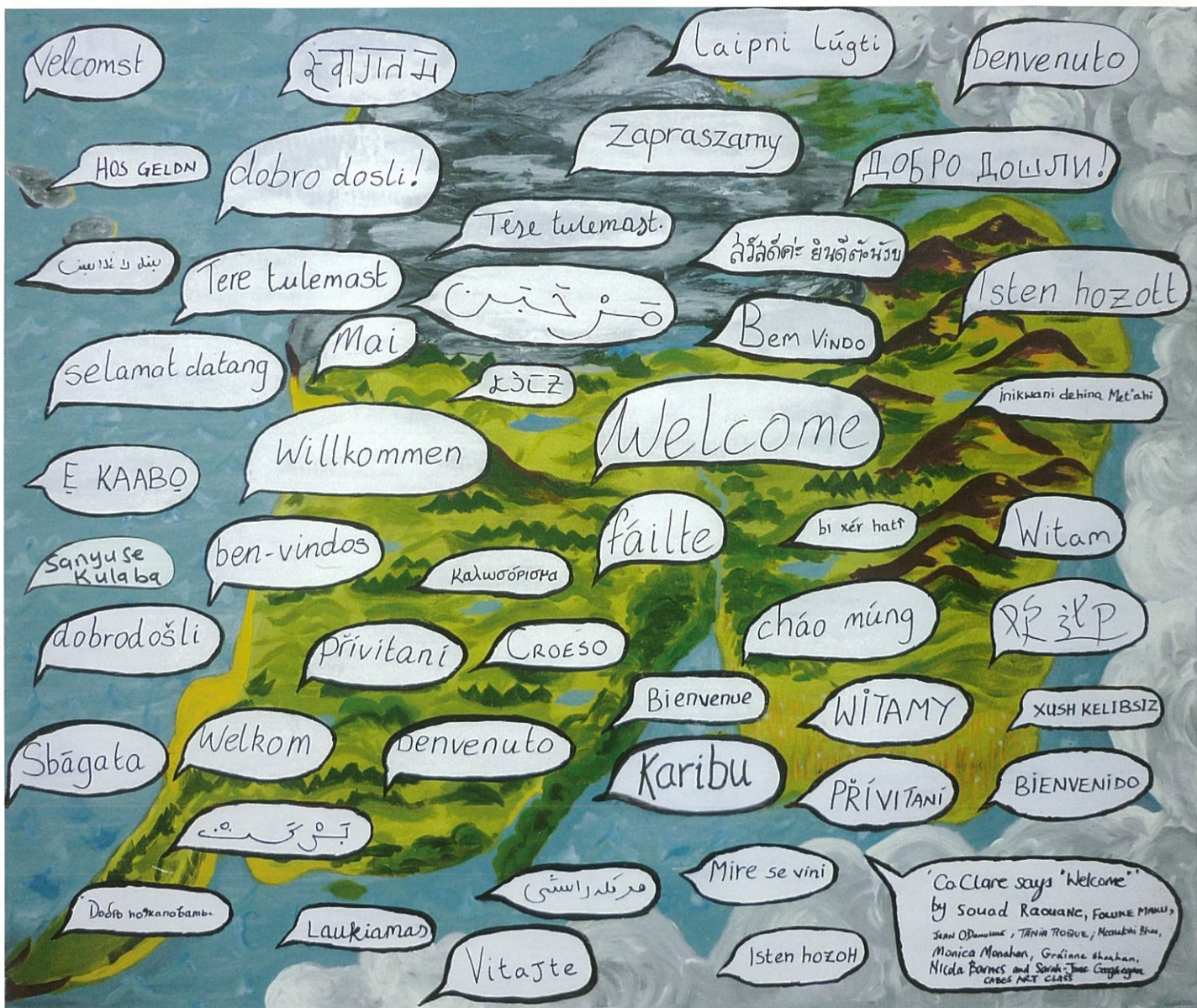


Simply Said 2017



Issue 29

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

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

Dedicated to Moira Greene
on her retirement
for inspiring people to tell their stories

Acknowledgements

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Nicola Barnes' Family Learning art class
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Foreword

Welcome to the 29th 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 year's edition has 112 articles and the writers were inspired by many subjects including rugby, GAA, holidays, crochet, ghosts, proverbs and childhood memories.

The writers have shared personal stories about their families and homes; told tales about farming, pastimes and hobbies; recalled memories of their childhood in Ireland, Poland, Pakistan, Nigeria, and advised Mayo how to win the Sam Maguire Cup.

There is a wonderful international dimension to this year's publication with contributions about Syrian families, Brazilian, Chinese and Lithuanian proverbs, Spanish Vikings, Moroccan cuisine, a love for Scotland and holidays in England. The stories are both funny and poignant; the proverbs are deep and the recipes are mouth-watering.

The cover of this year's *Simply Said* is a 'Welcome' sign located in the Further Education and Training Centre, Ennis. A number of discussions took place amongst staff at management meetings regarding having a welcoming sign for the Ennis FET Centre. Family Learning tutor, Nicola Barnes, took on the project in an art class.

The learners came up with ideas for the background and it was suggested that learners themselves write 'Welcome' in their own language and this would be included on the sign. The learners enjoyed gathering 'Welcomes' from around fifty languages, all spoken by people attending the Ennis Centre. It shows the wide diversity of culture and language among us and the sign welcomes everyone. The learners really enjoyed the course.

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 2017*.

The CABES team

Contents

Title	Author	Page
Learning to drive	<i>Michael</i>	1
My Irish life	<i>Zoe</i>	1
My cousin's wedding	<i>Diane</i>	2
Red Rock	<i>Joan</i>	2
Six word story	<i>Brendan</i>	3
About me	<i>Simeí</i>	3
The Irish Wheelchair Association	<i>Susanne</i>	4
Holidays	<i>John</i>	5
Sponsored silence	<i>Paul</i>	5
Munster playing Ulster	<i>Tony</i>	7
Summer holiday	<i>K</i>	8
Eating seaweed	<i>Avril, John, Robert, Michael</i>	9
Crochet together	<i>Gormlaith, Anne & Marisa</i>	10
Dublin Zoo	<i>Douma, Fatima & Maesa</i>	11
Slane Castle 1981	<i>Mike</i>	11
Teacher	<i>John</i>	12
Living in Ireland	<i>Ingrida</i>	14
Ireland from a foreigner's eyes	<i>Agnieszka</i>	14
Teresa from Poland	<i>Teresa</i>	15
About me	<i>Desanka</i>	15
About me	<i>Zanetta</i>	16
A friend from my past	<i>Daiva</i>	16
Coming to Ireland	<i>Jamil</i>	17
My childhood in Pakistan	<i>Khalid</i>	17
My childhood in Nigeria	<i>Patience</i>	18
My princess	<i>Ramilya</i>	18
The history of a Spanish Viking in Ireland	<i>Rika</i>	19
Lithuanian proverb	<i>Dainius</i>	20

Moment	<i>Dympna</i>	20
My oldest friend	<i>Agnieszka</i>	20
Two Brazilian proverbs	<i>Sonia</i>	21
My best friend	<i>Cassbie</i>	21
Moroccan cuisine	<i>Sana</i>	22
An old Chinese proverb	<i>Susan</i>	23
Groats with dried plums	<i>Barbara</i>	23
Twin calves	<i>Michael</i>	24
A beautiful day	<i>Marcela, Maria, Beata & Nazilla</i>	24
Three horse-power agriculture	<i>Michael</i>	25
Maggie's winning streak	<i>John</i>	28
Making cards	<i>Joe</i>	29
Quad calves	<i>Seamus</i>	29
My new house	<i>Christina</i>	29
My lucky streak	<i>Breda</i>	30
Trip to Edinburgh	<i>Olivia</i>	30
Fiddler on the Roof	<i>Ann Marie</i>	31
Six word story	<i>Brendan</i>	32
The Christmas my mother went to England	<i>Dympna</i>	32
A tale for adults	<i>Magda</i>	33
Knitting squares	<i>Margaret</i>	34
The Bakehouse	<i>Maíread</i>	34
Learning to cook	<i>Liam</i>	34
Home	<i>William</i>	35
Photos	<i>Martin</i>	35
Six word story	<i>Eoin</i>	35
Learning to garden	<i>Sabrina</i>	36
Men's Shed computers	<i>Michael</i>	36
My village	<i>Ranka</i>	37
Ghost's story	<i>Marija</i>	38
Joining the English class	<i>Aleksandra</i>	38

Improvements in my life	<i>Kamila</i>	39
The pine marten's visit	<i>Liam</i>	39
Farming	<i>Robbie</i>	39
Benefits of learning English	<i>Iryna</i>	40
Our Scariff maths class	<i>Bridie, Paula, Sabrina, Richard & Debbie</i>	40
Childhood memories	<i>Gloria</i>	41
My love of Scotland	<i>Eoin</i>	42
A person I admire	<i>Brendan</i>	43
Stress in our everyday lives	<i>Shetara</i>	44
Six word story	<i>Eoin</i>	45
Friendship	<i>Susan</i>	45
Radio	<i>John</i>	45
A day in the bog	<i>Philomena</i>	46
About me	<i>Imad</i>	46
My family	<i>Jamal</i>	46
My experience of housework	<i>Michael</i>	47
Joey's chair	<i>Joe</i>	47
About me	<i>Mohomad</i>	48
My time in Lisnagry	<i>Teresa</i>	49
Busy schedule	<i>Kevin</i>	49
Sewing class	<i>Mary</i>	50
The story of my award	<i>Bernadette</i>	50
My brother	<i>Colm</i>	51
Stress	<i>Monika</i>	52
About me	<i>Noura</i>	52
Hurling heroes	<i>Colm</i>	53
About me	<i>Aroba</i>	53
About me	<i>Daíj</i>	54
My favourite thing	<i>Elvis</i>	54
My favourite place	<i>Daíj</i>	54
About me	<i>Habibullah</i>	54

My favourite place	<i>Ibrahim</i>	55
How Mayo can win Sam in 2017	<i>Michael</i>	55
My family	<i>Rowayda</i>	56
About me	<i>Khadijeh</i>	56
About me	<i>Majida</i>	56
My family	<i>Ahmad</i>	56
About me	<i>Mohamad</i>	57
Something magical in the air	<i>Stasia</i>	57
Housework	<i>John</i>	57
How to make a wish that will always come true	<i>Mila</i>	58
The best news of all	<i>Maria</i>	59
The countryside	<i>Brian</i>	59
A Polish proverb	<i>Irena</i>	59
The Brigadeiro	<i>Bruna</i>	60
Pastimes	<i>David</i>	60
My hobbies	<i>Declan</i>	60
My fabulous trip	<i>Agnieszka</i>	61
The Redeemed Christian Church of God	<i>Lily</i>	61
Stress in our everyday lives	<i>Catherine</i>	62
The folk stories and legends of Clarecastle	<i>Noel</i>	64
My family	<i>Wafaa</i>	65
Letter of complaint	<i>Noel</i>	65

Learning to drive

I learned to drive when I was seventeen. My father brought me for my first lesson in the Industrial Estate in the Gort Road. He told me where everything was and how to start the car. I sat in the driver's seat. I thought I could just take off, no problem. I got it into first and second gears fine but when I tried to put it into third, that was when the problems started. It slipped into fourth and the gearbox screeched. My father shouted to put it back into third. I looked down to see where third was and the car started to drift across the road. My father started panicking and told me to pull over. 'Do you know what we'll do?' he says. 'We'll get your uncle Bernie to teach you altogether.'

By Michael

My Irish life

Irish weather sucks, but it's funny too. You can get four seasons in one day, especially if you can see a double rainbow. You might find a money pot at the end of the rainbow. Rain is good for growing.

I find growing spuds very interesting. You put a few under the ground and you can harvest a large crop. You can cook a delicious meal and chill out.

Fishing is a good hobby. When you are fishing you have plenty of time to think. You can sit back and enjoy the view and release any stress. When you come home you can cook the fish with your home grown spuds.

I also like to sew. It allows me to explore my creative side. I enjoy making things that make my house more homely. Ireland is not home, but it has become my adoptive home.

By Zoe

My cousin's wedding

It was a cold day with some sunshine. The wedding was in Ballinasloe and the reception was in Spiddal. The bride wore a lovely white dress and the groom wore a blue suit. The bridesmaids' dresses were blue and light blue. I wore a red dress with red shoes and a hair clip bow with diamonds. My daughter wore a white dress and silver shoes. My son wore jeans and a shirt. My husband wore jeans and a shirt and black shoes. We had a nice chicken dinner and dessert. We had a great dance and met all the family, cousins and friends. It was a great night. We stayed overnight in the hotel and had breakfast and then went home.

By DÍANE

Red Rock

When I saw *Red Rock* for the first time I knew it was a good programme. When it first started it was on two nights a week and if you missed it you could see it again on Saturday or Sunday. When it started it was on at 8:30 p.m., but now it is on Mondays from 9:00 until 10:00 with the repeat on Saturdays at 10:30 p.m. Now it's only on one night a week for an hour.

There are great stories in *Red Rock*. I felt so sorry for Conor that he is going back to prison for something that Rachel Reid did. Conor's mother, Angela, is a guard. She keeps annoying the Reids because she also knows that it wasn't Conor that killed Brian. Angela went to their house and she searched their bins for the phone Rachel had. Then Rachel came home and asked Angela what she was doing. Angela asked her where the phone was. Rachel said that she threw it in the river. Rachel ran into her house and rang her father. Then he went to the garda station to make a complaint against Angela and she got suspended from work because she was annoying the Reids.

Angela went to the café and she asked Rachel's father did Rachel kill Brian. He told her to get out. Angela was upset because Conor was getting blamed for something he didn't do. It was Rachel that killed

Brian, and Rachel's father knew because he helped her to hide the body.

In another story Katie is threatening to leave home with her baby, Luke, if the Kielys don't stop the money lending.

Angela begged Nikki to give her her job back. Nikki told her that she shouldn't be at the station. Angela got a letter about her suspension from the sergeant. When Conor saw the letter he ran to Rachel and said to her, 'Look and see what you have done.' Conor hit Rachel by accident and he got arrested again. Nikki asked Rory, did he think Conor should be charged for assaulting Rachel. He said, 'Yes.' Nikki said, 'Charge him so.' Conor was afraid that he would go down for the murder of Brian but he didn't do it. It was Rachel, and her father covered it up for her.

In another story, Michael and his friend are dealing drugs. They were nearly caught by Sharon, the garda. I really like watching Red Rock.

By Joan

Six word story

Heroes' lives. Heroes' deaths. A mystery.

By Brendan

About me

My name is Simei and I'm from China. I live in Ennis with my family. My husband is a chef. We have 3 children, 2 boys and a girl.

I study English twice a week at the Adult Education Centre in Ennis.

In my free time I like to go shopping with my children or go to the park. They love pizza and I love cooking it for them!

By Simei

The Irish Wheelchair Association

The first time I went to the Irish Wheelchair Association was the first week of November 2015. While I was at the centre I learned how to play *Telly Bingo*. I feel happy and relaxed while I'm playing and sometimes I win!

The Irish Wheelchair people are helpful. I like to see people helping each other.

They asked me how many hours I would like to use the centre and I said four hours every week, twice a week.

They had a trip to the Galway Races in September, but I couldn't go with them because I thought I would be too tired the next day. I was also invited to my first Christmas party in the Auburn Lodge in December 2015. It was very nice and I enjoyed it. The food was good and there was a raffle but I didn't win anything! There was also some music by a man who played an instrument and sang. My carer, Mary, asked him to play 'When I'm 64,' by the Beatles, but he didn't know this song. I went home at 11:15 p.m.

My carer, Mary, and I go for coffee or tea sometimes. Our favourite places for coffee are Suas Café, in O'Connell Street, and Zest in the market.

I went to Kildysart with Mary and I showed her the old cottage where I used to live. I also showed her the Ship Graveyard where they put old ships. All the ships have gone now except the Italian ship. We also went to the graveyard where my father is buried but it was lashing rain so we couldn't get out of the car.

The next time we went to Kildysart the weather was good. I bought a new jacket for my mother for Mother's Day.

By Susanne

Holidays

One day I set out on a holiday
Oh! It was a great holiday!
I met a lot of old friends
Oh! What a great holiday!
The weather was very warm
It was a great holiday!
There was a lot to see and do
It was the best holiday ever!
I made a lot of new friends.
It was the best holiday I had ever been on!

By John

Sponsored silence

I was just watching TV one night and saw Les Battersby in *Coronation Street* and he was doing a sponsored silence at the Rovers Return pub. The idea came into my head that I could do the same as a fundraiser for Kilmihiil People's Park. I spoke to John, the chairman of Kilmihiil People's Park, about my idea. John asked me to explain what it was all about. Then John said, 'Knock yourself out with that.'

John and I went to The Fiddle Head pub in Kilmihiil and talked to Jerry, the publican, about running a sponsored silence in the pub some night as a fundraiser for Kilmihiil People's Park. Jerry was very interested in the idea and wanted to know how he could help with it, so we picked a date for the sponsored silence and ran with it. Then we put the idea to the rest of the committee. They thought it was a good idea and that it wasn't costly to run either. So then we went to the garda station in Kilrush to get a permit. John said that he would make out sponsor cards for the people that were taking part and shutting up for the night. We picked characters from the local area that would have a job to shut up, especially with a few drinks.

The people taking part had to stay quiet for two hours. That meant no talking or whispering for the night, but they could use beer mats to write on or talk with their hands. The crowd had to try their best to get them to talk. They tried everything. Some told lies, some told jokes, and some made up stories about us to get us to talk. One man got a

safety pin to prod us with, and the MC was picking our weakest spots to get us to talk. The only chance I had was to stay on the dance floor and keep dancing and keep away from people. I don't know which was worse, not talking or dancing.

The Fiddle Head pub is on the main street of the village. It's a family run pub and there's a bar and a big lounge there. They hold a lot of functions and they have music there most weekends and a lot of local events happen there. We ran a fundraiser in each of the pubs so no one would feel left out. There was good space at The Fiddle Head for everyone - the people that were shutting up and the crowd watching them, and what we had planned for the forfeits. We picked November for the sponsored shut up because it was a quiet time of the year for pubs. The night we picked was a Saturday night so people could have a good night out and have a good lie in in the morning.

Before we knew where we were, it was the Saturday night we were going shutting up. The seven of us that were shutting up got to the pub for around 9:30 p.m. The torture started around 10:00 p.m. and lasted until about 12:30 a.m. First the music started and then the MC got up on stage and called us up and introduced us one by one. Then he explained the rules for not talking and the forfeits we had to do if we did not shut up. The forfeits were food we had to eat and the menu included hard boiled eggs cooked in pickle and covered with vinegar, pigs feet cooked in vinegar and covered with chili, boiled maggots served on stale bread, raw spuds dosed with pickle. This was some of the menu that we had to choose from if we could not stop talking. We had drinks to wash down the food. The drinks were sour milk, cabbage water, a glass of vinegar and egg yolk in orange juice.

I was one of the first to talk. I'm not sure if I did talk but I was blamed for it and had to do a forfeit anyway. I went for the boiled eggs because they looked the handiest. They tasted sour and sharp and they were disgusting. I can still taste them. I went for the orange, as I thought; that was worse than the eggs because of the taste. The raw egg didn't look the part nor taste the part in the orange. I got my own back on Tina for blaming me for talking. She had to go to the menu and pick something. She went for the eggs too and went for a glass of water as she thought, but what was it only vinegar. The crowd was really cheering her on. Everyone got caught before the night was out. The crowd wanted us to keep going all night. Husbands and wives

were delighted and said they would pay more to keep it up for a week.

The night was a great success because a lot of money was raised and people wanted to know when we were running the next one. Some people had volunteers lined up for it already. It cost us nothing to run and it raised the money we needed. A lot of people were cursing me for my bright ideas and no-one needed a laxative the next day.

By Paul

Munster playing Ulster

I was one of the lucky ones that has a friend who gave me a ticket to the Munster V Ulster semi-final of the Pro12.

The Pro12 is a Rugby League that involves clubs in Europe. The clubs play each other at home and away. The ticket I got was for the match to be played in Thomond Park.

A word about Thomond Park. It is the home pitch of Munster Rugby. Our Munster team has given us so much pleasure in times gone by, hopefully much more in times to come.

Three days before the match to see my heroes, I did not have a ticket. I had tried everything to get my hand on a ticket. They were like gold dust. Two days before the match, still no ticket. I was invited to the pub to meet my friend and halfway through our conversation he produced my ticket. I was walking on air - the thrill of going to see my Munster heroes.

The day arrived. I was collected from home and when we arrived at Thomond the place was packed and the game was on. Munster had to win at all costs. The whistle blew and my heroes charged.

The game - Paddy Jackson missed a penalty. Forward pass for a try was disallowed. Drop goal was missed. Munster had to come from behind four times throughout the match.

The final whistle was approaching and Munster are down by five points - my heart pounding. Keith Earls got the try. We were level.

Ian Keatley stood up to take the conversion. There was silence in Thomond. The oval ball sailed from boot over the bar and the silence was deafening. We had won by two.

My heart rate settled. Our heroes had won. Now, where was I going to get a ticket for the final?

By Tony

Summer holiday

Last summer I decided I would bring my wife and kids on a summer holiday abroad. The weather had been so bad at home I felt like we all needed some sun. We had been in Tenerife the year before and really enjoyed it. Everybody agreed we should go again.

Our flight was at 7:00 a.m. I got up at 4:00 a.m. and called everybody. As usual, there were last minute things to be put in the cases. Finally we got on the road at 5:00 a.m.

Everybody was tired but excited. After checking in and boarding the plane it was announced that the flight would be delayed. We sat for over an hour in our seats before taking off. By then the kids had eaten all the sweets I had brought for us all. The flight was four hours' long. We all slept for a while.

When we arrived in Tenerife Airport we collected our bags at the terminal and got on the bus to the hotel. Once we arrived, we checked in. The kids went straight to the pool. We followed them and all cooled off. It was 25 degrees.

For the rest of the holiday we swam in the pool and at the beach every day. My wife and I read books by the pool while the kids played. We ate out and relaxed every day. We went to the water parks.

At night we went out for meals and relaxed at shows, like parrot shows with the kids. We relaxed, knowing that we didn't have to get up for work and school in the morning. It was a great 2 weeks' holiday. We enjoyed being together so much, we decided to go on holiday again this year. We have picked Portugal because the journey is not as long; it is better value for money and the warm weather is guaranteed.

By K

Eating seaweed

Our group were discussing healthy eating and started talking about how we used to eat seaweeds. Dulse or dilisk was bought in a white sweetie bag from a greengrocer. Its colour was red or a deep purple and it was soft in texture. It was salty but full of vitamins and minerals. There was seaweed called 'sleabhac.' This is vibrant green in colour and grows in long thin strands and grows stuck to rocks. It is seasonal. When it turns a darker colour the season is over.

The sleabhac was collected locally from Doonbeg beach, rinsed well, then dried. It was cooked for three hours, then the ham was added and cooked for a further two hours, or until the ham was tender.

We remembered bread called 'laver bread' but could not remember how to make it so we searched the internet and found the recipe. What was it made from? How was it made?

Wash the seaweed and rinse in clean water several times. Over a low heat, or in a slow cooker, simmer the seaweed for 6 hours until it turns into a dark pulp. Combine the laver bread, olive oil, lemon juice and seasoning and stir through. Toast the bread, then butter to taste. It is full of vitamin A and vitamin C and minerals.

Another recipe:

- 1 onion

- 1 good rasher of bacon

- 2 tsp cooking oil

- About 4 oz sleabhac/laver/nori seaweed or 3 nori sheet wraps, re-hydrated

- About 2 oz or 1/2 a cup rolled oats

- A great optional extra is to add 1 slice of good black pudding

Take the bacon - if using pudding, add this now - and fry in the cooking oil until crispy; remove and break up as small as possible.

Put in the finely sliced onion with a slow, steady heat and cook off until soft.

In the meantime, re-hydrate nori sheets, or if using fresh sleabhac boil until soft. Then mix the oats, bacon, seaweed and soft onions together.

Make into cakes; fry until crispy and serve.

By Avril, John, Robert & Michael

Crochet together

Our level 3 crochet course has given us confidence to help one another and also to take on a project. It was great to have support. We helped one another with different stitches and patterns and shared where to buy good quality wool at a good price and supplies from local shops and websites, and we learnt extra stitches from watching YouTube. We learnt to look after ourselves by learning some exercises to help our hands from getting stiff and to take regular breaks, especially for a nice cup of tea or morning coffee!

Some of us found that being able to crochet either came naturally because members of the family had crocheted as we were growing up, or they found they preferred it to knitting as the work progresses more quickly.

Crochet has helped us to relax in the evenings and it's great to have a skill that can be used to make presents such as hats and blankets for new babies, children and people in need. Things we have made include blankets, hats, cowls, bags, and we had the confidence to tackle daunting crochet kits such as making a dragon and a monkey.

Most of all we enjoyed meeting to work together, sharing yarn and tools, having a chat, exchanging healthy recipes and beauty products, such as hand creams for our hardworking hands.

By Gormlaith, Anne & Marisa

Dublin Zoo

Last week we went to Dublin Zoo on the train. We saw giraffes, lions and monkeys. The children's favourite animals were the monkeys.

The weather was very nice. It was warm and sunny so we had a picnic. We had a good time.

By Douma, Fatima & Maesa

Slane Castle 1981

Guns 'n Roses are playing Slane Castle this year on the 27th May 2017.

I went to the first Slane concert when Thin Lizzy was the headline act on the 16th August 1981. They were supported by Hazel O'Connor, Sweet Savage, Rose Tattoo, Megahype, The Bureau and an up-and-coming band from Dublin called U2. The price of the ticket was £8.

We got the train to Dublin, then a bus to Slane, Co. Meath, which is not too far from Dublin city. When we arrived at Slane we went to the camp site, put up the tents and went for a look around. There were chip vans and food stalls and stalls selling t-shirts and badges. We got something to eat and went back to the tents and talked about what the concert was going to be like tomorrow. You could hear Thin Lizzy music being played on big tape-recorders or 'ghetto-blasters' as they called them back then. Around the camp site that night very little sleep was gotten.

The day of the concert, the weather was sunny. Things were getting busy with fans arriving on buses from all parts of the country. There were Mods and Punk Rockers with long spiked hair. Some had Mohawk hairstyles. Then I guess we were the rockers with the long hair, the heavy metal badges, patched denim jackets and Thin Lizzy t-shirts, 'ready to rock.'

We queued up and went in to the concert. The stage looked really big with a wall of sound - speakers on both sides. The concert site was like a valley or amphitheatre. On one side you had the castle on the

hill, and at the back of the stage the River Boyne flowed. It looked fantastic. The crowd was getting bigger as the concert started and the sound was loud and heavy.

The first band on was Sweet Savage, a heavy metal band from Belfast, followed by The Bureau. Then Australian rockers Rose Tattoo and next, Hazel O'Connor, who at the time had a hit single called 'Breaking Glass.' As she was playing, a helicopter flew over with Thin Lizzy in it. The crowd cheered with excitement. Next up were U2, who were expected to be the next big band out of Ireland with songs from their album *Boy*, the only album they had out at the time. But the one I was looking forward to seeing all day was Thin Lizzy.

The excitement was building and the crowd were cheering with hands in the air, clapping and shouting 'Lizzy, Lizzy.' The stage filled with smoke and flashing lights and Thin Lizzy appeared like a flash of lightning through the smoke playing 'Are you ready to rock?'. The crowd went wild as they played hit song after song; it was a great show. It's hard to believe it was 36 years ago when Thin Lizzy rocked the Castle in 1981.

By Mike

Teacher

I sat at the third desk in the third row beside Kevin, looking up at the large brown clock above the door. It told me there was only thirty minutes left. I hope he has forgotten I told myself, but no sooner had I told myself this, when out came the words I had been dreading to hear all day, 'Get your homework journals out'.

He always started at the left hand side of the classroom, walking down between the rows checking the journals. As he came closer to our row, my tummy filled with butterflies. He marked Kevin's journal with his red pen; his top pocket at all times contained three red pens and three blue ones. I think he thought they were a row of medals. Turning his attention to me he asked, 'Where's your journal?' using my second name - he always did. I replied in a low voice, 'I forgot it sir.' 'You forgot it!' Teacher then lowered his head and stared right into my

face, 'You forgot it!' I did not answer him. His eyes began to open wider behind those thick black rimmed spectacles. His bushy eyebrows which were black, grey and ginger, seemed to move closer together. There was hair coming down his nostrils, also hair sticking out of his ears; he seemed to have hair everywhere, and his breath reeked of tobacco.

He then stood up straight, towering over me, 'Put your hands out.' I'd seen the cane being produced from his side pocket. What could I do, only follow his instruction? Six slaps I was given, three on each hand. I put my hands up to my mouth to blow on them and, hopefully, ease the pain. Teacher then ordered me to the front of the class. As I slowly made my torturous journey to face everyone, I was asking myself, 'What is he going to do next?'

Taking up position directly behind me he then said, 'Repeat after me five times, I must not forget my homework journal.' Feeling a blush creeping up my neck, and now starting to burn my cheeks with embarrassment, I found it hard to look at the class. I lowered my head and looked intently at my feet. I was beginning to feel humiliated. My voice sank to a murmur.

When I finally finished the last line he ordered me to say it another five times, this time only louder and stop looking at the floor. I was praying the bell would ring and save me, but it never happened. Teacher got to humiliate me a second time.

After the ordeal was over, I was instructed to go back to my seat. Being able to look up at the large clock again, it told me there were only five minutes left before class finished. However, they turned out to be the best five minutes of the day. Sitting on mine and Kevin's desk was teacher's red pen. He forgot to pick it up, being too concerned on what punishment he was going to deal out to me.

Teacher then told the class, which had filled with silence, 'I will not tolerate anyone forgetting their homework journal.' He continued on in a loud and domineering voice. 'Anyone who forgets things is just stupid, or lazy, or both. Forgetting is not an excuse, and will not be tolerated.'

After all he had just put me through, I summoned up the courage to put my hand up in the air. This was an opportunity of a lifetime I

thought. Teacher looked at me and using my second name as usual he snapped, 'What is it?' To my humble satisfaction I said, 'You forgot your pen sir.' I could hear giggling throughout the classroom.

By John

Living in Ireland

My name is Ingrida. I'm from Latvia. Latvia has many rivers and lakes. It is located on the Baltic Sea.

I'm a student in English language class and I'm happy for the opportunity to learn English in Ennis.

I live in Newmarket on Fergus. I have a beautiful garden where I planted tomatoes, cucumber, lettuce and radishes.

I like the weather in Ireland because the summer isn't hot, and winter isn't cold. People are smiling and responsive. There are many beautiful places where there are early spring blooming daffodils and rhododendrons.

By Ingrida

Ireland from a foreigner's eyes

In my opinion Ireland is a very specific country, in a good sense of this word. I have been living here a few years. During this time I have travelled a lot through Europe, so I can make a comparison. I think Ireland is a very nice place to live. It's a beautiful and always green island.

There is something here which brings calm. People are nice, easy going and they are never in a hurry. They could stop a car in the middle of the road to talk to someone. Irish people have a great sense of humour. I think every Irish person can sing and dance. Irish dance and music is unique and original.

The scenery is still very natural, green and clean. You can still see many fields with animals - like sheep, cows or goats – other countries are already very commercialised. Compared to many other countries the roads are very good and there are not many billboards so you can still enjoy the views. However, there is something which I can't understand: how can people drive 100km/h on such narrow and twisted roads? I probably won't be living here forever but I will always miss Irish culture, the way of life and being.

By Agnieszka

Teresa from Poland

My name is Teresa. I was born in Poland but I now live in Ireland. My town isn't very big but it's lovely. I live in an apartment in the centre of town and my daughter lives in Dublin with her family. My granddaughter is 4 years old. Her name is Sonia and she's really nice and very active!

My daughter and I love swimming. We often go to the swimming pool.

I go to school because I don't speak English very well. I'm in a class with 15 students. They're from all different countries.

By Teresa

About me

My name is Desanka and I'm 36. I'm from Bosnia and Herzegovina but now I live in Ennis. I'm married and I have 3 beautiful children, 2 girls and 1 boy. I'm studying English and Customer Care in the Adult Education Centre, Ennis.

In my free time I like to go running and walking. I like watching TV and listening to music. I also like having coffee and chatting with my friends.

By Desanka

About me

I'm Zanetta and I live in Ennis. I came to Ireland 6 years ago from Poland. I have 2 sons, Peter and Michael, and 2 grandsons.

I'm studying English and bookkeeping. In my free time I like reading and going on motorbike trips!

By Zanetta

A friend from my past

One summer I was going home to my country for a small holiday. I had something important to do there. I had to meet my friend, whom I hadn't seen for 25 years. We were best friends in primary school. We were planning this meeting for a year or more. The last time I saw her I was a small girl. So, we decided to meet in a very nice place, outside my town, in a cottage style restaurant beside a lake.

I arrived there first and I was waiting. I was waiting and didn't know what I was waiting for. My mind was running. I was wondering how she looks now, how she talks now ... I couldn't even imagine, because I hadn't seen her for 25 years. Then she arrived. I cannot describe the feeling that I felt at that moment. It was very strange actually. She was the same girl I remember.

We were talking all day. All our memories came back to us. We were laughing and crying. We remembered so many stories from our time together. We had a very good time.

Our meeting was coming to an end. Both of us knew that the next meeting could be another 25 years away. We promised each other we wouldn't wait that long again, but life is life and you never know.

Now it has been 4 years and we have been trying to stay in contact on social media, sending postcards for Christmas and Easter. We say Happy Birthday every year to each other.

Very hard to say what we were waiting for for 25 years.

By Daíva

Coming to Ireland

I came to Ireland in 2006. It was the beginning of spring and I was really freezing but most of the locals (meaning the Irish people) were saying it was not that cold. I quickly made friends and got to work with some of them, and what a culture shock it was.

I was looking forward to finishing work on Friday and going home to rest for the weekend but they were all looking forward to going out and drinking all weekend. I thought they were all mad, working hard all week and spending all their money drinking during the weekend. I was soon joining them some Friday evenings but I still, to this day, can't understand why they do it.

However, one of the many positives that I really love about Ireland is how the Irish people support their heritage like the Gaelic football and hurling. Every county in Ireland supports their local teams and gets behind them, hoping to get to the finals and win the All-Ireland Final at the end of the season.

By Jamil

My childhood in Pakistan

I was born in Pakistan. All my childhood was in Pakistan until the age of 21. Then I moved to England. I was in London for 17 years. Then I moved to Ireland. Now I am 39 years old.

I grew up in Jhelum, near Islamabad. There are four seasons in the year: hot, rainy, cold and dry. Each season lasts three months. People in Pakistan eat spicy food. Most people eat a lot of meat. There are many kinds of fruit: mango, apples, watermelon, strawberries and many other types of fruit and vegetables.

By Khalid

My childhood in Nigeria

I was born in Nigeria. My childhood was always in Nigeria until I moved to Paris. Later, I travelled all over the world.

I grew up in Nigeria, in a town outside of Uromi Edo state where there is beautiful countryside. There are four seasons in the year: hot, rainy, cold and dry. Each season has three months.

The Nigerian people eat spicy food. We eat a lot of spicy food like rice, fish, meat, vegetables, peppers, potatoes or spaghetti for dinner. For breakfast we eat eggs, sausage, cheese and bread with tea and coffee and a lot of different fruit: apples, oranges, mango, pawpaw. In Nigeria we have a lot of different kinds of food, such as poundo yam, oyo-bolo (potato flour). Nigeria is a lovely and beautiful country.

I have three sisters and four brothers. I played with all of them when I was a child. We played hide and seek. We played in the puddles and in the rain. We had a lot of friends and we ran around together. My parents bought me a red doll. I liked her very much. They also bought me new clothes at Easter, Christmas and New Year. I had a very happy childhood.

By Patience

My princess

Hello, my name is Ramilya. I'm 27 years old. I have lived in Ennis for the last two years. Originally, I'm from Uzbekistan. When we moved to Ireland I was pregnant, and after half a year I became a mother. It was my first baby. First, I'd like to tell you something about the Irish maternity hospital I was in. I loved it. The ward was very convenient; the doctors and midwives were so friendly and kind and the cuisine was really tasty. I had an operation and the doctors did their work perfectly. So I thank them very much.

Now let me tell you about my family. Family is an important part of my life. I've got a husband and a daughter. My husband is an IT-technologist. He goes to work every week-day. My daughter's name is Diana. Now she is one year and eight months old. She looks similar

to her father. She is my little angel, my heart and my soul. Every morning she wakes me by pulling my hair and touching my eyes. She doesn't want me to do any work and wants me to spend all my time with her. There are a lot of toys everywhere in my house. She is like a clockwork toy, always moving and doing something. Sometimes, I'm really tired from being a mother and wife. But after a long day when she is sleeping in my arms, and I am afraid to disturb her dreams, I think that I'm the happiest woman in the world.

By Ramílya

The history of a Spanish Viking in Ireland

The story began in Madrid, Spain. A long time ago I felt a need to work in English as an actor, to feel like the English actors in their own language. In 2016 I started to watch the television series, *Vikings*. Meanwhile, I was thinking about going to Ireland and living in an English speaking country, working and seeing with my own eyes how the people feel in the English language.

Finally, here in Ireland, I recently had the opportunity to go to the capital, Dublin, for an audition for *Game of Thrones*. It turned out to be a real fake. People couldn't believe that it was not the audition that it was supposed to be. The agency only wanted to recruit people to work as extras for different productions in Ireland.

I was able to introduce myself as an actor, telling them that I was working in Spain as a professional actor. For this reason they admitted me and I had an interview in a special room, after seeing how many people left the 'audition' after hearing that it wouldn't really happen.

After about a week they called me to work as an extra in *Vikings*. I told them that I could go to Dublin and stay there a few days to work in the series.

Hopefully, I'll go and I'll have the opportunity to work and enjoy working in the English language as I wanted.

By Rika

Lithuanian proverb

This is a proverb from Lithuania that I like.

*Eat breakfast yourself,
share lunch with a friend,
and give dinner to the enemy.*

By Dainius

Moment

I live for the moment
For a moment is all I have in life
A moment
Is such a precious thing in life.

By Dymna

My oldest friend

My oldest friend is called Beata. We met thirty-two years ago when we were both fifteen years old. It was our first day at high school. On the first day we sat at the same school desk, and we sat together for the next four years.

After graduation Beata married, and soon after her wedding I left the country. We didn't see each other very often, but we often talked on the phone. Every time when I visited my family, I would find time to meet my best friend.

Beata didn't have any children, and after a few years of marriage she got divorced, and moved to England. She has been living in London for twelve years. Sometimes, she comes to visit me (before to Germany, and now to Ireland) but usually we talk on the phone or via skype. We still meet each other in Poland when we visit our families.

My best friend Beata is very sociable and also very generous.

By Agnieszka

Two Brazilian proverbs

Proverbs are popular sayings. They are about aspects of life. Many of them have been created for many years and are still used. Most are anonymous.

One Brazilian proverb is:

A scalded cat is afraid of cold water.

This is used to say that a person knows that if something was not good once, it probably won't be again, so he becomes cautious.

Another example of a Brazilian proverb is:

A closed mouth does not let flies come in.

This means that, sometimes it is better to keep the mouth closed than to get into trouble for talking too much.

I know these proverbs from hearing my parents saying them since I was a child.

By Sonia

My best friend

I have a very best friend called Jeannie. She is my friend's cousin, and we first met at my friend's birthday party. We went to different schools, but we had the same hobbies. That's why we became best friends more than twelve years ago. Jeannie is a lovely girl. She's outgoing, genuine and understanding. She always helped me with my homework.

After we graduated, she went to the city to continue her studies at university. I stayed in my own small town and started working as a shopkeeper. We barely kept in touch. After two years, I moved to another town and we lost contact. A few years later, we met again at a friend's graduation party. We were so happy to meet up again. We

exchanged our phone numbers and emails. After that, we usually met up for a meal with some of our friends at the weekends.

Eight years ago, I moved to England and got married. Jeannie still lives in Malaysia, and she married four years ago. We still keep in touch with skype and facetime. I really appreciate having such a lovely friend in my life. I can't wait to see Jeannie again soon.

By Cassbie

Moroccan cuisine

Moroccan cuisine has been influenced by many other cultures and nations over the centuries. It is a mix of Mediterranean, Arabic, Andalusian and, most importantly, Berber cuisine.

Spices are very important in Moroccan food. Although some have been imported by the Arabs for thousands of years, many ingredients are from Morocco. Saffron, mint and olives are grown in Maknes. Oranges and lemons are grown in Fes.

Morocco has two coasts, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. That is why Moroccan cuisine has many seafood dishes. A lot of European pilchard is caught, as well as mackerel, anchovy, sardines and horse mackerel. Quarfa (cinnamon), camoun (cumin), kharquom (turmeric), quezbora (coriander), quronfel (cloves), basbas (fennel) and zaatar (oregano) spices are combined to make the celebrated Moroccan spice mixture called Raslhanout. This is used to cook fish in a tagine.

The main Moroccan dish most people know is couscous. Couscous is cooked in a tagine with many different vegetables and, sometimes, beef and chicken are included.

Moroccan food is very tasty and healthy. The spices are good for digestion, all of the vegetables are grown nearby, and the meat and fish are always fresh. Moroccan cuisine is delicious!

By Sana

An old Chinese proverb

I like this because it was helpful for my family.

The sky won't refuse people the way.

It means don't worry, in the end you will see hope.

By Susan

Groats with dried plums

Ingredients:

- 1 cup barley porridge
- 2 cups water
- 150 grams of dried plums
- Salt
- Sugar
- Cinnamon
- Honey

Preparation:

Cook groats (barley porridge) in salted water until tender. Rinse the plums. Cook the plums in water with sugar. Combine the plums with the barley and add honey and cinnamon.

I love this dish! It smells and tastes really good. Not everyone likes it, but my family often does it for dinner. When you cook it, the whole house smells of plums, honey and cinnamon! This dish reminds me of childhood. It is a really simple dish, but also very good. In my house, this dish is always on the Christmas table. In Poland, people like dried plums and they often add them to various dishes. They have a very specific taste, which I really like.

By Barbara

Twin calves

Twin calves were born on our farm. They were born on a Saturday at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. It was winter time. The cow calved on her own and the calves stood up straight away. We didn't put the calves out because they'd get sick if they were in the fields in winter time. It's too cold for them. I went down to the cabin to see the calves. The dog came down as well, but on a lead. He can't go into the cabin.

I like calving time, especially in the spring. You get happy calves in the spring time.

By Michael

A beautiful day

Our class was invited to visit a beautiful farm in Liscannor. The trip started at 9:30 in the morning on the 19th of October. There were approximately 20 parents plus our leader, Mary. Unfortunately, Nazilla couldn't come because she hurt her finger.

We arrived there at around 10:15 a.m. The name of the farm is Moher Hill and it has beautiful animals.

We saw different types of animals like llamas, alpacas, rabbits, donkeys, racoons, chipmunks, emus, sheep, pigs, ostriches, red deer, peacocks and more. Little Lucy fed the baby goat with milk. It was a relaxing day for us. There is a good area for kids to play. The landscape is green and quiet. The weather was cool. After we finished visiting the farm we had tea and coffee. Then we went back to Ennis. We returned there with more energy. It was a beautiful day for us. Thank you Mary.

By Marcela, María, Beata & Nazilla

Three horse-power agriculture

I grew up on a north Cork mixed farm during World War Two (WW2). While the family enterprise was of necessity self-sufficient, we usually had a good surplus cash crop in milk, cereals, and tillage including one acre of sugar beet. Traction engines were then limited to the very large farms and contractors. Therefore, both road transport and field work was by draught horse. This non-fiction essay is focussed on one very narrow aspect of farm life in the 1940s; some jargon may be unavoidable.

We had 3 horses on our farm. 'Gerry' was an Irish Draught, and 'The Pony' was a smaller horse which replaced the jennet for the daily creamery run. Our third horse was a Half Hunter, which my father purchased cheaply as a colt. Attempting to train the young Hunter for draught work was very eventful, but she remained a little giddy at team work. The horses were housed in individual stables adjacent to the cow stalls in a large disused lime kiln, which is now a protected structure. As small children on the farm we were allocated the routine tasks of feeding the horses with hay, oats and grated mangolds. When the horses could not be led to the nearby river to drink, we had to haul buckets of water until they were all satisfied. The stables were only cleaned out once a month; we just kept adding straw bedding until it got too high and we then had a major deep clean task for a rainy day.

The other horse maintenance job was a haircut with a rotary hand-powered clippers once per year. On rare occasions, we had to manufacture the horse shoes at home in the coal fire. Normally, this was done more efficiently by the local blacksmith. I got the 3 mile ride on horseback and watched a new set of 4 shoes and steel studs being fitted. The hard steel studs were only needed when the horses were occasionally used for slippery road transport or taking the family trap to Mass on Sundays. Refitting a single loose shoe or missing stud was always done on the farm. The horse harness was repaired at home using strips from a leather hide and sewn with waxed hemp and a lock-stitch awl. The horses were well looked after and remained very healthy and reliable. Some problems such as pressure sores on their shoulders were a problem when the heavy springtime field work got under way. The solution was to treat the injury and relieve harness pressure by sewing part of a wool blanket to the horse collar.

Spring horse ploughing started as early as weather permitted. Farming had to be in harmony with the environment and seasons. The ploughing rate was only about one acre per day, so this project took a long time. The weather can be very inclement and the soil saturated in early spring. The worst that I remember was the big snow in 1947, which did not thaw for 6 weeks. With a major setback like this, we had to try and get an agricultural contractor to expedite some of the ploughing in time for planting the spring crops. Ploughing with a pair of horses can be fairly skilled work to completely cover the green sod. During another very bleak weather period I remember my father reading a British Army advertisement in *The Cork Examiner*, 'inviting young men to serve in sunny southern Sudan.' Keeping warm and fairly dry during spring work was always a challenge. Continuous walking with one leg in the furrow for 8 or 9 hours until the horses got tired required tenacity.

The weather and soil conditions had to be much drier for preparing ground for the seeding. With a pair of horses we cross-harrowed the ploughed fields, and then rolled with a concrete cylinder or dragged an old railway sleeper to prepare a fine seed bed. Cereal planting was by a horse-drawn Pierce corn drill about 6 feet wide, which buried rows with the correct amount of seed grain. This machine was easy to use but required accurate steering to avoid the neighbours noticing blank ground when the crop started to grow.

There was a national policy of compulsory tillage to ensure food security in times of rationing. Tillage ratio was based on arable acreage as determined by the inspector; we therefore had a lot of row-crop work. Horses are intelligent and row-crop working required a lot of dexterity of them. They either had to walk in the furrows or stay on top of the intervening ridge depending on the root crop being sown. Well-rotted farmyard manure was spread along the furrows from a single horse tipping butt. The seed potatoes were placed on top of the farmyard manure and the furrow was closed with the drill plough. Small seed was sown using the turnip machine or the precision beet seeder; the latter provided correct spacing for seed with 100% germination. Single spacing of root crop seedlings as they grew was very tedious. This was assisted by a horse-drawn gapping hoe and, later, weeds were reduced by periodically pulling a scuffler along the furrows.

Summer farming was more enjoyable in the good weather. Mowing the hay was by a pair of horses and a 5' Pierce finger bar mower. The hidden knife was bad for wildlife, such as the corncrake nesting in the tall grass. In hindsight, we should have started mowing in the centre of the field to provide escape routes to the hedgerows. Hay was saved into cocks by drying with the tosser, then using the wheel rake to create rows and, finally, the steel skeeter to gather the rows to the cock building sites. After a period, the cocks were drawn by tipping horse float and stored in the haybarn located in the haggard.

The creamery horse was busier in the summer with the increased milk supply of two 20 gallon churns. He would join the queue of other horse carts waiting at the Co-op Creamery and learned to move on automatically to keep his place. Another summer activity was driving the horse cart filled with hand tools to the local peat bog, and cutting the turf for the winter domestic fuel. Towards autumn we also cut alder and ash firewood growing along by our riverside. This was slung by horse-and-chain close to home.

Grain harvesting during the autumn required all three horses to tow the reaper and binder, which was a relatively large machine with multiple functions. The straw was cut very low with the finger bar knife and laid flat by the reel. It was then elevated and compressed into sheaves for the mechanical knotter. Our binder went on hire to local small farmers, so it was kept busy during the harvest season to offset the investment. My grandfather's obsolete horse threshing set might still be able to separate the grain from the straw but it was left rusting beside the machine shed. The threshing became increasingly mechanised by the steam engine or the heavy 'Field Marshall' tractor-powered mill. Main-crop potato harvesting was by a Ransome's digger with spinning kickers at the rear. This machine also went out on hire to keep it busy.

Working with horses can be very rewarding; they memorise repetitive procedures like a modern GPS controlled tractor and are intelligent, with personalities much like your dog. They can deviate a little from plan on reaching the headland of the field to sample a few bites of grass. Horses sometimes prefer to run free in the pastures and need to be caught using their favourite treats in a bucket. In retrospect our weather was not as bad as Frank McCourt's Limerick, nor did we work as hard as McAlpine navigators. While I enjoyed growing up in our rural environment, as feral kids we did not get around to grammar

school. I must therefore depend on the CABES' editors to check for split infinitives, etc. and shrink the text to more interesting sound bites.

By Michael

Maggie's winning streak

Just after Christmas, my sister Margaret won the lottery to go on *Winning Streak* on RTÉ 1 television. The whole family had a great day out because we went to Dublin to support her on the show.

I met my mother and my brothers Martin and Patrick in Ennis and we got the bus to Dublin to the studio where the show was recorded. The presenters were Sinéad Kennedy and Marty Whelan and they were very nice to everyone. There were two other people from Co. Clare on the show that week. My sister Maggie is the youngest of 8 of us, and she works for the Red Cross and has two dogs called Cody and Abbey.

Maggie wasn't nervous and she picked the colour blue first and then won €10,000 with no. 2. Next, she won a holiday in Slovenia and then she won a car – a big, white car called a Tivoli worth over €25,000. We were so excited for her. Altogether she won over €18,000 in money, as well as all the other prizes.

Maggie didn't have any plans for the money but she is saving it for the future. We had a brilliant day and we watched the show again on the computer. Everyone was very happy for Maggie and her winning streak!

By John

Making cards

I love colouring in things and making cards for people. I find it quiet and relaxing and it calms me down. I like to make birthday cards and I will make a card for my friends if they are sick because it helps to cheer them up. I made cards for my friends Mary and Kathleen when they were sick in hospital. My brother is going for a check-up soon so I will make a card for him too; it will help him to get better quickly.

By Joe

Quad calves

Quad Charolais calves were born in Lahinch in January. I went to see them. They were inside in a cabin. The weather was too bad for them to go out. They could die in the cold. In winter time, the fields are too wet and soggy for them as well.

Their mother was outside eating silage. Cows can get wicked when they have calves, and that's why the mother was outside. I rubbed the calves' heads. They weren't nervous. They were too young to be nervous.

The calves are getting big now. They're outside in the grass. They like being outside in the summer heat and sunshine. They run in the fields. Sometimes, they knock down fences and you just put them up again.

By Seamus

My new house

I am moving into my new house tomorrow and I am very excited about it. The house is beautiful. It has two bedrooms, a backyard with a swinging garden chair in it, a living room with an open fire, and a kitchen with a table where you can eat your food. It has a lovely bathroom with a shower over the bath. There are a lot of presses where I can put all my things. The rooms are lovely with my own wardrobes and dressing table. It's in a very quiet place so no-one will bother me.

I went shopping and bought an iron, a toaster, three saucepans, storage tins, a frying pan and other bits and pieces for the house. I have a television and I will get a microwave oven to heat up my dinners. I'll have keys to my own front and back doors and I will have to make sure I lock everything before I go out.

It will be a big change for me because I have lived with my family for over 60 years. But I'll have my key worker staying with me to help me for a while till I get used to living on my own.

By Christina

My lucky streak

I went to a concert last week with my friend, Mary, in East Clare to watch a traditional music band. They played the fiddle and sang songs but it wasn't music that you could dance to.

I bought some raffle tickets and ended up winning the best prize – a cruise on a boat from Kerry! So, Mary and I are going to go this summer and we will go for lunch in Listowel and then do some shopping. I'm looking forward to it.

I have been having a lucky streak because I also won some money on a horse in the Grand National. I can't remember the name of the horse but I won €20 so I was delighted. I might buy a lottery ticket because they say things come in threes, so I might win my fortune if my lucky streak continues!

By Breda

Trip to Edinburgh

I went to Edinburgh in Scotland this year with my friends Jenny, Eddie and Trevor. We flew from Shannon Airport straight to Edinburgh on the Friday morning and after dropping off our bags at the B&B, we went for breakfast and then shopping. I bought loads of things – 2 tops, a pair of sunglasses and a bag from River Island.

The next day we went to the castle. It was a long walk up the hill but once you were inside it was really good. We walked all around the

castle, into some very big rooms and then around the courtyard. There were a lot of visitors because it is a really popular place.

I was tired after all the walking so we had a rest before dinner. Then we went to a lovely Italian restaurant and I had a lasagne with a salad.

We didn't do much on Sunday morning because we had to get the flight back home. We had a lovely time in Edinburgh. It is a very old city and there is so much to see and do and all the people we met were really helpful and friendly. I would go back again for another visit.

By Olivia

Fiddler on the Roof

I went to see a musical show last week called *Fiddler on the Roof*. It was very good with lots of singing and dancing. I knew some of the people that were in the show so that made it more exciting. One of them was my doctor!

The show started off very funny. It was about a milkman in Russia with five daughters and he had to find rich husbands for them, as was the tradition in Jewish families. But the daughters had their own plans. The eldest daughter wanted to marry the poor tailor; the second daughter wanted to marry the poor teacher and the third daughter ran away with a soldier. The father was very angry but, in the end, he had to agree to let them go against their tradition. At the end of the show all of the people had to leave their homes and take what they could with them. It was very sad to see this because they just wanted to be happy in their little village.

The best part of the show was when the father and mother were in the bed and he told his wife about her grandmother coming to him in his dream and saying he should let his daughter marry the tailor. It was very funny and the singing was really good. I enjoyed this show.

By Ann Marie

Six word story

Tog out. Get ready. You're in.

By Brendan

The Christmas my mother went to England

My mother went to England one Christmas. My sister Frances gave her the price of the flight. My father, brother Patrick, sister Ruth and myself were left to mind the house. We had Home Rule. One night we went to Mass and did not come back – we went to the pub instead! We went to a soirée and came back at six o'clock in the morning. There was a cow calving so we met our father as he was going out and we were going in. He wasn't too pleased with us! My sister and I were a bit giggly; we had had a drop to drink; Father was unimpressed but he didn't show it at the time. I baked a cake to try and make amends but, unfortunately, the cake didn't come out of the oven as expected so it didn't make up for the mischief.

One day around Christmas time, my father went to town on the tractor for messages. It being Christmas, father had a few drinks for the occasion. On his return he left a bag of flour in the tractor by mistake and the dog was going to do his business on it. I went into the house and gave out to everyone and said the flour had to be removed immediately, turning the tables on poor Father.

Patrick and Ruth were going out one night to a dance and I decided to stay at home and keep Father company. Patrick washed his jumper late in the day and put it on a bush outside the house. Later, I saw a kitten eating the sleeve of it. I told Patrick to bring in the jumper before the kitten finished it altogether. He somehow managed to get it dry in time.

Things in the house were moving along fine and we all muddled together and we were looking forward to Mother coming home. Everything was OK until we got a telegram saying Mother missed her flight. Father was very annoyed. He blamed my brother-in-law for not bringing her to the airport in Birmingham on time.

My mother came home with no worries, but soon enough Father told her everything. Ruth and I were grounded for six months. Patrick came home from college one weekend and invited me to go to the pub. I said, 'Sure I can't go, I'm not allowed anywhere,' but he said, 'If you come with me, she won't mind.' There was nothing said about it and it was a good night. My parents were flexible and decided to give me another chance.

By Dympna

A tale for adults

Once upon a time, not so long ago, I discovered a fairy tale for adults. It's called *Game of Thrones* and it is absolutely amazing. This fascinating story was created by George R.R. Martin. I heard about this book many times before but if I have to be honest, I was sceptical before I read the first chapter. Then it happened to be one of my favourite books. The story got me completely! The world of the seven kingdoms sucked me in. To this day, I am very impressed by the enormity of the author's imagination.

I was enchanted by the realism, human destiny without the happy endings and, finally, by the tragic events.

Of great importance in *Game of Thrones* is that the main characters have to think strategically to achieve their aims. This is something that has always fascinated me.

Like every one of the inexhaustible multitude of fans, I also have a favourite character from that magical world. In my opinion the best is Jon Snow who, in the end, will be the king on the Iron Throne.

By Magda

Knitting squares

I like to knit cushion covers. You knit squares for these. You put up 30 stitches for each square, and you need 24 squares. You sew them together when you have them all knitted – 12 for the front and 12 for the back of the cushion cover. You need material to sew onto the inside of the front and back of the covers, and you put soft material inside as well. You need a zip for the top.

I like to use yellow and blue wool, and other colours too.

By Margaret

The Bakehouse

I work at The Bakehouse in Miltown Malbay on Wednesdays from 2 to 3 o'clock. It's a restaurant in the middle of the town and lots of people go in there. I work at the tables. I tidy and clean them. I collect plates, cups and saucers and I bring them to the kitchen. I wash the tables down and then set them again with cutlery and napkins.

There is a lovely smell of food in the restaurant. They serve bacon and cabbage, mash and carrots for dinner. They serve wine as well. Desert is lemon meringue, ice cream or apple pie.

The restaurant gets noisy when it's busy. I can hear music, and people talking and laughing. I like when it's busy. Working at The Bakehouse is my hobby, but I get paid as well. Everyone at The Bakehouse is nice to me.

By Máiread

Learning to cook

I made a recipe book in my cookery class. My favourite recipe is chicken curry. I made it for a group gathering. Everyone said they loved it. I hope to do more cookery classes next year.

By Liam

Home

I like my home. It is comfortable and warm. I like my own space. I live near the town. I have a front garden with flowers and a seat in it. My front door is white. There is gravel in the front and plants in pots and window boxes. I sit outside in the summer time.

I make a cup of tea in the evening and I can hear the traffic outside, but I listen to the radio. I listen to music and chat shows on *Clare FM*. I listen to Br. Cletus on Saturday evenings. He sometimes tells funny stories. I like a good laugh sometimes.

By William

Photos

I take photos on my phone and on my tablet. I put photos into an album to keep. I give some to friends. It's great to have photos of my friends and family, and of my girlfriend. I like having them. I took photos of quad calves in Lahinch and that was great too.

I like to draw pictures as well. Sometimes, it's tricky and hard. You have to concentrate if, say, you're drawing a box, so that you get the lines right. When they come out crooked, there's a lot of rubbing out to do and that's a nuisance.

I go through my photos often. I take photos on holidays. I took some of boats and horses on the Aran Islands. If I didn't have my album, I'd be upset because I like my friends and family.

By Martin

Six word story

My life. My soul. My heart.

By Eoin

Learning to garden

I have been doing horticulture courses for the past two years. I started with a beginner's course and I'm now at level 3. They are the best courses I ever did. Everything I learn in class I try out at home.

I saved seeds from the flowers in my front garden last summer, dried them out and brought them into class. We sowed them in pots and put them in the glasshouse so we will have flowers for this summer.

You should see my lettuce, parsley, peas, spinach and strawberries. I sowed them all from seeds this spring. They are just in big black pots, as I only have a patio. I have no back garden.

By Sabrina

Men's Shed computers

I've been attending the Adult Education Centre in Scariff for three years and it has been most fulfilling. For an unemployed man in his mid-forties from a small rural village, the centre has brought me and my fellow learners up to speed with the modern world of communications. Not only have we become computer literate, but we find meeting for classes socially rewarding too.

I've seen too many men in rural Ireland revert back into themselves and develop mental health issues because of not getting out and meeting people. Where once, the pub was the centre of community gatherings, this is no longer the case. Men have become isolated from their communities and also became socially inept.

Adult Education Centres in rural Ireland, like the one in Scariff, have been a lifesaver for many men. We have been given hope and a platform for going forward with our lives.

By Michael

My village

When I was born, and many years before and after that, my village was a small piece of paradise. It looked for me like some kind of artwork. I saw pictures painted by Marc Chagall, a famous Russian-Jewish Cubist painter who painted images of his village, Vitelsk. In these pictures happy animals and people were playing together over the clouds, little cottages were dreaming under the sky. The material world and people were inseparable and he told us beautiful stories about them by brush and colour.

My village is situated near a mountain and far away from cities, and when I was a child people lived a hard, simple life. I was raised in a small house with my parents, grandparents, brother, sister, and my uncle's family. When the other adults were engaged in work on the farm, my grandmother did all the housework and childcare. She did everything for us and expected nothing for it. I still have a picture of her in my memory, a sacred picture, how she was making bread and baking it in a large oven made from bricks, which was built in the corner of the back yard. The smell of fresh bread is something you could not forget all your life.

We children from the village were gathered in the field near our homes. We were safe and secure there. We did not have toys, so we created them from natural resources surrounding us. We always knew where the first fruits ripened and we enjoyed stealing them.

My family moved out of the village when I was seven. I used to visit my relatives in the summer holidays but connections were becoming weaker over time.

During the war, all citizens were gone and a few were killed. When I came to visit ten years after the war, I found all the houses destroyed by bombs and burned. Our small house had only part of a wall and no roof. In the middle of the rubble, where the kitchen had been, a tree was growing, a green tree as a symbol of new life. I could hardly believe it. Only three people live there now. The time is passing and soon no-one will even remember or care about a small village and the people who lived there once upon a time.

By Ranka

Ghost's story

It was dark when I got off the bus. I heard an explosion. I was scared and ran away. I saw a tree and hid behind it. The bus was burning in a big fire. A few moments later the fire engine came. Immediately, they started to extinguish the fire. Fortunately, the ambulance came instantly. When the fire was extinguished, the medical team got out the people from the bus. We were only five men in it. I saw that they got out the five men too. One of them had shoes like mine on. I got close to him. Surprisingly, I saw that it was my dead body. Oh my God! Am I a ghost?

By Marija

Joining the English class

When I joined the English class, I was very shy because there were a lot of strangers who spoke different languages. But it was an experience, and I've got an opportunity to know interesting and valuable things which help me feel more confident.

Sometimes, I help my husband with writing. When he needs to write some letters for friends he asks me to check the grammar because now I know it better, not enough, but better than last year.

I started walking every day. I walk in the evening time because I enjoy seeing the lights at night and the empty streets in my town.

Everything I learn in the English class is useful and helps me in my life. I have become more sociable because I have begun to understand what people are talking about. I have decided I want to learn more.

By Aleksandra

Improvements in my life

I talked to new people and improved my spoken English. I feel more disciplined and I started to understand what people say to me in English.

I have more contact with other people and started to go to the library.

I never rode a bike until now. I've learned to do it. I've also started walking more, especially when we are going to new places in Ireland.

I decided I want to learn more and get a profession, but even if I can't I'll look for a simple job.

By Kamila

The pine marten's visit

My next door neighbour and I both work on a farm near where I live. We had a few hens but they were killed by a pine marten.

Pine martens are like weasels. They like to eat hens. They are able to get in through holes in the fence and in small spaces in the door. They go for the hen's neck to kill them. This happens, usually, at night time when everyone is asleep.

This is what I know about pine martens because my next door neighbour and I have no hens now.

By Liam

Farming

I live on a farm. I like tractors, machinery and the quad. Over Easter I was spreading slurry with Wayne. In the summer I fork the silage into the pit.

On Wednesdays and Fridays I work in the mart.

By Robbie

Benefits of learning English

My name is Iryna. I'm 36 years old and originally from Belarus. I started English courses with VTOS in September, and what I want to say is that this course is enjoyable and enriching, really helpful for improving my speaking and writing skills in English.

Only four months gone, but I feel a huge difference in my social life. I feel less afraid to visit new places, to meet new people. Now I'm more confident when I'm speaking English.

With a lot of reading I am building up my English vocabulary. This is really important for me because now I feel able to help my son with his homework.

This English course has also brought a lot of benefits in my professional life. I feel less stress in completing reports and letters.

The English course gave me an opportunity to gain more knowledge, learn new material, and meet new people and teachers outside of my daily schedule. Also, this course is a good step to prepare for further education or higher education levels.

In conclusion, I would like to say that this English course has helped me to understand that I want to know and learn more.

By Iryna

Our Scariff maths class

We started a maths class two months ago. When we were talking on the first day we all said that we didn't like maths in school and didn't think much about them since then. However, we soon realised we perform maths in our day-to-day lives; for example, shopping, paying bills, budgeting for clothes and holidays.

In the beginning we were nervous, but with lots of examples and practice we are getting more confident. Using techniques such as estimating and rounding are very useful on a daily basis. We also find

percentages are relevant, particularly when calculating sales prices! We solve problems that are realistic and relevant to everyday life. One member of our group has found it very useful for helping her son with his homework.

We find working as a group invaluable, as we help each other out. It gets us thinking and there is a sense of achievement when we find a solution.

We are all surprised we are finding maths so enjoyable!

By Bridie, Paula, Sabrina, Richard & Debbie

Childhood memories

When I think of my childhood days it brings back many happy memories of a simple lifestyle on a small farm in north County Cork. My parents, Bernadette and Seamus, were hard working and lovely country people. There were five children - two boys and three girls. We got on great together and helped on the farm. We had cows, calves, horses, pigs, goats and poultry. We saw the birth of all these and were taught how to care for their young. It was such a happy time to play with them. All the animals had names. The cows and goats had to be milked by hand and we learned this skill. Later in life we knew how to care for and love all the animals, as I do to this day.

When I was about six years old my father developed Parkinson's disease. This was a great shock to my mam and all of us, but we all rallied around him and mam, and we learned to accept his condition. He was a wonderful patient and mam cared for him all the time. They both taught us a lesson in how to accept disappointments in life. In spite of his disability he taught us how to do many things on the farm.

Summer holidays were joyful and happy times, no lessons or school. Hay had to be cut and saved and made into 'wines.' They are now known as 'trams.' After a few good hot days they were drawn into the hay barn one by one. We had a very old tractor and it was called Fergie. I remember when my father was driving out a gap and the tractor would lift up in the front, so my father would put a big bag of sand plus me on the front to keep the tractor on its four wheels. I

thought it was great fun, even though I was a little scared. We had great fun climbing on top of the reek of hay and flattening it down. Driving through all the meadows, we brought the saved hay in. My mother was very good to us while saving the hay and she brought delicious sandwiches, spotted dick bread and Cidona out of a glass bottle. I can still taste that meal in the open air. Life on the farm was fantastic. There were always some interesting things to see and do. We were never bored. We had to whitewash the cow house, calf house and all the other buildings. Gates had to be scraped down and painted and hedges had to be cut and trimmed every year. I think I learned more interesting and practical skills during the summer holidays than I did in school.

Pastimes and sports were simple; all of us children played hurling and football and learned to ride a bicycle. We also loved to play shopkeepers, and two of the goats were great fun as they loved to play shop with us; they were our customers.

When I look back on my childhood memories I thank my wonderful parents (who are deceased), who cared and loved us all and helped us enjoy the simple things in life.

By Gloria

My love of Scotland

Scotland has a big place in my heart for so many reasons, from the people, the nightlife, to the food and tourism. There is a friendly vibe there like nowhere else. Add in Edinburgh with its culture and old buildings.

The first time I went to Edinburgh I fell in love with the place. Me and my friend stayed for a week. We ate a lot of good food and some junk food too. We went to the horrible histories dungeons. It was all true stories in there. I came across a small shop called Ben's Cookies. They had the nicest cookies in the world, lovely and warm. I went to the zoo. It was raining bad that day but I still enjoyed it, seeing all the lovely animals. I got to see a wolf. It was breath-taking; looking into the eyes of a wolf was unreal!

Scotland has world renowned festivals, especially in Edinburgh, which are the next thing I want to go and see over there. I will be going to Scotland, especially Edinburgh, for many many more years to come, to the city that stole my heart.

By Eoin

A person I admire

Many people in all walks of life can be admired, from Ed Sheeran for his singing and song-writing ability, to Roy Keane for his achievements in football. One man that stands out for me for his exploits in the modern game of hurling is Tony Kelly.

A sportsman with an abundance of talent, Kelly has already tasted All Ireland success with Clare when they won the Championship in 2013. An achievement not to be underestimated, the mid-fielder turned in performance after performance and tasted glory against Cork on the final day. He was also awarded the player of the year trophy for his efforts.

So what does it take to reach these heights? It takes sacrifice number one, training five nights a week and playing a match or two at the weekend. You need skill, which Tony has too, probably one of the more naturally gifted hurlers Clare has seen for many a year. And you need to be dedicated and give up your time to achieve your dream. A big ask.

A leader in mid-field, Tony Kelly began his hurling career with Ballyea. Proud of his roots, his club contested the All-Ireland Club Final this year. He shone throughout the year and was man of the match in the quarter final, coming up with a typical late point to secure victory in the dying seconds.

Every hurler will tell you that their club is the most important of all, and Kelly shows that in the way he plays for Ballyea.

By Brendan

Stress in our everyday lives

Stress is what you feel when you are worried or uncomfortable about something; this worry in your mind can make you feel bad. You may feel angry, upset or scared which can give you a stomach ache or a headache. When you're stressed, you may feel like sleeping or eating less, or you might sleep or eat too much. Stress can make your heart beat faster, make you sweat more and make your hands and feet cold.

Stress can affect both your body and your mind. People who take a lot of stress can become tired, sick and can't concentrate. Many different things can cause stress – from physical, such as fear of something dangerous, to emotional such as worry over your family or job. Knowing what causes your stress is the first step in learning how to deal better with your stress.

There are four types of stress: Survival, Internal, Environmental and Overwork. Survival stress is when you respond to danger; for example, facing a wild animal. Environmental stress is stress from noise and pressure from work and family. Overwork is when the stress builds up in the body and it makes you tired. It can be caused by working too much or too hard in the house or at work.

A quick way to deal with stress is to do the following steps. Breathe deeply – take several deep breaths to slow down your heart rate and reduce your anxiety. Relax your muscles, stretch your neck, stand or sit up straight, get some of the tension out of your body. Make a change – step back from what you're doing and/or what's stressing you. A few seconds can bring a lot of perspective. Laugh – nothing relieves the tension in your body or your mind like a little humour.

Some ways to help deal with stress are: finding support through friends, organisations, new activities and organising your lifestyle so it can become less stressful.

By Shetara

Six word story

A smile. A gift. A joy.

By Eoin

Friendship

Chats over chips
at McDonald's
with burgers and Coke
bus hopping for shopping
and tea and talk.

All Shook Up
and sharing a song
in Ennistymon;
without my friends
how would I be?

Lonely.

By Susan

Radio

The radio keeps me company. I like listening to *Lyric FM*. This is a radio station based in Limerick. The music on this station is calm. The presenters tell you the time and the news is read. I like stations that have music and talk. On *2FM*, there is pop music and the presenters talk in the middle of songs so that they can tell you the name of the songs. I don't like that. They don't do that on *Lyric FM*. Marty Whelan presents a show on *Lyric*. He has good music on and he talks a bit. He might say something like, 'I opened a window,' the same as if he was sitting with you at the table.

Sometimes, the music goes very low and then it goes up again suddenly. This happens because of a fault with the computers. Radio stations use computers now for playing music.

The radio is important to me because it wakes me up in the morning!

By John

A day in the bog

Twenty years ago, we footed the turf – the good old days. We put five sods of turf standing – one cropping, the other two sods lying flat and one sod lying across them. We brought a kettle, tea and sugar. It was loose tea that time. We made sandwiches and we brought our own cooked chicken and we had country butter and, of course, we had our own treats and our own water. We boiled our kettle and we had lovely mugs of tea in the bog – the loveliest tea we ever drank.

We had our own Dexta blue tractor. It was forty years old that time, in the 1980s. We all had a great time footing the turf. It's all changed now. There are no bogs now, hardly. They are all gone into forestry, and bogs are also preserved for wildlife.

Many people go bog snorkelling and many episodes of *Ireland's Fittest Family* were filmed in bogs.

By Philomena

About me

My name is Imad. I'm from Syria and I live in Shannon. Every day I wake up at 8:00 a.m. and have my breakfast. I go to school. After school I go shopping; then I go home. I have lunch and I pray. I go on the internet after prayers. At 6:00 p.m., I go to the gym and after gym I have a shower. I study for about an hour and then I go to bed.

By Imad

My family

My name is Jamal. My family is very big. I've three brothers and 5 sisters. My brother has one son and I am his uncle. I've two sons - Adbalnasser and Jalal and three daughters, Jaida, Jiana and Jihad.

By Jamal

My experience of housework

When my wife went to college I told her I would take care of the housework. Sure it was only a bit of sweeping and cleaning, but by the time I was finished I often had to have a shower.

She always wanted a dishwasher but I thought it was a waste. But then, she started college and for a week I had to do the washing up every day, three times a day! Then I bought the dishwasher!

When my wife arrived home from college the dishwasher was in the kitchen. She said she should have gone to college years ago.

I didn't usually cook but, one day, my wife rang me and asked me to put on the dinner. I got the chicken pieces and put them in the oven. I cooked potatoes and peas - and gravy! She rang to check that the dinner was on. She thought I'd know how to do everything from looking at her. I checked the chicken and it didn't look right. I phoned her and she asked me if I had remembered to put in a drop of oil - I hadn't.

I made up for it though. I poured in a good bit and put it back in the oven for another half hour.

When she returned, the chicken was still in the oven. The minute she saw it she knew. The chicken was burned. We got a pizza!

By Michael

Joey's chair

I am lying here on my bed. I know that my Da is out there in the kitchen having a cup of tea and a fag; my big brother is also there getting ready for school. I would love to be going too.

Oh yes! Here he comes! I can hear the bedroom door opening. It makes the same sound as always, like a whistle. My hearing is excellent but my eyes cannot see him. 'Good morning Dad,' I say. He cannot hear me because I do not have a voice.

'Good morning Joey. How is my boy today?' Da knows that I cannot reply; all I can do is smile; he always gives me a kiss on my forehead. 'Now let's get you out of these night clothes and get you out for your breakfast,' Da says. Oh yes, I think, nice one. I love my food. 'Breakfast - the best meal of the day,' I heard them say.

If I could talk and I was asked what my Da's voice is like? I would have to say, 'Loving and caring.' He washes me and combs my hair and he tells me how handsome I am. Well I must be, because my dad would not lie to me.

Well, you might ask at my age of 7 years old why I cannot do this for myself? Well I do look like any other boy I heard them say, two legs, two arms, but I am paralysed on my right hand side from birth. I cannot eat solid food but my dad knows that. I cannot stand or walk.

One day my Da told me that he was going to make me my own armchair. Every day for a week, he and I were out in his workshop, not that I could do anything but Da was cutting and hammering, and saying things like, 'Damn it,' and 'You stupid flecking level.' I found this really funny.

My big brother would ask him, 'What are you are making?' He'd say, 'I am making Joey his own armchair.' 'Can I have a look?' 'You can,' and Da explains that he is putting lead on the floor of the chair and the sides so as the chair will not fall over, and leather on the seat, the back and the sides.

When Da has it finished he puts me in it. I feel like a king on a throne. My big brother, Michael, has a sit down on it too, but Da says, 'This is only Joey's chair.'

By Joe

About me

My name is Mohomad. I am from Syria. I live in Shannon. I have 3 children - 2 sons and 1 daughter. I learn English in the Adult Education Centre. I'm grateful to all my teachers and everyone in the Adult Education Centre.

By Mohomad

My time in Lisnagry

When I was five years old I started school in Doora National School. When I was 9 years old I went to school in Lisnagry. Lisnagry is a boarding school. I lived there and only came home for Christmas, Easter and the summer holidays.

During my time there I made my Confirmation with Josie, Patsy and Mary, who are still my best friends.

We got up every morning at 6 o'clock and went to Mass at 7 o'clock. Then we had our breakfast.

After breakfast we had classes for reading and writing until 12 o'clock. We then had embroidery classes until 1 o'clock when we had our lunch.

After lunch we had free time. We went for walks often to the orchard where we sometimes helped ourselves to the apples. Sometimes we walked into the village of Annacotty where we did a bit of shopping. We always had to be back for our tea at 6 o'clock. After tea I talked to my friends. During the years when there was a concert on in Newport, a group of us would go to the concert by bus. We had to be in bed by 7 o'clock. I enjoyed my years in Lisnagry.

By Teresa

Busy schedule

I work in Centra two days a week. I keep the shop tidy and clean. I bring in coal and briquettes to the shop. One of my jobs is to flatten the cardboard boxes. This means putting the boxes into a special machine to be crushed. I also work in the Ennis National School Tuesdays and Fridays, from 2:00 to 3:00.

On Thursdays I go running in Lees Road. On Fridays I attend a course in the Auburn Lodge, and on Mondays I go to the Adult Education Centre.

By Kevin

Sewing class

I am attending a sewing course with Nicola. She is so helpful, lovely and interesting and I am learning a lot.

During one of her classes we were discussing the different types of fabrics. When I was growing up in Galway in the 1960s there was a textile company, Galway Textile Printers, 'The Cotton Factory,' known locally as 'The Cotton.' It printed cotton fabrics, which were sold for export and were used to make ladies' dresses and curtains. My two aunts worked there and would bring home samples, from which my grandmother used to make dresses for me and my sister.

Unfortunately, it closed its doors in the mid-70s, a big loss to Galway at the time for the local people who were employed there.

By Mary

The story of my award

I work at Ennis General Hospital in the Medical Assessment Unit. We were nominated for an award by the HSE. As I am part of the team, they invited me to the award ceremony. I was delighted to be asked but I was not sure what to wear. I asked Patricia, the ward sister. She told me to wear something very smart and she asked me if I had any bling. I laughed and said, 'No.' I decided I had better get some bling.

So off I went shopping for a dress, shoes and a bag. My granddaughter helped me with the shopping. We went online to Virgo boutique and found a blue dress with lots of sparkle. When the dress arrived I tried it on. I loved it and it looked fabulous on me. I felt amazing in it, so I bought it. We went to Ennis, to Pamela Scott, to get shoes and a bag to match. I found the perfect shoes and bag. I was so happy with the outfit I took pictures to show the nurses.

I decided to get my hair, make-up and nails done professionally as this was going to be a very important occasion for me. The nurses and I met at the beauty salon where we got everything done. We had great fun and looked fabulous. Afterwards, we went to the matron's house where we got ready. We had a glass of wine and her daughter

took some pictures. Then our lift came and we headed off for the Strand Hotel in Limerick.

We met up with all the other nurses and doctors. Lots of pictures were taken while we chatted. The bell rang to call us for dinner, so we all sat down for our dinner. I had soup for starters and beef for the main course. The food was really tasty.

After dinner the awards were presented. Patricia and the doctor's names were called out. They, and all the other members of the team, including myself, went up on the stage to receive our awards. I felt like a celebrity. The band started to play and we all got up and danced. I could have danced all night. It was fabulous and it went too fast.

I felt so proud of myself and of the work I did. We worked as a team and earned our reward.

By Bernadette

My brother

A happy hurling GAA man with his family and hurling icons, Kieran is my only brother. He is 36 years of age. He went to Australia in February 2006 when he was 24. Kieran qualified as a mechanic in Ireland. He worked in Broadford before he emigrated. Kieran qualified as a plant fitter in 2008 in Australia.

Kieran met Marie in March 2006. She is from Upperchurch in Co. Tipperary, but lived her teenage years in Borrisoleigh. They came home to get married in August 2013. I was best man. We were going down to the church in Tipperary in a VW car. It was like the two boys out of *The Fast and the Furious*. I was honoured and delighted to be best man.

My mother, Marion, went to Australia to see the birth of her second grandchild. Baby Ella was born on the 8th February. Marion was there 3 days beforehand. We call her Mar. She will be there for 7 weeks with Kieran and Marie. Conor is 2 years of age and he is a big brother to his baby sister, Ella. We are getting on good at home. Bill, my dad, is

doing the cooking and I am doing the washing. Marion won't know the place when she comes home.

By Colm

Stress

In our hectic life stress is increasing day by day. What is stress? Where does it come from?

If we are feeling tension or we are worried about something, this then causes stress. Sometimes, if we do not eat healthy food we automatically get stressed. Nowadays, we live a very fast life; we all want to do everything at once and when we are not able to do this, we automatically get stressed. Stress comes in front of us in many forms like if your child does not do well in school, health problems, stress in the home, in relationships, in jobs, etc.

I have seen many times when people get stressed they eat more, and sometimes they think their stress is gone by eating sweets. It is bad for their health.

Many health issues increase by stress; for example, blood pressure, heart problems, thyroid, migraine, etc. But it is important how we manage and decrease our stress levels. It is better we do more things in routine and take up healthy activities such as yoga, meditation, mindfulness; keep calm and be patient. These routines will always benefit our lives. We should always think first, why do we stress? Is it a benefit or a loss? Of course it is a loss.

By Monika

About me

My name is Noura. I am from Syria. I live in Shannon. I go to school every day. After school I go home and cook dinner. I like Shannon.

By Noura

Hurling heroes

Hurling is my greatest passion. Davy is one of my heroes. Davy won Munster with Waterford in 2010 and, in 2013, won an All-Ireland as a manager with Clare. Davy is now the Wexford manager. He will be up to take down Cody for the Bob O'Keefe Cup in his 3 year stint. Down the road he might manage Galway or Limerick. You'd never know but that man might be back in Clare yet. He brings so much colour, like Roy Keane. They are the music of the game of hurling.

Anthony Daly is another of my hurling heroes. Anthony pulled out of the race for the Clare job. Daly was the Clare manager from 2004 to 2006. He became Dublin manager in 2009. After a year or two he won the Bob O'Keefe Cup and a National League title. He was a great captain in '95 and '97. You can do this as manager down the road.

Another hero of mine is Donal Óg. He started his time as coach of the Clare hurlers in 2016 with Davy. Now he is with Maloney and O'Connor. Maloney, O'Connor and Cusack - they sound like a firm of solicitors. They will serve out their time until the 2019 season with Clare. Donal Óg is a Cork boy. He won 2 All Irelands -1990 and 1999. He is an ex-chairman of the Hurling and Football Players' Association and a *Sunday Game* analyst.

Maloney and O'Connor are joint managers now. First, they were with the minors, and then the under 21s, and now they are with the seniors. Now they face Limerick in the first round of the Championship. Some of the former back room team are now in Limerick. The Clare players have an All-Ireland and League. They would love to win Munster to go with it. I'd love to see the Galway hurlers win Liam and the Mayo footballers win Sam, and I'd love to see Sixmilebridge win the County Final.

By Colm

About me

My name is Aroba. I am from Syria. I live in Shannon. I always watch TV in my spare time.

By Aroba

About me

My name is Daij. I am 40 years old. I completed high school. I have a good job and I am happy with my work. I like fishing at the weekends. I go fishing with my friends. I have a big family - 6 sisters and 4 brothers.

By Daij

My favourite thing

Actually the thing I like most is a book. I like it so much to spend my time reading books because to read means to be rich in knowledge. A book is a wonderful friend because it develops our minds and it teaches us how to confront our difficulties. I read many books, such as *Divine Comedy* by Dante and *Stop Thinking Start Living* by Richard Carlson.

By Elvis

My favourite place

My favourite place is a mosque because I feel very good when I'm in the mosque. I sit alone with my God and I start to talk with Him about everything. I ask for Him what I need and I ask Him for help because all the time I need help from Him. The mosque really is my favourite place.

By Daij

About me

My name is Habibullah. I'm from Afghanistan. I live in Ireland. I love sport. My favourite sport is MMA. When I go training I forget all my problems. I feel fresh and very energetic. I already did Tae Kwon Do for 10 years. I have good experience in Tae Kwon Do. I am a good fighter in Tae Kwon Do. Sport is my life.

By Habibullah

My favourite place

My favourite place is the gym. I like going to the gym any time. When I'm in the gym I forget all my problems and I always do very hard training. I have many friends in the gym and they help me any time I need help. Sometimes, people do exercises the wrong way and I show them how to do them right. I go to the gym every day.

By Ibrahim

How Mayo can win Sam in 2017

Mayo have produced many great footballers in the past, including John Morley, Joe Langan, Tom Flanagan and Eamon Mongey. In the last few years they have beaten all the top teams in the country and won five Connacht titles, but the All-Ireland has eluded them. Is this the curse of the priest from Foxford? They can be brilliant in one match and poor in the next one. Mayo need to get some more forwards as we rely too much on the O'Connor and O'Shea brothers.

The Sam McGuire Cup must come to Castlebar in Mayo in 2017. We want Cillian O'Connor to lift Sam and bring it back to the West. I think Lee Keegan is going to get man of the match or maybe Aidan O'Shea. I don't want Stephen Cluxton to lift Sam this year. I hope Kerry play Dublin in the semi-final and that they beat them because Mayo will beat Kerry but not the Dublin team. Dublin have a lot of good players, like Diarmuid Connolly, but I hope we can win. There will be lots of celebrations on the bus back to Mayo.

In this year's League, Mayo had good wins over Roscommon and Kerry in Tralee, but lost to Dublin in Croke Park. I would like to see Mayo win the League, as it is good preparation for the Championship. I hope Mayo win the All-Ireland this year and I can imagine the celebrations. Mayo have not won the final since 1951 and it would make every Mayo person very happy if we won it this year.

By Michael

My family

My name is Rowayda. My family is big. I have 4 brothers and 4 sisters. My brother is not here in Ireland. I am in Ireland with my family. I have five children. I have one daughter and four sons. My children go to school in Shannon.

By Rowayda

About me

My name is Khadijeh. I'm from Iran. I'm married and I have 2 kids. My first boy is 13 years old and the second boy is 11 years old. I decided to learn English so I can have a career. I have an interest in hairdressing and I hope to have my own beauty salon one day. I love to travel with my friends. I hope that all my dreams come true.

By Khadijeh

About me

My name Majida. I am from Syria. I go to school in Shannon. I wake up at 8:00 a.m. I go to school. I go shopping. I come home and cook dinner.

By Majida

My family

My name is Ahmad. My family is very big. I have four brothers and three sisters. They live in Syria. My sister has two sons and three daughters. I have one daughter. Her name is Ketam. She is fifteen years old and I have four sons. Their names are Abdualkafi, Abdullah, Kaled and Saad.

By Ahmad

About me

My name is Mohamad. I live in Shannon. Every day I wake up at 8:00 a.m. and I get up at 8:30 a.m. I have breakfast at 9:00 a.m. At 9:30 a.m. I go to the crèche. At 1:00 p.m. I go home after I collect my children from crèche.

By Mohamad

Something magical in the air

My favourite day to celebrate in the year is not very surprising - it's New Year's Day.

I love that day because everyone around is happy and full of laughter. They are excited. You can almost feel everyone's dreams all around. During the day people drink champagne, dance, and smile. There is something special, something magical in the air, in people's heads.

Each New Year's Day is overflowing with magic. This magic is associated with the faith that 'new time' has just begun, when it will start to fulfil the wishes uttered at midnight when the old year ended.

Even if within the next few weeks, the spell is broken and the magic is weakened, we still have the idea that during this year something good will happen, something special.

For me nothing else is like this; not my birthday, not any other celebration in the year.

By Stasia

Housework

I like helping out at home. I like filling the dishwasher and washing clothes in the washing machine. My room has a nice lamp and a chair. I like playing PlayStation 3 games. I also enjoy watching movies and TV shows.

By John

How to make a wish that will always come true

In our family we always celebrate New Year, because it is the biggest holiday in Russian culture. We often say, 'How to celebrate New Year, so spend it,' which means the way you spend New Year's Eve is the way you will spend the rest of the year.

Traditionally, New Year is celebrated in a family circle or with close friends at home. Many yummy dishes are cooked for New Year's Eve. A bottle of Soviet sparkling wine or any other champagne is a must, while celebrating Russian New Year.

Some of the traditional and most popular Russian New Year's dishes are:

Holodets (jellied minced meat) [ha-la-d'yets]

Salad Olivier [sa-lat a-leev'-ye]

Salad Vinigret [sa-lat vee-neeg-ryet]

Selyodka pod shuboy (Herring 'under a fur coat' salad)
[s'yel't pat shoo-bay]

At around 10–11 p.m. we set the table, sit down and give a farewell to the old year. Very often, families turn their TVs on to listen to the president's speech on New Year's Eve. Now, here is the most interesting and magical moment of the celebration – you can make a wish while the chimes are striking New Year and it will always come true! There are a couple of ways to do it:

You can make a wish when the chimes are striking midnight and then have a sip of champagne or sparkling wine.

Write down your wish on a tiny piece of paper while the Kremlin chimes are striking midnight, then burn it, soak it in a glass of champagne and then drink it.

Rush outside right after midnight to enjoy colourful fireworks – they are also a big part of the Russian New Year's Eve. Fireworks are followed by the exchanging of New Year presents. If the children are asleep, they will find their gifts under the New Year tree in the morning. Christmas is celebrated slightly differently in Russian culture. A fir tree (Christmas tree) is not decorated for Christmas in Russia; it's decorated for New Year's celebration.

P.S. Don't forget to make a wish while the Kremlin chimes are striking midnight on December 31st! May all of your wishes come true in the New Year!

By Míla

The best news of all

My whole life (14 years to be exact) I had wanted a brother, but I was always an only child. So when on July 23rd, 2012, my mother came home and told me that I would have a little brother, it was the best news of all. Despite the big age difference, I was very happy. One of my favourite dates ever since that day is March 23rd, my brother's birthday.

By María

The countryside

I live on a farm. We have cows and calves. In the summer we make silage bales. The cows are kept in a slatted house during the winter. When the weather is fine they go out. We have a milking parlour and I help to keep it clean. I also like wildlife.

By Brían

A Polish proverb

This is a wise proverb from Poland:

Speech is silver and silence is gold.

By Irena

The Brigadeiro

The Brigadeiro is a famous sweet from Brazil, and it came from quite original circumstances.

In 1945, shortly after the end of World War II, there was an election campaign for a new president in Brazil. The candidate, Eduardo Gomes, whose military rank was Brigadier (Brigadeiro), had great success among women. His slogan for the campaign was, 'Vote for the Brigadeiro. He is beautiful and single.'

Brigadeiro's supporters tried hard to promote his campaign. Contrary to selling the usual electoral merchandising, they decided to make a sweet to be sold. There was, however, a problem. Because it was just after the end of the war, there was a lack of fresh milk and sugar, which complicated the task of making any candy. So they decided to make it with condensed milk, and mixed it with butter and chocolate.

The sweet of the Brigadeiro was created and it was sold during the campaign. It was successful and delicious, but the candidate wasn't chosen.

The sweet spread throughout the country, and is still always a favourite.

By Bruna

Pastimes

I like bowling. I go every Tuesday night. On Monday and Thursday nights I go swimming in the West County Hotel. I live near the hotel, which is very handy.

By David

My hobbies

I like the Munster Rugby team. I have been to Thomond Park. I also like soccer. My favourite team is Liverpool and my favourite player is Steven Gerrard.

By Declan

My fabulous trip

On the 5th of July 2016 I went to Spain with my friend Ewelina. I like this date because it is my birthday. Now whenever I think of this date, I am happy because it reminds me of this fabulous trip I took with my friend. In Spain we went to the beach every day. We went swimming. Some days we went on other trips. One day we went on a boat and it brought us to a small island. We had a lot of fun this day. So this is why I like to celebrate this date because it is my birthday and reminds me of this trip.

By Agnieszka

The Redeemed Christian Church of God

In my church we call ourselves a family. We have a relationship with God and it's never too late to have a relationship with God. In my church we have two pastors, a male and a female. They are my spiritual parents. The members of my church are called brothers and sisters. This is very different to the Catholic Church of which I was once a member, but now I have a relationship with God within the Redeemed Christian Church of God and I have learned more about the bible. I have also been baptised as a born again Christian.

On Fridays we have a bible study. We talk about the bible so that new members can understand it. Afterwards, I have a chat and tea, coffee and biscuits with my brothers and sisters. During this time, if anyone has a question about the bible we can all help each other out and help each other to grow more spiritually.

In the Catholic world I used to pray to statues and holy pictures. In my new faith we are asked to put nothing before God so I pray directly to Him and not to statues or saints, not even to the mother of God, Mary, but we do respect her. The most important thing is our relationship with God.

On Sundays, we have Open Charge, where we pray and ask God to join us in our Service. And then, we have Open Heavens, and this is all about reading God's Book as a message from Him to us. After this the choir will praise God. At the end, we have Sunday school where we

pray and discuss a topic related to our faith and, finally, The Grace is said. This is a prayer that is said at the end of the service.

My faith means a lot to me. I am an Irish Traveller who was reared a Catholic. But, three years ago I gave my life to God and it was the best thing I have ever done. There are things that God has done for me that no other man, woman or child has ever done. Some people say there is no God but I have experienced God and he has always been there for me, through good and bad times. In my culture, as a born again Christian we are not allowed to drink or smoke or have sex before marriage because it would disrespect God.

I would encourage people to discover the Redeemed Christian Church of God and not to judge a book by its cover. Whoever reads my story, I hope you are blessed and if you want to find out more there is a church near you and it is never too late to join!

God bless you and keep you and your family safe.

By Lily

Stress in our everyday lives

Stress can affect anyone at any time. It can result from a feeling of being overwhelmed with situations or issues going on around you. This leads to strain and pressure being put on your body and your mind. In turn, this can lead to many different mental and physical problems. Stress can give you a feeling that you can't cope; a lack of energy to deal with everyday situations.

Stress can lead to physical and mental exhaustion, which can result in many issues like depression, hopelessness, sadness, loneliness and also physical ailments like high blood pressure, heart disease, panic attacks, etc. It affects your ability to think straight and to be able to make good decisions. Many of these issues can prevent you from going about your life.

There are a lot of factors that can cause a person to feel stressed. You may have work issues where you are feeling overworked; maybe you've lost your job, or perhaps you are experiencing some kind of

conflict in the workplace with your boss or fellow employees. Personal issues, like divorce, where a person can lose everything they had in life and they have to start from scratch again to find a new direction can be very difficult. Also, long term illness can have a major effect on a person's life, particularly if they have to become dependent on others to take care of them. Financial pressures are also a major concern in people's lives. This can cause a lot of mental strain, worry and fears over whether they can provide for their families, keep their home or pay endless bills. You may also suffer from depression, anxiety or a lack of confidence, leading you to a feeling of unhappiness within your life.

There are many different ways you can manage your stress and learn to cope with it so the stress doesn't become the main focus of your life. You should never deal with stress on your own; don't be afraid to ask others for help. You will feel a lot better if you confide in a family member or a friend, who can in turn help you to get the help you need through doctors, counsellors or medications. Sometimes, when you are stressed, it is a good idea to perhaps take a step back from life; try to get plenty of rest; eat healthily and also take time for yourself. There are a variety of different ways you can relax; for example, through exercise, meditation, yoga classes or simply just sitting in a quiet room and clearing your mind of all thoughts.

Stress affects people of all ages and it's nothing to be ashamed of. The best thing you could do would be to share your feelings and worries and let people help you before the problem becomes so big that you feel your life has become unbearable or a burden for other people.

By Catherine

The folk stories and legends of Clarecastle

People respected such places as fairy forts and there were warnings about behaviour which might offend the good people. The rich heritage of folklore about fairies and ghosts recorded in the parish both in the late 19th century and in the 1930s is an indication of the strength of those beliefs, which continued well into the 20th century and nowadays, the 21st century.

T.J. Westropp recorded many instances of belief in a magic world of fairies, banshees and ghosts among the country people of the parish during the second half of the 19th century. There were stories recorded concerning a mermaid appearing in New Hall Lake. The folklore recorded in the late 1930s also suggests that many of the older people at that time believed in fairies and in the supernatural world. Westropp noted the practice of knotting seven hairs in the mane of a horse or in the tail of a cow, to protect the animals against the fairies. This belief was recorded in the Edenvale area and also around Carnelly in the 1890s.

The folklore recorded from the older people in the 1930s mentions a bough of a chestnut tree, or horseshoe, being placed over the door on May eve to keep the fairies out of the cabins and to prevent them from taking milk from the cows. It was believed that certain practices by the people could, by invoking supernatural powers, bring bad luck to others with whom they quarrelled. They could, for example, place a needle at the bottom of a milk churn; this, it was said, would turn the milk sour.

One story relates that the milk churn belonging to a woman from Lissane was cursed and that she had to have the milk churn blessed by a priest to remove the curse. This raises the question of whether the priest himself actually believed the milk was cursed or did the priest bless the churn to bring some psychological comfort to her family, who may have believed that their milk was cursed?

By Noel

My family

My name is Wafaa. My family is not big. I have two sons and one daughter. We live in Shannon, Co. Clare.

By Wafaa

Letter of complaint

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you regarding the purchase of a lawnmower which I bought in your store on the 20th of April 2017.

When I brought this lawnmower home, I found to my horror that there was a hole in the petrol tank. Now sir, I can assure you it was not a pretty sight to see, because at the time I did not realise that my wife 'at the time' was giving a test run to the lawnmower. When she pulled the starter cord, she was smoking and wife and lawnmower took off like a fireworks display!

The last sighting of my wife was 500 miles north of Rockall, heading for Newfoundland. This last sighting was detected by a Russian submarine spying off the north coast of Derry!

Therefore, I shall be seeking compensation for the wife 'lost at sea.'

Yours in petrol-soakage,

*Joe Shears,
Gardener*

By Noel



The Cabbage

My name is Jane and I have studied art for many years. I returned to adult education two years ago to become more confident in my literacy and workplace skills. This chalk pastel was completed as part of a Leaving Certificate art portfolio. The idea came to me during an Easter portfolio preparation course in Limerick.

By Jane