West Clare 1916-1920

The people in West Clare, like most of Ireland, were opposed to the British Rule in Ireland. While the Rising in Dublin in 1916 was widely reported there was very little anti-government activity in the community at large. There were many ambushes of the British authorities. An ambush at Cooraclare where police were being transferred to Knock led to the death of a young volunteer. A young man who was filling in a road which had been cut to impede the

movements of soldiers was also shot dead. A big ambush of military at Rineen near Miltown Malbay resulted in the death of people.

While there was unrest, the people generally went about their business. Children went to school, cows were milked and fairs were held throughout the county. Cattle fair day was held in Cooraclare on the 5th of March and Doonbeg was on the 16th of December and the horse fair was on the 25th of March in Kilrush. Football matches were played and life went on as usual at that time.

By Mary

Community Memorial Hall in Athea

Con Colbert, the youngest man to be executed by the British army after the 1916 Rising, was born in Athea, Co. Limerick. Here also I was born and grew up. I knew his cousins.

In one of the first ceremonies to be held to mark the centenary of the 1916 Rising a memorial stone was erected in Athea. When I was young a Community Memorial Hall was erected in memory of Con Colbert and the hall has been used on a daily basis ever since.

By Joan

My ambitions

My name is Adam but my friends called me Jamciy. I come from Sudan. When I was younger there was a war in my country so we had to leave. I was seven when I went to live in Chad with my mother. I went to live with my grandmother in a refugee camp in Chad. There were about 7,000 Sudanese people living in the camp. The people were very nice but they were sad about leaving their country. Many people had lost their family in the war.

I had lots of friends in the camp, and we also went to school together. We had classes from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. I stayed in the camp for ten years. My father was living in Ireland at the time.

I went to the airport with my mother and my friends went to the airport too. They helped me with my cases. It was early. We waited at the check-in. I hugged my mother goodbye. My mother cried. My friends were sad too. They wanted to come with me. I felt sad because I said goodbye to my family and my friends. I miss them.

In the plane, I was a little excited but also worried because it was my first time. When we landed at Heathrow it was raining. I felt cold because I did not dress for the weather. I was confused at the airport because I could not speak any English. At three o'clock we arrived in Dublin Airport. Then I was happy to see my father and his friend. I was so excited about my new country - Ireland. I'm living in Ennis with my parents, and I have made lots of friends here.

I am generally a happy person now. I am a student at the Adult Education Centre in Ennis. I enjoy reading history and English books. School is very important to me. I like sports. I often play soccer, snooker, skateboarding and ride my BMX bike. I hope to go to university. It's my ambition to be a doctor.

By Adam

Corofin on Easter Sunday 1916

On Sunday 24th April, Easter Sunday 1916, a large crowd gathered outside the Clare Heritage Centre in Corofin, Co. Clare to commemorate and salute the local members of Óglaigh na hÉireann who mobilised at Inchiquin and Whitemount. This was one of the many formations of the Clare volunteers that took place on a county-wide basis. The North Clare battalion was commanded by Bertie Hunt of Corofin and John Minihan who served as section leader. The intended target was the R.I.C. barracks in Corofin but the order to destroy it was countermanded by Eoin Mac Neill. Many of the Corofin insurgents were later arrested for their involvement in the 1916 Rising in Clare. Many of the volunteers went on to play a prominent part in the War of Independence. John Minihan was a special intelligence officer and later adjutant of the 3rd battalion, Mid-Clare Brigade on the Anti-Treaty side. His brother in law, Denis O'Loughlin, who was by his side at Easter 1916, was now on the Pro-Treaty side. Two of John's sisters, Helen and

Changing colour in summer

My country has very nice weather in the summertime. People go to swim in the Baltic Sea. Last year in August it was 35 degrees in Latvia, where I'm from. I went to the beach to relax. I like to relax.

Some people like to change the colour of their bodies in the sun. In the summer I often sunbathe but my body becomes red.

By Vītolds

Look at the sky

Look at the sky
see what it does
it changes the weather
sometimes bad, sometimes good

but look at the sky
what do you see?
do you see a picture
in the clouds just over the trees?

oh what a picture
all smiles and fun
like the clouds
are waving to say look at us

but the clouds will pass
and so will my worries
I will be happy and relaxed
and won't be in a hurry

look at the sky

By Mary

The Pearl of the Orient

I am from the south-east Asian country called Malaysia.

Malaysia is a tropical country. The population is made up of Malays, Chinese, Indian, Peranakans, Kadazan, and Ibans. They are the largest ethnic groups in Asia, and have lived together for generations. Mostly, Malaysians can speak more than three languages. The national languages in Malaysia are Bahasa Malay, English, Tamil, Chinese (with different dialects: Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Hakka and Hainan), and other languages spoken by the different ethnic groups.

I lived in Georgetown. It is the capital city of Penang, which is a state located on the north-west coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Penang was founded by the British in 1786.

Penang is known as 'The Pearl of the Orient'. A lot of foreign tourists love to come here to visit and holiday. They come to relax and soak up the sun, and go snorkelling. The weather is quite hot and humid for the whole year. There is a bit of rain throughout the year, with especially heavy rain in September and October. It is best to avoid the monsoon season from November to March.

The streets of Penang city are well-known as a food paradise. These local street foods in Penang are very famous: Char Koay Teow, Laksa, Mee Goreng, Nasi Campur, Hokkien Mee, Nasi Lemak, Penang Rojak, Penang Chendol, Ais Kacang, Dim Sum, Curry Mee, Lok-Lok, and Oyster Omelette.

The street foods are a combination of flavours from different ethnic groups. They are sweet, sour, spicy and hot. When travelling to Penang, there are a few foods a visitor must try. There is no more famous dish than Char Koay Teow. Char Koay Teow is fried flat rice noodles. It is stir-fried in a charcoal-fired wok with flat rice noodles, bean sprouts, shrimp, scrambled eggs, Chinese sausage, clam, and pork lard, with dark soya sauce and chilli paste. Charcoal and pork lard are the main things that bring out the flavour.

Asam Laksa is one of Penang's signature dishes. It has a spicy and sour taste. The spicy soup is cooked from mackerel fish and tamarind juice. It is served with rice noodles, cucumber, red onion, shrimp paste,

lettuce, bird eyes chillies, pineapples and mint leaves. This dish is very popular and is a traditional Peranakan or Nyonya cuisine. It is a combination of Malay and Chinese ethnic traditions.

Another dish that visitors must try is called Rojak. It is a fruit and vegetable salad with a dark and sticky sauce, and garnished with chopped peanuts. The salad ingredients are cucumber, guava, mango, Chinese turnips, pineapples, cutter fish, bean curd and fried dough. The dressing is made from shrimp paste, chilli paste, sugar and lime. The salad may not look very good at first, but its taste is so amazing. It is a delicious mix of sweet and savoury flavours.

Eating by the roadside stalls and hawker stalls is an experience tourists must try.

By Cassbie

Travel

Travelling is great,
by bus or by plane,
to Ennis or France
I will go again.

Lourdes is hot
and the hotels are good,
but things there are dear,
even the food.

Wherever I go,
I go there with friends
and we sit for a while
until our day ends.

By Geraldine

Four seasons in Lublin, Poland

In my home town in Poland the seasons are very different.

The beginning of autumn is beautiful. Leaves on the trees sparkle with colours (gold, yellow, red, violet, and many more). Late autumn is already much cooler and rainy. Days are short. It's windy, wet and cold. This is not my favourite time.

In winter it is very cold. The temperature often drops to minus 20, or minus 25 Celsius. There is a lot of snow. I don't like winter. All around, it is white and grey, just boring. But sometimes, when everything is covered with snow and it is a very nice, sunny day, then it is really beautiful.

In spring nature comes back to life. The world becomes colourful again. Days are longer and warmer and there is more sunshine.

Summer is very hot. The temperature often reaches over 30 degrees. It is really nice. There is blue sky, sun, all shades of green and colourful flowers. In the summer many people spend time on the lake or go outside the city for the weekends. During this period a lot of visitors come to the town. I love summer. This is my favourite season.

By Agnieszka

Forgiveness

I was 8 years old, but it was only 30 years later that I forgave her. It started with a phone call. I'm not sure why, but maybe it is because we talked a lot before she died. We kind of closed a few chapters between us. There is power in talking.

By Michael

Learning to paint a memory

It was fifty years ago when I first saw the Poul nabrone Dolmen on the Burren in County Clare. I was driving with my parents through the incredible scenery full of limestone pavements, amazing plants and fascinatingly shaped mountains. It was a very cold blustery day in early April with frequent sleet showers and as we drove along I caught sight of those remarkable stones.

We parked on the side of the road (there was no car park in those days) and it was raining hard. My step-father chose to stay in the car, which pleased me because he had not the understanding of or interest in geography or history as my mother and I had.

We climbed over a wall and as we jumped from one stone to the next, I looked up at the dolmen and was struck by the size of it. Clouds skidded across the sky and then the shaft of the sun shone like a spotlight on the stones of Poul nabrone. I was struck by the solidity of the stone, the fluidity of the sky and grasses blown by the wind and we stood there marvelling at this ancient monument. Sleet came down again and my mother and I looked at each other and, observing that there was no one else around, we moved into the Dolmen out of the biting wind. In the dry, sitting down with our backs against stones we smelt the rocks and damp earth around us. We were both aware of the great weight of history that was in and around this place and wondered at what those stones had witnessed through the centuries and what stories they could tell if they could talk.

Years later I discovered that Poul nabrone had been used right up to the sixteenth century as a gathering place for law-giving by the local Brehon. Nowadays, it is a tourist attraction with thousands of people visiting it every year.

For my QQI Art portfolio I wanted to capture the stones standing so solidly with the sunlight playing across them and the movement of the sky and the grasses above and below them, just as I had first seen them. To get the proportions and angles correct, I used a cutting from the local paper and made a grid to transfer it onto my canvas. Even then it was not easy to get it right. I completed the project using other photographs, my imagination and of course the memory of that day at the Dolmen with my mother.

I remembered all those years ago sitting inside the Dolmen and saying how I would love to paint it. Like all wise mothers, my mother nodded. We both knew I wasn't artistic. Fifty years later I have learned to paint a memory.

By Monica

A visit to Bohnia Salt Mines

Location: Poland 40km away from Krakow in Bohnia.

I would like to tell you a story about the wonders of a place I once visited with my family. It is a salt mine called Bohnia. I was there in 2012 and it was really beautiful. Outside the mine there is a village that shows how people lived in Poland around the first century. You can go visit it and even go into the huts where people lived and see the tools they used. There is a guide who tells you all about what you can see there. Afterwards you can go into the salt mine which is underground. In the mine there is also a guide who shows you around. You can travel along underground streams in boats. There are projections on the mine walls showing how people mined at that time and they look extremely realistic! You can also go on a cart that takes you into the depths of the mine. It is truly a wonderful place and well worth seeing.

By Nati

The Hurling League Final

I went to the league final on Sunday. It was a great day out. It was a tough match and the Clare lads done well to beat Waterford. It was very exciting, as they won the match with the last puck of the game. The final score was Clare 1-23 to 2-19. The last time they won it was 1978.

By John

A sound like thunder

Last year I went to the cinema. I had a very good seat, but the young man and some young women who were sitting behind me were talking loudly. After one hour when I was going home, I heard a sound like thunder. Then my mother called me and I said, 'Mom, I heard a sound like thunder. What was it?' My mother told me that it was a land mine that was exploded by the militant group called 'Al-Shabaab'. I told my mom I would come home as soon as possible. That was a bad day in my life.

By Cabdiraxiín

My favourite shop

My favourite shop is called Hamar Wayne market. It's in the Banadir region, in east Mogadishu. It's next to Somali Market, and it sells all kinds of food from Somalia, Djibouti and many other countries in the Far East. This market sells all human needs such as food, clothes, shoes, furniture, spare parts, gold and second hand goods – especially phones, televisions and gold.

The reason I like it is because goods from this market are very cheap, especially clothes and vegetables. It is open all days of the week from 8 o'clock in the morning until 7 o'clock at night. The best time to go is on a Thursday afternoon, when the shop is usually very quiet. The people there are very friendly and they always try to help you find what you want.

By Koowsar

A photo exhibition by John Kelly

On the 18th of November a group of us and our instructor, Amanda, left from the Education Centre at 11:00 a.m. and went to Glór for a photo exhibition by John Kelly. We saw a lot of photos, real-life photos. As I liked this picture the most I chose to write about it. It was called *Cruinnú na mBád*. The picture was lovely and spoke out for itself. The sail boats were beautiful and they were called the Galway Hookers. They were used for transporting turf. In the photo two people were sitting on the wall watching the sail boats go by. The sails on the boats were red and the two people had red clothing, which was lovely. Also the river was so calm and steady. It was peaceful to look at and see the relaxation in this picture. The picture represented a festival in Kinvara, County Galway.

What I expected to see was at least 16 pictures. There were a lot more than I thought. Also they were different, real-life pictures.

The saddest picture for me was *Highway to Heaven*. This picture spoke out for itself. It showed an old horse and cart carrying a coffin. It was a woman going on her last journey with her husband. As she sat on the cart with her arms on the coffin, the family walked behind. It showed a real old Irish tradition and it is still in a lot of cultures.

The funniest picture for me was the *Rock Concert*. I first thought it was a walking tour in the Burren. The setting of the picture was really lovely and the scenery spoke for itself. I thought it was a walking tour because of the way it was set. The group was scattered all around from the bottom to the top. It turned out it was a choir. To me it was funny in a way because a group like a choir always have a uniform, the same colour for everyone but this group had their own clothes, which was lovely. The picture stood out to me for the fact that the people were themselves and I didn't recognise them as a choir. They were faced with their backs out so you could not see their faces. Usually, the first thing you always see is the choir with their faces out front.

Overall I enjoyed the photo exhibition. It was real life.

By Claire

A bad journey

I had a bad day in 2008. I can't forget it. I jumped out of the window of my room. My brothers and sisters saw me and I said to them, 'Don't tell my mother.'

It was 6:40 a.m. and I hadn't had breakfast. I started my journey to Mogadishu. My family had moved to the peaceful town of Warsheikh because of the civil war. All families had to evacuate Mogadishu in Somalia because it was too dangerous.

The sun was very hot and I didn't have any water. I was walking nearly 30 kilometres without any food and water. Fortunately, I saw a fisherman and I asked him for water and then I continued my journey. I walked four more kilometres and I reached a small city called Ceel Macaan, which means 'the sweet well city'. Fortunately, to my big surprise, my great grandmother, my aunt and my uncle were there and they saw me. They were returning to Mogadishu.

Unfortunately, my teacher was travelling with them. I got scared because I thought he was going to beat me. He said that he had to return me to my family in Warsheikh.

My great grandmother said to let me follow them, but my teacher refused. My great grandmother obeyed his suggestions and we changed our direction and we continued the journey together back to Warsheikh.

My teacher brought me into a restaurant. First he ordered a cup of tea for me. I drank very quickly. The tea was burning hot, but I drank it. The manager was surprised how thirsty I was. Then we ate spaghetti. We finished our meals. After that we looked for a car travelling in our direction. We got one and we went back to my home in Warsheikh. I did not talk to anyone. I went to bed and fell asleep.

The next morning my family asked me why I had gone on that journey. Then I answered that I just missed our home in Mogadishu.

By Cabdiraxmaan

Suuq Bacaad

My favourite shop is called Suuq Bacaad. It's in Yaqshid, in West Mogadishu. It sells all kinds of food and utensils. The shop is open seven days every week from seven o'clock in the morning until six o'clock in the evening. The best time to go is on a Friday afternoon.

The people there are always very friendly and they always try to help you find what you want. The reason I like it is because I love fruit, especially mangos.

By Hasan

My learning experience

I enjoy learning new skills at Ennis LCETB. I've been here since September 2014. I attend English classes every Wednesday. In my class there are twenty people. We read stories, discuss them and complete exercises. I hope to build my confidence and find a lovely job.

By MJ

Holidays in Spain

In 2008 my family and I went on holiday to Spain. We went to a place called Santa Ponza. It was really enjoyable. We went to theme parks and water parks over there. The weather was so hot we spent most of the day under shelter, but at night we would all go out to the pubs and have great fun. It's a place I would recommend to anyone to go for a holiday. When we were going home the sun was splitting the rocks. When we arrived back in Shannon airport the rain hit us in the face, but out from all that we had a great holiday. I really liked it and would like to return again.

By Patrick

1916 and politics

The 100th anniversary of the 1916 Rising was commemorated this year in Dublin and many other parts of the country. Events were staged during Easter weekend and again on Sunday 24th April because that was the actual date of the Rising. There was a lot of media coverage of the events. Many people were dressed up in the costumes of the period. Nearly every national school in the country played a part with flag raisings, proclamation readings and pageants. The GAA also held their own special celebrations. A huge pageant was held in Croke Park on Sunday 24th April after the National League Football Final.

In 1966, for the 50th anniversary great celebrations were also held but they were of a more military kind. This year there was a greater recognition of all the participants, including the women. Even British soldiers and RIC men who died were remembered.

An unusual thing about the 1916 leaders was that many of them were poets and writers and at least two of them were born outside of the state. James Connolly was born in Glasgow and Thomas Clarke was born in England.

Following the Rising a civil war broke out in the country, which led to the establishment of the two main political parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. There was once bitter rivalry between these parties and their followers. Nowadays, the rivalry is not so bitter but the banter can be mighty.

In the recent general election our local staunch Fine Gael was enticed onto the Square to shake hands with the leader of the Fianna Fáil party, Micheál Martin. There was a great good humoured response from the crowd and shouts to the councillor that he was changing his colours.

As a matter of fact, that election result itself was very inconclusive and at the time of writing this article a government had still to be formed, more than two months after the election.

By Colm

My woodwork story

A friend asked me how did I get into woodwork? I told him it was my dad's fault for giving me a screwdriver when I was 8 years old. I used to help him when he was doing upholstery. The first time I was with him he was doing a couch and two chairs. We had to bring the two chairs home to do the upholstery but we had to do the couch at the house. My dad finished the two chairs and then went to do the couch. I was amazed when I saw what was inside the couch. It was just wood and springs inside in it.

After that when I was helping my dad he showed me what wood was good and not good. You could have woodworms in some old chairs or couches. That was the first thing we looked at before we did anything.

For years I helped my dad. He had a lot of tools and I always asked him, 'What's this for? What's that for?' He showed me and I was amazed by it.

When I started secondary school there were woodwork classes. I loved it. The first thing I made was a key holder. After that I wanted to make more. I told the teacher it was easy. He looked at me and laughed. I asked him to give me something harder so he gave me a chance to make a dog house, then a cat house and a lot more after that.

For my Leaving Cert we were told to make something of good quality. I made a pendulum wall clock. Now I'm finished school for 10 years but I still do woodwork at home and still love it.

By Michael



Learning how to play the guitar

I always loved music and always wanted to learn how to play the guitar. I was talking to Karl over in Clonroad one day and said to him that I was thinking of learning how to play the guitar. He said, 'If you do, you might play at *Simply Said* on the launch night.' That gave me a year then to learn. I was up for the challenge.

Next thing I had to do was get a guitar and a tutor. I have always known Nicky and I knew he was involved with the music project with the Clare Youth Services. I bought a second hand guitar and Nicky was on board with me, so we started our lessons one hour every Monday.

Nicky is a very good teacher because it isn't all about the music with him. We talk about different things and still get the lesson done. The first chord I learned was the G string which I found very funny at the time! After getting the hang of the chords, the first song I learned was 'My lovely rose of Clare'. Now I have five songs learned. In August this year I am going to be 60. I'll never be a Bob Dylan but, in saying that, it's never too late to learn.

I would like to thank Nicky for all his help. I couldn't have done it without him. I also want to thank my family and neighbours for putting up with all the racket I was making. It wasn't easy on them at times! Thanks to all in CABES for the support.

By Jacko

Broken but not forgotten

I have a great interest in finding out about my ancestors. So I was looking for my ancestors in Cork and discovered two headstones: my grandfather and my great grandfather. The headstones were badly broken, covered with grass and were barely legible. I got the family to contribute, and had them restored to their former glory. I love looking at them now. I always feel as if my ancestors are thanking me for saving the beautiful mark they had left after departing this life.

By Marjorie

My first flight

I was born and raised in the city of Rio de Janeiro. My first time outside Brazil was on holiday to Colombia. I was very excited. It would also be my first time on a plane, but things did not happen as expected. When the plane took off a wheel on the left side, 'my side', fell off the airplane! Really!!

The pilot announced an emergency landing, but he would have to fly the plane until the fuel-tank was empty for safety reasons. We flew over Rio de Janeiro for over two hours. Some people prayed while others sat in silence. I was so scared. Most of the time I looked out the window but saw nothing – my life passed before my eyes like a movie. I also prayed.

Finally, we were told to prepare for the emergency landing. Everyone was terrified. In the end, it was a completely smooth landing and also the best one I have ever had to this day.

By Rosangela

If I won the Euromillions Lottery

If I won the Euromillions lottery I would never have to work again. I would like to win at least €100 million so my family would never have to work again either. I would build a new house the way I would like it. I would have a cellar with a fitness gym. I wouldn't tell anyone that we've won the Euromillions.

I would even consider moving to another country. If you don't tell anyone, no one can tell anyone else. It's the only way that you won't have people bothering you. I would tell them I invested money in some shares and that they had come good for me. I would not go into much details but I'd tell a good story and make it believable. It would be brilliant just being able to do what you want to do when you want; to sit down and read a book or spend time with your family. I could bring the kids anywhere I wanted to. Hopefully, we would live happily for ever more. At least I think we would.

By K

Natural cures

I have heard of a cure from the leaves of the honeysuckle that was growing overhead our pond. When the leaves fell off they rotted, and it seems that this pond was blocked off at both ends which left the water stagnant. If the rotted leaves were left there for a month, the cure was in it.

It was the same in October and November. I remember that a lot of the old people used to go down to Kilkee and on to the rocks. The seaweed would come in and very often it gets trapped in the rocks. If it was left there for a week or a fortnight, the stink and flies would be bad, but when the salt water would come in, people would lie in it. It's better than any seaweed bath that you might pay a hundred quid for.

By John

About me

My name is Declan. I have been attending classes in the Adult Education Centre since 2006. I find it very hard to believe that ten years have gone by so fast.

The first evening I started I felt very nervous because I didn't know what to expect. It reminded me of my school days. I soon started to settle down. My tutor made me feel very welcome. After a few weeks I soon became a lot more confident and was no longer shy.

A lot has happened in my life since I first started. I have lots of new friends. I met a wonderful woman in the Queens hotel in 2009 and after being together for two years we got married in September 2011. We have a beautiful daughter and are very happy.

By Declan

Stillness

Stillness in the morning when I get up.
If there is no noise
To better my thoughts
When I give up for a moment.
Why this relapse?
Why this peace which at last is mine?

By Dympna

This one is for a friend

A friend of mine was telling me about his daughter who had alopecia, a condition where you lose your hair. They had been to a lot of doctors with her. They brought her to a specialist in Dublin who put her on medication and tried out some wigs on her. But my friend did not want his daughter wearing a wig. He was telling me he had started going to church and praying. I could see the pain on his face. I said to him, 'My mother was very religious. One time we had a fire in the back kitchen of the house and everything was burned or broken except for a holy statue she got from a friend. My mother made out it was lucky. Sometimes when my nephews or nieces got sick or were doing exams or something like that, she'd take it down off the shelf and say to them, "give it a rub for luck".'

My friend asked me for a loan of it. I said, 'You can, but I want it back tomorrow.' The next day he called back with the statue. 'What did you do with it?' I asked him. 'I rubbed my daughter's head with it and left it in bed beside her,' he replied. His daughter did not know the statue was in the bed beside her all night. That morning his wife got up before him and found the statue in her daughter's bed. I started to laugh. 'What did you tell her?' 'I told her what you told me about the statue,' he said. As the weeks went by, his daughter's hair started to grow back. She was still on her medication. To this day we still don't know if it was the statue or the medication that worked.

By Mike

John Kelly, *Between You Me and the Wall*

Hi, my name is Matthew and I have been going to the Adult Education Centre for the last couple of months. I have been doing Computers, Maths and English. Then, two weeks ago, I went to an exhibition celebrating the works of John Kelly and the past two decades of his work as a photographer with *The Clare Champion*.

The exhibition contained a total of 36 photographs in which some of them were coloured and others were black and white.

The first time I saw these photographs I was confused in what they were about. Then I started to realise that they were a reflection of happiness, sadness and of life itself.

There was one picture that was very sad, a man in a coffin getting brought up the road by a horse and cart with a woman sitting on the front of the cart. Later, I found out it was an old Irish Traveller's funeral. The second photograph I looked at was a load of mini photographs of the protest in Shannon about the fuelling of US military fighter planes. I think one of the most interesting pictures was of a lake in Clare that froze up and it looked like an ice rink. I saw beautiful scenery and trees in the background and a man on a bike cycling on the ice. This was my favourite picture.

I think my whole perspective on the day was that it was really good and enjoyable and it also taught me there is more meaning to a photograph than just a picture and a frame.

If I was to advise anyone I would tell them to go see this exhibition. I also noticed there is a lovely canteen and we were speaking to a member of staff who seemed to be very nice.

I hope that after Christmas I can do something like this again.

By Matthew

Fears. Then and now

I was afraid of snakes. Now I am afraid of tigers.

I was afraid of dogs. Now I am still afraid of dogs.

I was afraid of spiders. Now I am afraid of heights.

I was afraid of dogs. Now I am afraid of flying.

I was afraid of ghosts. Now I am afraid of nothing.

I was afraid of foxes. Now I am afraid of illness.

I was afraid of dogs. Now I am afraid of heights.

I was afraid of donkeys. Now I am afraid of getting fat and cats.

I was afraid of dogs. Now I am afraid of boats and illness.

*By Man Moí, Jozef, Vytautas, Leonor, Roman, Nazi,
Lucie, Adam & Ying Xia*

Fifty years
later I have
learned to paint a
memory

Monica page 69

I did not want
to come home. It
took me a week to
recover!

Sylvia page 9

Then I started
to realise that they
were a reflection of
happiness, sadness
and of life itself.

Matthew page 80

I was 8 years
old, but it was
only 30 years later
that I forgave her.

Michael page 67

What a match!
What a trip!
My greatest night as a
Liverpool fan!

Uncle Bob page 19

If I was asked to
write something like
this 12 months ago,
there is no way
I would be able.

Seamie page 42