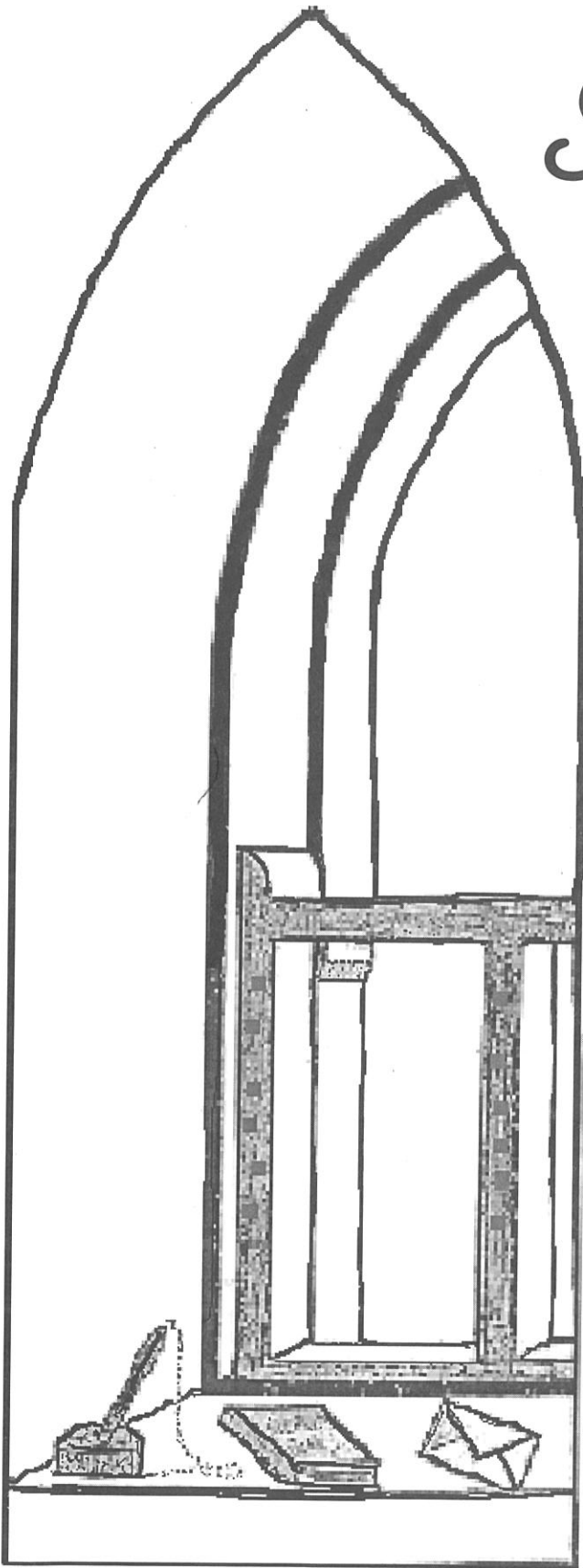


Simply Said

2002

Issue 14



Co. Clare VEC

Clare Reading & Writing Scheme

*A Collection of Writings
By Students
Of the
Co. Clare
Reading & Writing Scheme*

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Foreword

The students, tutors and staff of the Clare Reading & Writing Scheme are delighted to present the fourteenth issue of *Simply Said*, our annual student magazine.

Over one hundred and fifty students from around Co. Clare have contributed to this year's ***Simply Said***. Their stories, poetry and songs make the ***Simply Said 2002*** a pleasure to read.

A sincere thank you to students, tutors, staff members and other supporters who have helped in the organisation and production of this year's magazine, and in other ways throughout the year.

Most especially, congratulations to all the students whose work is represented here. Well done and best wishes for continued success!

Moirá

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Saving The Hay

When I was younger this is how we used to save the hay. We would have two meadows cut in advance. When we got up in the morning we would have a good breakfast, wash up, and tidy the kitchen. We'd start out in the meadow around lunchtime.

First we'd check the hay to see if it was dry. If it was damp we'd wait a while, if it wasn't, we would start turning.

I hated turning the hay but I loved the tramming. First you'd turn over and shake out the hay with a two-pronged fork. This would take hours. You would get blisters on your hands, but soon they would heal, depending on the weather, turning the hay would take 2 or 3 days. If the weather was slow, it would take a lot longer. Then we would make 'raheens' and leave them a day and then turn again. After that, you'd start tramming.

We'd gather a ring of hay, enough to make a tram. Dad would make the tram. He'd build it halfway and then pull it into shape with his hands and the rake; then he would finish it. Then he'd tie them down with súgán (binder twine) that had a nice tarry smell. Dad would throw the ball of twine (saved from the year before) over the tram, and one of us on the other side would catch it then both of us would pull a fist of hay out, and ring the twine around it and push it back into the tram. We'd cross over the súgán again in the opposite direction. This way, the trams kept firm.

The rest of us would keep ahead of Dad, making another ring of hay. One of us would rake up the hay around the meadow. We would take a break around 4 o'clock and have tea, sandwiches and 'Mi-wadi' back at the house, for about half an hour, and we'd catch the weather forecast in case of rain.

One of us would check the cows and calves. Then it was back to the meadow to finish the tramming, and we'd work away till about 9 o'clock. We'd have made 30 trams by the end of the day.

After a hard day's work we would go home and have supper, usually tea and salad, and relax a bit before going to bed. Next day, we'd tackle two more meadows, and go

on 'till all the hay was trammed. During this time we would check the trams regularly to see if the súgán was tight. By the beginning of August, the tramping would be finished.

After a few days break, we'd bring in the hay to the shed. This would take 5 - 7 days. We had a pony and hay car to do this. Once the pony and hay car were beside the tram, one of us would get up in the car and put one tall thick stick in each corner. The rest of us would fork the tram into the car, and the few sticks would support it. Then the pony would bring the hay to the hayshed.

The floor of the shed was prepared the day before by putting a number of bushes along the floor. This was to provide a base for the air to circulate and to stop the hay going mouldy. A huge hayrick was made with the help of a long ladder in the shed.

Foddering the animals would start around November or December, depending on the weather. Each animal would have about 7 forkfuls of hay twice a day.

These days it's all silage or baled hay if the weather is good. Silage smells bad, but it only needs about a day's work!

I will never forget the days in the fields saving hay; it was hard work but good fun too.

By Eileen

Seaworld

We had a good time on our tour to Lahinch. I was afraid to put my hand in the water in case the fish bit me. The farm was good but they had no cats. I love cats.

By Mary

My Birthday

The 23rd of January was one of the happiest days of my life, because it was my 50th birthday and everything went great. I thought I would do something different, as I did not know that my family had planned a surprise party. The party was one in a million. There was a big cake, wine, sandwiches, minerals and cocktail sausages. The house was decorated with balloons and a banner. It was a party I will never forget.

All my friends both young and old came. I got the world of cards and gifts; to me there will never be another party like it. It was the only party I have ever had since the day I was born.

To all concerned in getting it ready, so many many thanks. I really appreciated it.

By Pauline

Love

Love is like a burning fire
Keeping you warm, secure
It's the exchange of
Feelings between a man
and woman
There are many different
kinds of love
Love between mother and baby
mother and son
It's the love that joins a
Man and woman together
It has to be real
Otherwise the love
Will die.

By Catherine

Working In London

In 1989 I was working in the building sites in London doing labouring. I was staying in a house up by Wembley Stadium, and I was working down near Heathrow airport. Even though it was only 15 or 16 miles to work, it was very awkward to get there. I used to have to get up at 4.30 a.m., and leave the house at 5 a.m. to walk to the station.

I took a train from Preston Road Station to Edgware and then changed tubes and got off at the third stop. I can't remember the name of the station, but from there I got another tube to Heathrow where I had to start work before 7 a.m.

Luckily, the work wasn't too hard, but the hours were long. We'd work up until 7 p.m. in the summer. I know some fellas from Mayo who worked from 5 a.m. until 10 p.m. Their wives and families were at home in Mayo and they sent most of their wages back to them.

They were hard workers and they drank hard at the weekends. I suppose all of us drank at the weekends. Us single fellas were earning good money and had nothing to spend it on.

It's very hard for Travellers to get work on building sites here in Ireland, but there's no problem in England. For instance, settled friends told me that they were looking for labourers on building sites here in Ennis, but when I went looking for the work they said it was gone. There are no such problems in England. Once you are able to do the work they don't care who you are. I don't think it will ever be like that here in my lifetime.

By Paddy

Gizmo My Pet Cat

My pet cat was beautiful; he was black and white and very funny. Every morning when I came down the stairs, he'd be waiting for me. He'd lash out with his paw as much as to say, 'Feed me'! Everywhere I went he would follow me.

So one morning he was not to be seen. I went everywhere looking for him but to no avail. I could not find him.

I was very heartbroken after him, so I said that I would never again have another pet.

By Valerie

Trip To Dublin

My trip to Dublin was a very enjoyable day. It started at 7a.m. in the morning. First we stopped in Portlaoise for tea, coffee, and scones, which were very nice. The restaurant was warm and cosy, and the staff were very nice.

We resumed our journey again, which was also comfortable and warm. We arrived in Dublin at 11.15 a.m. and we went to the Chester Beatty Library. We started with a walk around with a tour guide and everything was explained to us in detail. The tour lasted about 45 minutes. We had lunch in the library restaurant, which was beautiful.

Our next stop was the Dáil, which I really enjoyed. We were brought into the gallery where we were seated for about 10 minutes. We saw a lot of familiar faces. We were taken on a guided tour of the Dáil, and also visited the Dáil Bar, which was very nice.

By Brid

How I Would Govern Ireland

If I was governor of Ireland I would first make sure that there was food for all the starving children all over the world. I would make sure that they had clothing and that they were able to go to school and learn. I would help to find families for the children that have nobody to raise them.

I would make sure there was a great police force all around, that they would catch all the criminals, and that they would be dealt with. I would make sure they were locked up and not let out until they have learnt that bad is wrong. I would have police watching everywhere.

I would make sure that children who are being mistreated/abused by their parents are put into safe homes where they would be treated as they should be.

I would make many changes in Ireland. I would make sure that there would be enough work for everyone. Nowadays there isn't much work, or money, around the world.

I would be there for people's needs. I would make sure that there is no war or violence. I would have a world that is peaceful. I would not allow alcohol because it causes too many problems. Today there are children at the age of fifteen, or even younger, who are drinking. It can damage people. Some people commit suicide over drink. I would also stop underage smokers because that can damage their health. I would make sure that people like Travellers are treated just as good as settled people. I would give them a chance to get an education, because I know there are some Travellers that have a lot of money but some don't.

As for the older people, I would put schools up for them to help them get the chance they never had to be educated. I would make sure that every house had a computer because it is another good way to be educated. They would have email and many other things on their computers.

I would make sure that there is more safety around Ireland so that there wouldn't always be worry. I would help the Refugee people get housing and money. Sometimes you see Refugees begging on the streets and they have very young kids with them. That is unfair to the kids, bringing them out on the streets. I would have them all looked after.

With me as governor, I wouldn't be all the time giving, people would have to earn it by helping me. I would make sure that they wouldn't take it for granted. They would have to be on my side and help me in every way. I would be there for their needs but they would have to work for it. They would have to work well at their jobs and earn their rights.

I would make sure that there are special provisions for disabled people, and make sure that they were treated like they should be. I would have signs put up for disabled people so that they can be helped in every way.

People that are being bullied - I would make sure that it stops. I would make sure that they are dealt with. Children that are being bullied have a very hard time, and they get down in themselves. Maybe there are problems in the home, and they have a hard time with their parents. I would make sure that every parent would bring up their child, as they should do. I would give special classes for the parents of bullies, and also the bully.

When people die, I would make sure that all the expenses are paid for because it is very expensive. I don't think people should have to face that. I would have graves done up with headstones and the most beautiful flowers on earth.

That would be how I would govern Ireland; be there for people's needs and their rights.

By Dolores

My Nephew

I have a nephew called Jonathan, and he is eight years old. Last Sunday, I brought him to the cinema. Jonathan wanted to see "Monsters Inc.". It was on at 2 o'clock. When we got there he had coke and M & Ms.

A mother sat beside us with four children, two of them were disabled and I felt very sorry for her.

Jonathan thought it was a brilliant film. My favourite character was Mike. I like going to the cinema.

By Ann

Work Experience

I am currently doing my Leaving Certificate Applied at the Youth Centre in Ennis. I started this programme last November. My subjects are French, English, Computers, Job Search, Social & Health, Contemporary Issues, Maths, Hotel Catering, and Tourism. My favourite subject is Computers, which I hope to work with some day.

Last February, all the students had to go on work experience. I was placed in the Clare Reading & Writing Scheme. The staff were very nice. I learned how to use a photocopier, and how to enter information onto a database. I was there for two weeks. During my work experience I helped out in the Friary Day Care Centre. It was very enjoyable.

By Amanda

The Last Warm Embrace

Arms outstretched and running wild
A happy caring carefree child,
Picking daisies in the warm summer sun
Laughing giggling on the run.

These memories will stay close to my heart
So we will never part,
I've cried so much tears stain my face
I pick you up for a warm embrace.

I cannot talk, I am numb with pain
Knowing things will never be the same,
It's time to say goodbye. I have to go
I know that this will hurt you so.

Be brave my child and do not cry
It will be easier as time goes by,
One day you will be big and tall
And won't remember the pain, when you were small.

I'll always be a part of you
Even when you're twenty-two,
I'll always be watching, making sure you're safe.
Remember our last warm embrace.

By Karla

My Favourite Soccer Team

My favourite soccer team is Manchester United. They have won lots of Championships. Sir Alex Ferguson is their manager. There are players from different countries such as England, Ireland, Holland, and France. I like to watch David Beckham play. He got England into the World Cup. Roy Keane is captain of Man. Utd. and the Irish team. I would like to visit Old Trafford some day.

By Jamie

The Tour To Dublin

We went on a trip to Dublin on the 20th of March. A few from the Youth Centre and some from the Adult Education Centre went. We headed off at 7 o'clock. We stopped in Portlaoise for tea and coffee. We reached Dublin at around 11 o'clock.

We went first to the Chester Beatty Library. A tour guide took us around. She showed us stuff that came from China and from Islamic countries, and the Middle East. For example, lanterns, scrolls, carvings from China, and manuscripts from Islamic countries.

After the tour we had lunch in the Chester Beatty restaurant. The meal was lovely. When we had our meal finished, we went on to Dáil Éireann.

By Martina

Exams

When I was young I did not have much interest in school and I left when I was 13 years old, which meant I never got to do my exams. Through the years I often had niggling thoughts, wondering would I be able to do it if I got the chance.

I got married in 1976, and had my first child in 1977. Then I had two more along the way. Now they are grown and I have a grandchild.

I am 52 years old and I am starting a whole new chapter in my life. I am doing my exams, and I have started my N.C.V.A. I am so happy; it has opened up a whole new world for me. I am learning so much and doing things I never thought I was capable of, and I have made a lot of new friends. We also have a very good social programme in the course.

At the present time my two daughters, my son and myself are all doing exams. So next year there will be big celebrations in our home, when we all pass our exams.

By Cathy

My Nephew Daniel

On the 23rd of October 2001, my sister was having a baby in Limerick hospital. I was waiting by the telephone. The phone rang and my brother-in-law, Mark, told us the news. It was a boy.

The baby was called Daniel. At the weekend Mark brought Eithne and baby Daniel home. He is a lovely baby. He has blond hair and bright blue eyes.

On the 23rd of December 2001 Daniel had his christening in St. Joseph's Church. Fr. Gerry baptised him Daniel Francis Pio.

Some pictures were taken of Daniel's christening. We went to Magowna House Hotel after. We had a drink in the bar. Then we were called for lunch into the dining room.

There was a beautiful dinner for us all. When Daniel gets big I am going to teach him how to read and write.

Daniel is able to tip his toes with his hands to play.

Daniel has lots of smiles.

By Breeda

The Day I Started Work In The Sherwood Restaurant

I applied for a job with a local restaurant, and I was called for an interview. I was delighted to get the job. I was nervous as the first working day approached. I was hoping that I would be able for the job.

I started at 8.30 in the morning. The staff were very nice; they were helpful and kind. I was a waitress, and served food to the customers during the day. Sometimes my work took me outside the restaurant.

On my first day, I served food to the farmers at the local cattle mart. I enjoyed talking to the customers; they were fun, and made my first day easy.

I felt that I was going to be happy working in the Sherwood Restaurant. Although the Euro made it difficult for a while, I still enjoy working there.

By Joan

A Visit To Dublin

On Wednesday the 20th March 2002, at 7a.m., I went to Dublin. I was delighted to have accepted an invitation to be part of the group from the Adult Education Centre. We had received a timetable beforehand of the places we would visit and the times when we would get there.

Three wonderful places were chosen for us to visit. The first place was the Chester Beatty Library, the next was Dáil Éireann, and the third was the National Gallery of Ireland.

The Chester Beatty Library was absolutely awesome - I would have stayed there all day...there were many wonderful things to see, lots of information to absorb, and so much beauty and variety. One has to go there to appreciate it. It was for me as if I had been around the world. The world itself was accessible through this collection. We are a very privileged people to have this collection in Ireland, and to have it freely accessible to all. Please go there for yourself, and take plenty of time to learn, and to see the many treasures Chester Beatty left us.

After a beautiful meal we then proceeded to the Dáil. My children had been but I never had the chance.

It was an organised and fast-moving visit. A large guard ushered us along the gallery of the Dáil where seats were available before a large partition of glass, which went up to the ceiling. I could see Bertie Ahern, the Taoiseach, reading from his notes and across the room sat Michael Noonan. I could see only two ladies - I'm sure others will describe what we saw, so I will write about how I felt. As the Taoiseach was reading about his visit to America, and later passing comment very briefly on what Mr. David Trimble had said about Southern Irish people, I felt frustrated not to be able to ask a question or make a comment. I had to make do with catching Michael Noonan's eye, giving him a wave and him responding with a wink and a return wave. I had a response and that cheered me up.

The security guard gave us a very entertaining brief history of the Dáil. Dick Spring, the former Labour minister, passed us by as we listened to our guide.

On to the National Gallery, a beautiful place. We were well prepared for our visit there. We had Lydia share with us the history of the Impressionists Art Collection. We got a great insight into the various artists and an appreciation for the wonderful paintings that we had the privilege to see.

It was a wonderful day, with great memories for us. Many, many thanks for giving me the opportunity to see such great places.

Thanks to Moira, Fionnuala, and Pauline.

By Angela

Riddles

My tutor is very nice. She comes every week. I look forward to her coming. I enjoy Ireland's Own, the magazine. Here are some riddles:

Why is roast pork like an old radio?
They both have lots of crackling.

What peels and chips but never cracks?
A potato.

How many peas are there in a pint?
Just one... P.I.N.T.!

By Martin

Thoughts Of Long Ago

I remember when I was a young lad back in the early sixties, in the days before television. They were good times for meeting people, and for telling fairy and ghost stories that frightened the wits out of us young lads.

There was a ghost story about the local graveyard, 100 yards from our house, that frightened the wits out of me. My best friend was living behind the graveyard and one evening I was crossing the graveyard when I heard a strange noise. Because of the weird ghost stories I had heard at the fireside at home the previous night, I ran all the way to my friend's house! His father was on the way to a local gamble, so he brought me home.

There was a card game called 45 that was held in different houses. Tuesday night was our night and there would be almost 10 people playing. One of the neighbours supplied timber for the big open fire in the kitchen and my mother would supply tea and scones during the evening. At the end of the night there would be great slagging when the losers would have to hand over as little as a penny! In those days even a penny was money!

In the summertime, all the people used to help each other out with the harvest. Afterwards, in the evening, young and old would gather at the crossroads where the old would tell stories, and spread the news. The young would play football, and pitch and toss.

Pitch and toss was a very popular pastime then. This was played by placing a stone on the road. The players took turns pitching or throwing a halfpenny at the stone. The person that threw their money nearest the stone got to toss all the coins that had been thrown already. If a coin landed on heads, he kept it, and then the toss passed to the next person whose coin was nearest the stone. This went on until all the money was won.

In the late sixties when T.V. became popular, it took over people's lives. Visiting houses and meeting at the crossroads gradually stopped. Now, if you visit a house you can feel unwelcome because the family continue to watch T.V. The old days of spreading news have died out and old friendships have been replaced by T.V. People can be lonelier now. It would be a Godsend if it started up again, especially for old people. It would make them feel happier and safer.

By Michael

The New Arrival

Two years ago my sister Helen got married. It was the happiest day of my life, a really perfect day in September.

There were one hundred guests. The church looked beautiful; my aunt Julia had arranged the flowers. The service was very nice and Helen looked like a real princess.

After the service, when all the photographs had been taken, we all went to Pepper's Restaurant in Feakle for the wedding feast.

Afterwards, we danced and talked and laughed for several hours. All too soon, Helen and Seamie were ready to depart on their honeymoon. It was then that I felt sad; when it struck me that I would not have a sister to come home to. But I cheered up when I realised that I had in fact gained a brother.

Now, my sister Helen has given birth to a beautiful baby, Katie Ann. The christening ceremony was last Sunday, and it was a perfect day. All the family from both sides were there, and Katie Ann loved all the attention.

By Anne Marie

A Day In My Life

I get up every morning at 8 a.m. I have a shower and then I get dressed. I have my breakfast at 8.15 a.m. and tidy the house for my Mum before I go to work.

The taxi picks me up at 9 a.m. and I get to Kilrush at 9.30 a.m. We have our tea at 3.30 p.m. and the bus brings us home at 4.30 p.m.

I get home at 5.30 p.m. Mum gives me my dinner when I get home and I wash up for my Mum. I like watching T.V. I go to bed at 10 p.m. and listen to music.

By Kathleen

My Pet

When I lived in the country I had a lovely little dog. He was a terrier and he had three colours; black, tan and white.

He was a great watchdog and was great company when I was on my own. He used to come in to every room after me.

I had him for seven years, but sadly he died last summer.

I don't really know what happened to him. I used to take him to the vet for his injections and I often think of him.

He was so human and affectionate. I don't think I will get another dog.

By Hannah

Visiting Co. Mayo

Co. Mayo is in Connaught. It is a nice place. My mother comes from there, and I go there on my holidays. We have relatives in Roundfort; it's a very small village. There are two pubs, a church, a graveyard, and a school.

It was Granny and Granddad's anniversary during the Easter break. Everyone was there, in Mayo. My uncle was home from England. I had a good time.

I will be going to Mayo again soon for my cousin Laura's 21st birthday party. I will bring a camera to take photos. I have to buy her a present, maybe a nice chain, perfume and a card. Mayo is my favourite place and I love going there.

By Kieran

Emma

Emma is my supervisor. I work with her in the glazing area. She has a great sense of humour. She has great time for all of us in the glazing section. When we feel unwell she takes care of us, and she will bring us down to the doctor.

We have art classes with Emma on a Tuesday. She is very helpful, and has great understanding of us. I can talk to her about anything that might be bothering me. She has a great sense of humour.

By Marion

Hell On Earth

On the 11th of September 2001 the U.S.A. got the biggest shock ever, when two jets crashed into the twin towers in New York. It happened at 9 o'clock in the morning, just as people were going to work. Six thousand people were killed. Osama Bin Laden, leader of the Taliban in Afghanistan, was responsible for the killings. There was another bomb in Washington in the Pentagon. Three hundred people were killed there.

On the 7th of October, the President of the U.S.A. and his government decided to return the assault on Afghanistan and they went in with the bombers. The Northern Alliance, who used to rule Afghanistan, helped the U.S.A. to fight the Taliban. Bin Laden is hiding with some followers who will fight to the death. I feel sorry for everybody caught up in the fighting, especially mothers and children.

By Paddy

My Sister's 50th Birthday

My sister celebrated her 50th Birthday in April. Her husband organised a surprise party for her in our local pub.

On the night of her birthday her family and friends all went to the party. My sister was shocked when she went to the pub because she thought she was going out for a quiet drink with her husband, but when they arrived the pub was full of family and friends.

We had sandwiches, cocktail sausages and drinks. There was a large birthday cake with candles. We all gave her cards and presents. There was music so we sang and danced. Her friend made a video of the party.

We all had a wonderful night and my sister will remember that birthday for many years.

By Josephine

Singing

Singing is my favourite pastime. Here are the words of 'The Wild Rover'. I hope you enjoy it!

I've been a wild rover for many's a year
And I've spent all my money on whiskey and beer
But now I'm returning with gold in great store
And I never will play the wild rover no more.

Chorus

And it's no nay never, no nay never no more
Will I play the wild rover, no never no more

I went into an alehouse I used to frequent
I told the landlady my money was spent
I asked her for credit, she answered me nay
Such custom as yours I can have any day.

Chorus...

I took out from my pocket ten sovereign bright
And the landlady's eyes opened wide with delight
She said: 'I've got whiskey and wines of the best
And the words that I spoke were only in jest.'

Chorus...

I'll go home to my parents, confess what I've done
And I'll ask them to pardon their prodigal son
And if they caress me as oft times before
Sure I'll never play the wild rover no more.

Chorus...

By Breda

Racing Pigeons

It's hard to know where to start to talk about racing pigeons because they have always been a part of my life.

I remember my father building our first loft and what I remember most was that all of the timber was green, so he built the loft and it looked really well. My father had a great love of animals and over our time we kept chickens, bantams, ducks, dogs, cats, canaries, budgies, and we even had a greyhound.

All those are gone now, but we still have racing pigeons. In the estate where I grew up in fourteen people kept racing pigeons, and I will always remember our first race. We all entered a bird each, maybe two, and we got someone to drive them out the road about 10 miles. What we had to do was, when the bird came back catch him and run to the top of the road. The first to the top of the road won.

That has all changed now. We have our own club; we are with the Munster Club Federation and also the Irish Homing Union Club. We have better lofts and better pigeons. We race for trophies and for pooled money.

The biggest thrill I get out of racing pigeons is letting them out in the morning and watching them flying around the loft, gliding in the air; sending them out to a race that could be two hundred miles, and after six or seven hours, seeing them returning to the loft. The pure joy of seeing them, not if they win, just to see their return. Pigeons have always been a part of my life and no doubt they will be until the day I die.

By Jacko

Skiing

Two weeks ago I took some skiing lessons. Normally, there are twelve in a group but I got a one-to-one lesson.

It all began when I heard on the radio that the National Council for the blind were skiing in Austria.

I phoned them to find out who was in charge of the skiing. Soon, I had my first lesson.

I went to Kilternan, Co. Wicklow, which is the biggest skiing club in Ireland. I learned four important rules. It's all about self-control and balance.

Skiing is similar to surfing, but in a different format. Since my first lesson I have read a surfing and skiing book in class. I can't wait for my next class!

By Gerry

Passing The Time

Pat and Ann run the day-care centre and they are very good. Ann bakes cakes and buns.

Pat takes care of the heating and things. Rita comes in Monday and Friday and she bakes as well. They are good fun, and are very kind to us.

I go to my sister's house a few days a week, and I go to Marian's on Sunday. My sister gives me my dinner; she is a very good cook. The time can be long - you have to pass it somehow. It's good to have friends and family.

By Kay

An Unusual Event

An unusual event in my life was going to my brother Cormac's 21st birthday party with family and friends at the Clubhouse. It was a special evening and everybody was there. I was very excited but a little nervous too, and happy because it was the first party I ever went to.

The party itself was held in the Clubhouse down the road. The hall was decorated with a big banner saying 'Happy 21st Birthday', and lots of other things on the walls. There was a bar to buy crisps and drinks. Later in the evening a big birthday cake was brought in and we all sang 'Happy Birthday' to Cormac. A few people asked me to dance but I said 'no' because I don't dance and I didn't like the music that was played.

In conclusion, I thought it was a very special evening. Everyone was dressed up and in a party mood. By the time we got home it was very late and we were all very tired. Shortly afterwards we went to bed. I must admit I did enjoy myself at the party and so did everybody there.

By Fiona

The Gift Of Time

Take time to think, it is the source of power.
Take time to play, it is the secret of youth.
Take time to read, it is the fountain of wisdom.
Take time to pray, it is the greatest power on earth.
Take time to love, it is the music of the soul.
Take time to give, a day is too short to be selfish.
Take time to work, it is the price of success.

By John

Liam

Liam is my boss. He is a gas man. When I want something done he will help me. When I don't feel well he will look after me. I like working with Liam. I wouldn't work with anybody else. He has great patience and he never lets me down. When I was sick recently he showed me consideration. He keeps an eye on things in my section when I am attending classes.

By Paul

The Special Olympics

This year I will be taking part in the Special Olympics. I will be in the walking race. I will be taking part in different races, the 1500 metres, and the 800 metres. I recently attended the Special Olympics Host Town Programme Ball in the Old Ground Hotel. I met Derek Davis on the night. I also met the Russian ambassador, Eugene. I had my photograph taken with them both. I had a great night out. I left the hotel at half past twelve, and got back to my house at a quarter past one.

By Martina

A Walk By The River Fergus

There is peace on the riverbank as I walk along and listen and see nature. Spring is in the air, and the birds are nesting. It's nice to walk by the river.

To see the trees grow and to hear the birds sing lifts my spirits. As I walk along the banks of the river, I might see an otter, a mink or a heron. Sometimes there is a fisherman fishing for a salmon, trout, or any other fish. Some days I see pupils of the C. B. S. canoeing down the River Fergus. In the evening I see the people out walking with their dogs. Walk by the river and be happy.

By Gerard

Names

Nigel

N now just five months
I in your blue baby grow
G gurgling and smiling
E every smile will show
L love that grows and grows.

Shaunna

S so sweet
H holding her dolly
A a little bundle of fun
U under the blankets
N not a care in the world
N no clouds to darken her sun
A amazing girl, my precious little one.

By Lourda

Work

I go to work, by bus, to Ennis. I sew and tack cushions. We have a tea break at 10.30 every morning. After lunch we go walking. We play bingo. Sometimes I win when I am lucky. We finish on Friday and I'm off on Saturdays and Sundays.

By Maere

Cargoes

This is my favourite poem. John Masefield wrote it, and I would like to share it with you.

Quinquereme of Nineveh from distant Ophir,
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,
With a cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,
Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,
Dipping through the tropics by the palm-green shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amethysts,
Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke-stack,
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days,
With a cargo of Tyne coal,
Road-rail, pig lead,
Firewood, ironware, and cheap tin trays.

By Robert

Training For The Special Olympics

I go training every Wednesday evening. I will be playing on the hockey team. We train in the P.E. hall in the Coláiste. We do lots of exercises, and some running too. We will be travelling to Cork soon for our first match. Mary is our trainer and she will be coming too. We have t-shirts with the Clare colours, which we wear when playing the hockey games. I hope we can bring some supporters with us to Cork.

By Ann

Ghosts In Galway... 1

One foggy Halloween, it was Michael's birthday. His wife arranged a surprise party for him and she told him to go to the pub. As Michael walked to the pub, he heard the howling of a wolf. Suddenly, he tripped over a stone. A light came nearer and nearer. He was scared. His wife came closer. She had scared him with her light.

By Pauline

Ghosts In Galway... 2

It was a cold dark Halloween and Mr. Simpson was walking home at night from the pub at 11 p.m. He was walking by the graveyard. Mr Simpson was scared and terrified. The wind was howling and the rain was pouring down and it was dark. The chains were rattling on the gate. Mr. Simpson ran home as fast as he could. When he told his wife all about it she thought he had too many drinks.

By Gerard

My Week

On Monday I work in the canteen with Nora and Mary. On Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday I work in the garden. Mike and Geraldine are my supervisors there. We have a good laugh as Mike and Geraldine are great fun.

On Friday I also go to reading and writing class where I practise my writing and we have great discussions, like now, talking about my week at work.

I love going to work.

By Patrick

Special Olympics

I am looking forward to going to Dublin on the 19th of June this year.

I will be playing basketball in the Special Olympics. I will be staying in the college for four nights. Mary is in charge of the basketball.

Martin and Pauline will be representing Munster in the National Games. We will be having dinner in the evening between 5 p.m. and 6.30 p.m.

I will be going out for a drink in the pub, and I will go dancing in the disco. The weather will be beautiful and the sun will be shining up in Dublin.

There will be someone to look after me. I will be meeting Noreen.

By Danny

Tour

On Monday 15/04/02 we went on a tour to Lahinch. I saw the sea. We went to Seaworld, and we saw all the fish. There were crabs and all kinds of fish, such as ray fish, star fish and sea urchins. It was beautiful.

Next we went to visit a farm. We had tea and sandwiches with cheese, tomato and lettuce. I saw a huge ostrich, lovely donkeys, a little lamb and some hens. The animals ran towards us because we had food. I enjoyed it.

By Bernadette

Travelling Films

Back in the late fifties, early sixties, we used to have travelling films going around the country. They used to set up a big tent in a field, and charge a few pence to enter. The tent would be packed. They showed mostly cowboy films. This was in the days before T.V. and most people would never have been to a cinema. This might only happen every 2 years, and so it caused great excitement. There would be people going around selling sweets and ice cream, which was a great treat. We wouldn't usually have money for sweets.

By the mid-sixties, most houses had a small black and white television. This was a good thing but it put an end to the travelling films.

By Martin, Michael, Patrick, Martin, Thomas and Michael.

Patricia's Holy Communion

My niece is making her Holy Communion on Saturday 18th May. There is great excitement in the house with all the preparations for the day. I am looking forward to going home that weekend. The last time I went home, my niece showed me her dress. It is beautiful. I gave her a voucher for her shoes. We are going out for a meal after the ceremony. I am really looking forward to the day, as she is the last in the family to make her Holy Communion. I hope she has a good day and that the sun shines.

By Anna

Sleeping Beauty – Ballet Ireland

I went to the ballet on Saturday the 28th of April. I thought it was very enjoyable and the dancing was good. It helped to know the story to follow the dancing. When the princess is born many fairies and witches came to give her wishes. The evil witch wasn't invited so when she came the music was loud and frightening. She was wearing a black costume and carrying flowers with thorns inside them. The princess cut herself on the thorns and fell asleep.

The prince was out hunting when he found the castle and Sleeping Beauty. He kissed her and she woke up. At the end all the dancers came out on stage, the wicked witch died and everybody was happy.

Ann Marie thinks it would be nice to be a ballet dancer, and to dance on your tiptoes. After the ballet we went for a drink at the bar in Glór. It was the first time I had been to a ballet, I had a lovely time, and I'd love to go again.

By Maura

The Rose

Some say love is a river
That drowns the tender reeds
Some say love it is a razor
That leaves your soul to bleed
I say love it is a hunger
An endless aching need
I say love it is a flower
And you its only seed.

It's the heart afraid of breaking
That never takes the chance
It's the dream afraid of waking
That never learns to dance
It's the soul afraid of dying
That never learns to live.

When the night has been too lonely
and the road has been so long
And you think that love is only
For the lucky and the strong
Just remember in the winter
Far beneath the bitter snow
Lies the seed that with the sun's love
In the spring becomes the rose.

This is one of my favourite songs because I like roses and I love the way the rose is compared with love.
When I sing this song I put all my heart behind it. It is a song that lifts me up and gives me hope.

Someday perhaps I will sing it for you.

By Patricia

Supported Employment

I am working in Time Piece 3 days a week. I love working there. My sister drops me in for 9 a.m. I work a 14 hour week.

I want to write an appreciation for Vinnie. She does reading and writing with me. She is very good to me. I hope we will have her back next year.

By Teresa

Our Outing

The farm we visited was too hilly. I found it hard to walk all the way to the top, so I sat on a wall half way up.

I walked back down the hill and the ostrich tried to peck the food from my hand. Down near the farmhouse they had different kinds of hens. I liked them because they reminded me of the old days on the farm. The creamery tanks on the pony-cart reminded me of when I used to wash the tanks on the farm in Doonbeg.

Seaworld in Lahinch was lovely. When we went in the door there was a great splash of water, like a waterfall. When it splashed we all jumped back, which was funny!

By Kathleen

I Was Totally Lost

It was a summer evening in August 1978. My friends and myself decided to go picking nuts in the nearby forest. We set off at about 7 o'clock in the evening. The evening was warm and bright. It didn't get dark until about half past ten. When we arrived at the forest I saw lots of nuts, so my friends and I started picking them. I got greedy and started to stray away from the rest so that I could get more nuts than the others. I got more than I could swallow and I got lost.

I looked around and saw nobody. I started calling out their names, but there was no answer. I knew I was lost in the forest. It started to get dark and I was scared. I started to cry and was going deeper into the forest.

I stayed there for about two hours in the dark. Then I heard someone call 'Bernie, where are you?' and I cried out 'I'm over here'. I was so frightened that my voice was too low and so my friends couldn't hear me. They were still calling my name. Suddenly I came across a small cabin built out of wood in the heart of the forest.

As soon as I saw the old man, I stared at him and he stared back. I turned and ran as fast as I could, afraid for my life. I heard the sound of horse's hooves behind me so I turned and saw the horses. I recognised them as our own horses. I followed them and they led me to a gap in the forest. I was so delighted when I saw my father there. He asked, 'Where were you?' 'I was lost', I said. 'I knew that the boys and myself had been looking around the forest for the last two hours' he said. I told him about the man in the forest. My father said he was a harmless old man who had lived there for years. 'Now,' he said, 'get home and never go into the forest again.'

Being a young boy, I didn't take any heed. The following day I was back in the forest showing the boys where the old man lived.

By Bernie

My Niece's Wedding

I went to my niece's wedding last year. It was at Christmas time. The wedding was in London. We were all excited. It was Saturday December 15th. Six of us were from West Clare.

I met some of my cousins at the wedding. My niece looked lovely. Her dress was beautiful, long and white. The flower girls wore blue dresses.

The day was fine. We had a lovely buffet after. The meal was held in the Parish Hall. There was a band afterwards and we had great fun. We did the Siege of Ennis.

By Phil

A Play

I went to Mullagh Hall to see a play called 'Wanted One Body'. It was a comedy about a rich man who died, leaving all his money to his maids and butlers, but nothing to his wife.

They couldn't keep the money unless they agreed to stay in the house. The wife allowed them to stay and when she died they got the house too!

It was quite funny in places especially when the solicitors were reading the will and they thought that the house was haunted.

I knew some of the actors in the play and they did a good job. I really enjoyed it.

By Joe

To Walk In Love With God

When I read the following prayer I feel uplifted.

Father, I am your child, and I commit to walk in the God kind of love. I endure long, am patient, and kind. I am never envious and never boil over with jealousy. I am not boastful or vain-glorious, and I do not display myself haughtily, I am not rude and unmannerly and I do not act unbecomingly. I do not insist on my own rights or my own way for I am not self-seeking, touchy, fretful or resentful. I take no account of an evil done to me and pay no attention to a suffered wrong. I do not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but I rejoice when right and truth prevail. I bear up under anything and everything that comes. I am ever ready to believe the best of others. My hopes are fadeless under all circumstances. I endure everything without weakening because my love never fails. Everywhere I go I commit to plant seeds of love. I thank you, Father, for preparing hearts ahead of time to receive this love. I know that these seeds will produce your love in the hearts to whom they are given. I am rooted deep in love and founded securely on love knowing that you are on my side, and nothing is able to separate me from your love, Father, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord. Thank you, Father, in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

By Connie

I Like Doing Woodwork

I come into work five days a week. My sister has moved to Limerick. I live at home with my mother. I have a dog. His name is Benjy. He stays outside in his own kennel. We live in Shannon so I see the planes landing and taking off. Sometimes the airport is very busy.

By Kenneth

Bus Trip

Seaworld and the farm were very good. The only trouble with the farm was that it was hard to walk up the hill, but Maura took my arm and helped me. I didn't fall at all. Teresa took me by the arm and showed me the chickens and we sat down after that.

I love travelling on buses and Lahinch looked lovely on such a sunny day. Caroline sat beside me on the bus.

Seaworld was grand. John was our guide and he showed us all the fish. I dipped my fingers into the water, but I didn't touch any fish even though I wasn't afraid of them biting me.

I enjoyed the day even though the gift shop in Lahinch was closed.

By Brendan

Sharon's Wedding

Last year my niece got married. There was great fuss before the wedding with all the preparations. I enjoyed the day but my sister warned me not to get drunk. That was a very tall order. It was great meeting my family who came home to Limerick for the wedding, especially my aunt. I am very fond of her as she lives on her own. My brother-in-law gave a great speech. Eddie remembered Chrissie, our sister, who died shortly before the wedding. It was very sad as we all miss her very much. We wish she was still with us. The craic started when the band began to play. We danced all night and had great fun. I'm afraid I got a little drunk and my sister wasn't too pleased! But she forgave me!

By Gerard

King Of The Yard

This story begins in the 1960s when my brother and myself went to national school in Co. Galway. I was nine years old and my brother was eleven.

From the first day we got hassled by the school villain - a boy who was a bit older than us. He was the leader of a gang in school and we were new. There were five or six children in the gang. They called us names and jostled us because they wanted to fight and settle who was 'King of the Yard'.

One day, when I wasn't at school, the bullying went too far. The gang leader broke the wheel on my brother's bike. A fight was arranged for the next day.

When my brother came home he told me what had happened. All this made me scared to go to school the next day, but when my brother told me that there was a party too that lifted my spirits.

Next day, I waited all morning for the party. At eleven o'clock I went out into the yard for break-time. My brother came over to me and said:

'You have to fight this morning.'

There was no party after all. A chill ran along my bones. The gang leader was huge. He struck me. We started to fight - he was lashing into me. We were soon both crying, but neither of us would give in. We were afraid to. He was afraid of losing his 'title'. I was afraid that if I lost I would be bullied all the time.

It was a hard fight but I didn't lose, and there was peace in the yard after that.

By John, David, John, Bernie, and Martin

Unbelievable Day

The best day in my life was April 12th 2002, the day I was moved. I went to pray and the prayer leader's voice was shaking. I had it fully in my mind that today would be a good day for me. I finished praying and I got up to go home. On my way home I met a man. This man was not new to me. We usually meet and always say hello but he never shakes my hand. However, that day he shook my hand and said 'bless you'. I was blessed that day. Every Friday I usually put money into the poor box. The people in the shop never say 'hi' to me. On this Friday I went into the shop to leave money in the poor box. I put the money in the box and people in the shop said 'hello' to me. I couldn't believe it. That is why I called it the happiest day of my life.

By J. David

Mountain View

I share a house with Danny, David, Paddy and Patrick. It is a lovely house. We get on well and we all have our own jobs in the house. Mine is doing the washing up.

I get the bus to the Brothers of Charity Training Centre every day. I work in different areas in the Training Centre like the kitchen, garden, pottery, woodwork and computers.

Every Friday I go home to Ballynacally for the weekend and return to the Training Centre Monday morning.

By Brian

The Clare Celts

I am going to see the Clare Celts in Galway sometime in June. James is coming with me.

We plan to go for a meal and to enjoy the day. The band are going to show me all their equipment and instruments. The Celts are a rebel band and their music is similar to the Wolfe Tones.

They will play requests for any Irish ballad song that you would like to hear.

By David

Trip To The Farm

We left the centre at 9.30 a.m. We went by bus. First of all we went to Seaworld in Lahinch. The fish were very big, so were the crabs. A man picked up a crab with long legs. I wouldn't have picked one up. I loved it there.

There was also a swimming pool. I saw all the little boys and girls swimming.

Then we went to a farm in Liscannor. I fed the donkeys special food. I saw a little lamb and an ostrich. I got tired going up the hill so I didn't see the pigs or the rabbits.

Maura took some snaps, so I'll get to see the animals I missed. We also got tea and sandwiches at the farm.

Getting in and out of the bus was hard but I loved the day and had a great time.

By Celia

My Driving Test

My older brother announced that he was going to Australia in June. He said that I could have his car. So I applied for my driving test in January.

I used to drive my uncle's tractor and my father's van. My cousin gave me a driving lesson for my birthday. My test was in April, so I took lessons for two weeks before my test.

My parents insured me to drive the family car, so that I was able to practice around the town with the instructor.

On the morning of the test I had to be in at 9 a.m., so I arrived at the test centre shortly before that. I was a bit nervous but felt sure that I would be alright because I had studied the rules of the road and I had lots of driving practice.

The driving instructor called me in. He asked me questions and I answered all of them correctly. Then he took me out on the road in the car. I drove through the town while he took notes of my driving. We arrived back at the test centre one hour later. The examiner brought me into his office. I had my fingers crossed hoping it would be good news. I could hardly believe it when he said I had passed. I couldn't wait to get home to tell everybody.

By Noel

Charlie's Story

I started living in the hostel in September of last year. I really enjoyed living there. I stayed in the hostel for nine weeks. I shared a room with Oliver. I was more independent when I was living in the hostel. I was able to visit people and places. I would sometimes take a bus to Ennis to look around the shops and go for a cup of tea. A couple of times I went to visit my brother in Galway. I went by bus and I enjoyed the journey.

By Charlie

Interviewing Nicky From Westlife

Do you enjoy travelling round the world to different concerts?
Do you like performing in Ireland?
What venue did you enjoy performing in the most?
Do you all get on well in the band?
Have any of you had any serious arguments with one another?
Do you get to spend much time at home with your family?
How many brothers and sisters do you have?
Are any of them pursuing a singing career, like you?
Are you married or do you have a girlfriend?
How many top ten hits have the band had?
Have you written any new songs that you will be releasing soon?

By Teresa

The Best Of Both Worlds

I live in Ballynacally and I travel to Ennis to the Brothers of Charity Training Centre every day (except Saturday and Sunday). A bus from the D.P.O.C. collects me every morning and drops me home every evening. The bus has a special lift so I can stay in my wheelchair on the bus. I have great independence as I have an electric wheelchair, which I can control myself.

At the training centre I have lots of friends and I'm kept very busy going to classes, cookery, music, reading, writing, PE, working on the computer and playing games. Earlier this year I went to Cork to the Munster Motor Activities Competition where I won a medal for bowling.

I have the best of both worlds as I love the training centre but I also love going home every evening.

By Connie

Personal Reflections Of Martial Arts

My first introduction to Martial Arts was when I was four. I finished training with that instructor at the age of eight.

Two years later I saw an Aikido Master on T.V. He was demonstrating hand – locks and takedowns. He inspired me to study Martial Arts full time.

The next art I took up was Shoto Kan Karate, and I studied that until I was eighteen.

When I was fifteen I started training with the World Tae Kwon Do Federation (WTF), International Tae Kwon Do Federation (ITF), and Hap Ki Do.

I also attained my 2nd Dan grade in Mui Tai Kick Boxing and Shoto Kan Karate.

I am now a 3rd Dan in Tae Kwon Do and Hap Ki Do. I hope to get my 4th Dan soon.

Since I have been involved in Martial Arts I have won:

The Cork Shoto Kan Karate Championship (1995),

The Cork Open Tae Kwon Do Championship, Black Belt Men's Division (1997),

A trophy for best referee in Cork (1996).

In 1996 I created my own Martial Art called Do Hap San Bal, which means the way of harmony of hand and foot. One year later I, Sensei Sean B, formed the School of Korean Martial Arts Association.

One should understand that Martial Art is not just about the body but also the mind and spirit. People should not take Martial Arts lightly and they should realise it is with them for life whether they use it or not.

By Sean

Moher Hill Farm

My favourite bit was Moher Hill Farm. I liked walking around looking at the animals. I saw turkeys, donkeys and hens, but no dogs!

The coffee shop was a nice place. We got tea and sandwiches there. I brought a brochure home to remember the farm.

Seaworld was a fine place. We got tea and sandwiches there. John, a man who worked there, told us about the fish. I loved the crabs and lobsters.

On the way home I saw St. Bridget's Well. Teresa told us that if you dropped rosary beads into the well and an eel appeared that your wish would be granted.

I would like to get a brochure on Seaworld in the Tourist Office.

By John

Johnny Logan

The first time I saw Johnny was in an interview with Shane Healy. That was in 1983. In 1980 he represented Ireland in the Eurovision Song Contest. He sang 'What's Another Year'. He won. Johnny Logan wrote the song 'Why Me' for Linda Martin in the Eurovision in 1992. We won again. Johnny also sang 'Hold Me Now'. Johnny Logan is not his real name, it's a stage name. His name is really Sean Sherrard. His father Charles Sherrard was known as Patrick O'Hagan a famous Irish tenor.

By Anala

My Home

I live with my mother and I love her very much. I have five brothers and sisters. I like when they call in to see my mother.

When my nieces and nephews call to see Mam she gets tired easily, so I send them upstairs to give Mam a break.

They are full of life and a bit wild. I like things neat and tidy and I spend a lot of time fixing things in my bedroom.

Sometimes I go to Bingo. I like having the odd night out.

By Phil

Interviewing Chris De Burgh

When did you begin your singing career?

Do you have a favourite song?

Where was your very first performance?

Do you enjoy singing to an Irish audience?

Did you ever perform in a band?

How many number one hits have you had?

How many of your records reached the top ten?

Will you be performing in any major concerts again?

Have you any new releases coming up soon?

Did your daughter ever think of following in your footsteps in a singing career?

By Dorothy

Tradaree Transport

I would like to write about Tradaree Transport as I have friends involved in the company. It is a 100% Irish owned transport company which has recently moved to a bigger premises in Smithstown Industrial Estate, Shannon. Tradaree operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week moving freight all over Ireland, the U.K. and mainland Europe. It handles all loads, big and small, providing a reliable service to both air and road freight forwarders. The current fleet consists of 18 vehicles, 5 articulated tractor and trailer units, 6 rigid trucks and 7 vans. I would feel comfortable sending goods with Tradaree Transport.

By Ger

Fishing

One day myself and a friend went fishing. It was a lovely summer's day in July so we decided to get our bikes and roam the roads. We cycled miles that day without any water to drink; we got very thirsty and our lips dried up. We cycled to Kilmaley and then walked through two or three fields. We spotted a lake and started to set our rods. The sun was so hot we were dripping with sweat. After about an hour we decided to cycle into Ennis. We went to the River Fergus. I told my friend that I had caught a lot of salmon and brown trout there once. The problem was that we had no fishing worms. Then I remembered putting fishing worms in a can in a hole in the wall before. I went over to see if they were still in the same place. They were gone, but there was something better than fishing worms there instead. There were twenty-five bottles of Stag cider! So, my good friend and myself celebrated on the bank of the River Fergus.

By Jimmy

A Bowling Trip

One day we went to Limerick bowling. We went on the bus. It was my first time bowling. I only knocked one skittle on my first shot, with a blue bowl. I used a black bowl for my next shot. This time I knocked five skittles. We all had a great time and we hope to go back again soon.

We had our lunch in Supermacs when we had finished bowling. I had a burger, chips and a coke.

By Jude

Renewable Energy

Energy has been my hobby for years. We all use it in various ways – homes, transport, food production, light, heat, and communications.

Can you think of a day when you didn't use any energy at all? We should all be more conscious of the energy we use, where it comes from and its environmental impact. The U.S.A. consumes 60% of the world's energy, with only 20% of the world's population. This highlights the need to re-educate people in energy consumption awareness.

In Ireland, only 2% of our energy comes from renewable resources and we import 80%, which inevitably causes pollution. There are lots of renewable sources of power – for example, the sea and the waves, which are very powerful but hard to harness.

Wind farms could be our major source of power, particularly as the West coast of Ireland is one of the windiest places in Europe. Personally, I like to look at the wind turbines working; the effect is calming and positive. The alternative is chimneys and smoke, or worse, nuclear power and waste, which we cannot dispose of.

By Gerard

Olivia

O only just two
L lovely with her eyes of blue
I in your pretty pink frock
V very cuddly and soft
I I could squeeze you
A and hug you 'till you beg me to stop.

By Jacinta

Interviewing Shane From Westlife

When did you start singing?
When did the band 'Westlife' get together?
Where do you live?
Would you sign my 'Westlife' video?
What's your favourite song?
Do you like doing live concerts?
Do you enjoy doing concerts in Ireland, or do you prefer to sing abroad?
How do you get on with the other band members?

By Desmond

The New Tunnel

I work in the garden centre in the Brothers of Charity, Ennis. We had a very exciting year this year as we replaced the old tunnels with a brand new multispan tunnel. The new tunnel will even have electricity and water sprinklers.

It is such a pleasure to take a walk through the bedding plants and shrubs. I love the colours and smells. It is a lovely place to work.

By David

Shannon Gaels

I'll never forget it... 1973, my first year with the local football team, 'Shannon Gaels'. It was a memorable time for me. We got through to the Junior League Championship and won it outright.

On the way, we defeated Kilrush Shamrocks in the semi-final. We beat St. Senan's, Kilkee in the final. My place in the team was in the forward line-up.

The final was played in Kilrush, in what the locals call 'The Cricket Field'. During the match the Shannon Gaels were awarded a penalty, which was disputed by St. Senan's, Kilkee.

A year later we were awarded the game and I received my medal in 1975.

By T

Trip To Lourdes

A few years ago I went to Lourdes with some of my friends. We stayed in a hotel for five days.

Every day we went to the grotto to pray. One morning we all went down to the 'Baths'. The water was very cold. Another day we went to visit St. Bernadette's house on a bus.

We did lots of praying every day. We had our dinner in the hotel each evening. Afterwards, we watched T.V. in the hotel's reception area.

By Martina

Adventure Stories

I have just finished reading an adventure story. It was very interesting and enjoyable.

It was about a group of children in boarding school. There were boys and girls there. It was Mike and Janet's first time away from home and they were lonely. They soon made friends with other children and shared their tuck boxes.

Tom was a boy who was always up to mischief, playing tricks on the teachers and pupils, especially Hugh, who was a loner. He played tricks in the classroom and was put in the front seat. Tom organised a midnight feast for Mike's birthday, but he didn't invite Hugh. Hugh was very upset so he told the teacher and the party was spoilt. After that, Tom and Hugh had a big talk. Tom decided he wasn't going to play any more tricks and that Hugh was going to be his friend. They would help each other with their studies.

At the end of the first term everybody was friends.

By Margaret

O'Connor's Bakery

I work in O'Connor's Bakery, Tulla Road on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. I help in the kitchen and

sometimes I cut the plastic sheets for wrapping the lunch rolls.

The staff are very nice and I enjoy working there. I also work in the Brothers of Charity Training Centre, Gort Road, so I'm kept very busy during the week.

At the weekend I go shopping on Saturday and usually go for a drive on Sunday with the other people in my house.

By Angela

Friends For Life

My cousin Noreen and I were very close friends. As children we were inseparable. I suppose our mothers being twins had a bit to do with it. They were so identical that they could even fool us.

It came in handy at times, like when my Mum got the letter for an interview. My Mum got herself so worked up about it that she got sick, so my aunt B. went in her place. My aunt was so excited when my Mum got the letter to say 'yes, you have the job; you can start as soon as possible.' My aunt B. was jumping around trying to annoy my Mum, saying things like, 'I wonder what I should wear for my first day?' They had a laugh about it and it was good fun.

That autumn, Noreen and I began our very first day at school. We were full of excitement. All went well until Noreen noticed that our parents had gone. She asked me if I had said something to upset them. 'No, why?' I replied. 'Because they have all gone,' sobbed Noreen. 'It's not always my fault when something goes wrong Noreen,' I snapped. 'No, not all the time,' sniffled Noreen, 'but most of the time.' But we soon forgot our parents and our first major tiff when the games started.

That was all a long time ago. A lot has happened since then. Noreen and I are both married with our own families. Noreen has twins, a boy and a girl. I also have twins, and they are also a boy and a girl. We named our girls after each other. My daughter is Noreen, and Noreen's daughter is Veronica. It's like history repeating itself all over again.

By Ronnie J.

My Life Experience Away From Home

I arrived in Ireland in May last year.

It was difficult in the first couple of weeks because it was my first time to be far away from home. All my life I lived with my parents. The weather was, and is, the main problem for me. It's cold and wet. The library saved my life. I used to spend four hours a day, five days a week in there, to learn English, a little bit of culture and the standard of life in this country. Then I changed my routine a little bit like going to nightclubs, going to the sports bar to watch matches and playing soccer every Saturday.

Actually I have a few friends and am happy with that.

Now I'm looking for citizenship in this country and I'm looking into the future. I know it won't be easy but anyway life is not easy. We have to work hard to get what we want without hurting anybody.

By Claudio

A Picnic

One Sunday, my Mam, Dad, sister and I decided to go for a drive. We brought a picnic with us. We went to Lahinch for the day. The sun was shining. The four of us went for a walk along the beach. We were all very hungry from the sea air so we went back to the car for our picnic. We had ham and cheese sandwiches. We brought a flask of boiling water and some tea bags, so we all had a cup of tea. Then we had some chocolate chip cookies. After we had finished eating we went for another walk along the beach. We all enjoyed the day and we hope to go again soon.

By Monica

Japan

The Irish team is playing in Japan. The first game is in Niigata. The city has a lot of snow in the winter and it has many ski resorts. Niigata is about two hours by shinkansen from Tokyo (shinkansen is the express train in Japan). The train is very expensive. Kubota is made in Niigata. Kubota is one of the most famous Japanese alcohols. It tastes very good.

The second game is in Kashima. The city has a football club team. The team is very good and they won the championship a few times in Japan. The Japanese team has many players from the Kashima team. Kashima is about two hours by bus from Tokyo.

The third game is in Yokohama. Tokyo is the biggest city in Japan and Yokohama is the next biggest city. Yokohama is very near Tokyo, about thirty minutes by local train. The city has many high buildings and many people work there. Young people like the city because it has many departments, amusement parks and other fun places. So I like it too.

By Saori

Hospitals

This past year I have been sick and have been to the hospital a lot. Thank God I am feeling much better. I have just spent a week in St. Luke's Hospital in Dublin. The hospital staff were very nice. We got a menu every day and had a choice of food. The food was lovely. I did not have any treatment so I could enjoy my food. I do not have to go back to Dublin any more. I will go to Galway for check-ups.

By Annette

Anniversary Present

Our three children gave us a Christmas and Anniversary present of a holiday (3 nights and 3 days) in Breaffy House Hotel. My husband and I were thrilled. We set out by car to Castlebar. The hotel was lovely and the food excellent.

The following day after arriving we went to Turlock House outside Castlebar, a museum depicting Ireland in the olden days. This was very interesting. The third day we went on a visit to Knock where Our Lady appeared. We went to Mass and prayed at the shrine.

In the hotel we met other people and chatted. Then on the Friday we drove north to see my Mum and sister. This was a lovely way of ending our holiday.

Many thanks to our children.

By Helen

Flower Girl

I was dwelling on the past
when she fell into my arms,
I cast my thoughts toward tomorrow
What will tomorrow bring?

I wish every day was like today
I don't care about the weather,
Where there's a will
Where there's a way
God, can't you see
I'm trying so hard to do the best that I can.

She's my little flower girl
She's my little flower girl and
I'm in love, I'm in love
and I'm in love, I'm in love....

By Blendi

Jack Of All Trades

I am talking about myself, about all the jobs I had. The first job I had was upholstering. I did that for two years. Then I had a job plastering. I did that for four years and then I went gardening for a while. Now I am doing security for the last three years, but my favourite job was plastering.

By Paul

Soap Bubbles

I watched Eastenders last night and it was about little Mo who got eight years in jail for attempted murder. Little Mo was abused and beaten by her husband Trevor. She finally cracked and hit him with an iron and left him for dead. The jury did not believe her and she was sent to prison.

When I watched this programme, I felt Trevor should have gone to prison and not Little Mo. After all she was beaten, raped and abused and she never told anyone, not even her family or friends. She kept it all in to herself until she went to court. Little Mo was only protecting herself from him, even though she still loved him and he wanted her to go back to him after all he had done to her. He said he still loved her and he would never forget about her.

It all started because he wanted her to have a family for him but she didn't want any children, not by him anyway. I felt sorry for Little Mo. It wasn't her fault.

By Lourda

First Trip To Lourdes

The first time I went to Lourdes was when I was thirteen years old. I went with mentally handicapped children from all over Co. Clare. It was supported by a 250 mile sponsored cycle.

I was with my mother. We went on a Monday evening, and arrived in Lourdes at 12 midnight. We stayed in the Hotel Astoria. The weather was beautiful.

We went to Mass every morning. We did a lot of praying. We went to the Baths; the water was freezing. We did the Stations of the Cross up the hill. We also did the candlelight procession at night-time. We had to be up early every morning. The food was OK. We came home on the Saturday morning.

I will be going again in June. This time I am going with the Killaloe Diocese. I am going with my mother and sister. We will be staying in the Tara Hotel. We will be there for five days. I am going on Wednesday and coming home on Monday.

By Elizabeth

A Night Out

Last Saturday night I went to Killimer with my Mum and Dad. We went to the pub for a drink and there was dancing. People were set dancing to the Country Rhythm Band. They played the Caledonian set and the jig. I waltzed with my Mum.

By Colette

Emmett

It was Easter Sunday morning on the 15th April at 10.20 a.m. The phone rang; it was my brother telling us that we had a new baby nephew. His weight was 6lbs. 6oz. They named him Emmett Jack.

He was born in Limerick Maternity Hospital. His father was present at the birth. He thought it was the most beautiful natural thing 'what nature could do'. We all went to the hospital that evening to see both mother and baby. Today Emmett is a year old, with four front teeth. His mother had to trim his brown hair and he no longer looks like a baby. He looks like a little boy now but very cute and spoiled. Emmett wants to know what is happening around him. We say he is very nosey but he is only being curious. In July he is supposed to be a page boy at my other brother's wedding. My father reckons he is too lazy and he will not be walking by then. He has got a two month old baby brother. He takes to him great. Emmett is a cute loveable child.

By Pauline

Magnificent Journey

Two weeks ago I went to London for a holiday with my girlfriend. It was a short journey but it was fantastic. We went to my best friend's house. We enjoyed everything. We were walking all morning and afternoon. It was very nice. The weather was warm and sunny. In the night we visited other friends. We tried all kinds of food and drink. We went to many places. We were shopping, sightseeing and enjoying ourselves. We were very happy. I will never forget this journey.

By Mageed

My Story

When I left school in 1994 I started work in the local Chinese. I worked there for three months. Then I went on a Fás scheme for one year. After that I got a job in a builders providers. I was there for two years, until I watered behind the bale of timber. I got sacked. I was very upset over this and was then on the dole for two months.

I got a chance to start a trade in carpentry in Kilkee. This was something I always wanted. I loved carpentry in school but there was one thing wrong, - I had no Junior Cert., as I left school early. I started going to Adult Education night classes. From there I went to Galway to do my exams. I had to study very hard.

Only for the classes a year and a half ago I would not be writing this story now. I have passed all five exams in Galway. I can now continue my trade. I have two and a half years done on sites. I only registered with Fás in March 2001.

In four years I will be going to America as a qualified carpenter to make a living for myself. I was very happy when I started my trade. I wouldn't have been able to do it without the night classes.

By Roy

The Irish Soccer Team

Ireland are playing matches before they go to the World Cup. Ireland won their last match against Greece. Mick McCarthy's team won by two goals to one. Soccer teams are going to be competing against other countries. The team is going to leave Shannon Airport to fly out for the World Cup. They have got to get sets of soccer gear and football boots. They are going to have a full squad. The matches are going to be shown on R. T. E.

By Patrick

The Lotto

If I won the Lotto I would go on a holiday to Spain or America. I would go with my Mum. She would like it.

I would like to go to Lourdes again. We got holy water there and went to the pool. It was very, very cold. I'd like to take Bridie because she is my friend. I would like to go for a walk with her, or maybe go for tea.

By Anne Marie

What Are The Facts

We don't know the time between birth and infancy, and we don't know how to achieve happiness. The time of our life is from our birth to the time of success. Our life is today, or so I think.

We wait for the future because it isn't in our hands. The present is in our hands but we don't know what to do with it. We have wasted the past and it is now behind us.

Now, look at the birds because they use their lives better than us. They live their lives for the present, for where they are. That's the right attitude. Think about it. Where are we?

Are the birds right?

By Salaheddin

Some Woman's Story

I was reading a story in a magazine called "Woman's Own" last night . It was the story of a woman in Germany having her first child. She was from England but her husband was in the military and stationed in Germany.

The woman was seven months pregnant and went to the clinic for her monthly check up. The doctor asked her if she had felt the baby moving in the last few weeks and she said 'no'. They did an ultrasound to see what was wrong. The doctor couldn't find a heart beat and said her baby was dead. Then he told her that she would have to carry it for the full nine months.

She went home that day with her whole world shattered and a broken heart, knowing she would have to carry a dead baby inside her for another two months.

When I was reading this I nearly cried. After the two months she went to the hospital to deliver the baby. She held the baby for a few minutes and then they took it away. The next day she asked the nurse if she could see her baby again and the nurse told her that the baby had been incinerated with the rest of the hospital waste.

I was totally disgusted to hear what had happened to her baby. I couldn't believe how badly she was treated by the hospital and the staff involved in her ordeal.

It is ten years later now and the woman has two beautiful daughters but still thinks of the other little baby that should be ten years old now.

By Anne Marie

My Friend

My friend's name is Patrick. We talk about lots of things. It is good to have someone to discuss worries and problems with.

We also have a good laugh together as Patrick can be very funny. He is a good worker and doesn't mind doing his share of the work. Everyone should have a friend.

By Jill

The Premiership

I like and enjoy many things, many places, many people, music and sport but I really love to watch soccer and I enjoy seeing the goals and the excitement of the Premiership.

Man. Utd. won the 2001 league easily and were well ahead of all their rivals at the end of the season. They have been very consistent all year and have brilliant players and squad members. They have won six championships in the last eight years and they won the treble in 1999.

Man. Utd. must be one of the wealthiest clubs in the world. They bought Fabien Barthez for 10 million.

Ryan Giggs won the Player's Football Association young player of year in 1991, 1992 and 1993. He also won the FA Cup in 1996.

Two of the most famous players of 1996 were Ryan Giggs and Eric Cantona.

By Carl

In September

I am going on holiday to Spain. I am going with Therese, Kathleen, Jacinta, John, Barnie and Donnie.

We will fly from Shannon airport and someone will meet us at the airport and take us to the apartments. We are going for seven nights. We will be swimming in the pool and we might go shopping. I don't know what it will be like because I've never been to Spain. They will be nice people.

I feel very excited about going. It will be a break for me. I have never been abroad before, except to England. I will have to pack my clothes. I could bring a few light pants and t-shirts with me. It will be very hot over there. I must get some sun cream because I burn very quickly. I have sunglasses already.

By Mary

Living In The Country

I live on a farm with my brother. I look after the house and do the cooking and washing. I like living in the country.

The only problem is that I do not drive and I am too far from everything. I get lifts sometimes from my brother but there are lots of times when he is too busy.

I sometimes get a taxi but we have only the one taxi in the town and it can be expensive.

I hope one day to be able to get work part time in the nearest town.

By Eileen

My Brother's Wedding

My brother is getting married in May, here in Ennis to a girl called Ann Marie. My mother, Ellie, bought me a new outfit and boots.

I'm looking forward to a good day out. I hope the sun will shine as Ann Marie is wearing a beautiful white dress and veil.

By Julie

My Childhood

I remember a very happy day when I was a little girl. My family lived in Belarus. I had an older brother and my parents organised lots of fun for us. On sunny Sundays we walked in the forests. We enjoyed the beautiful scenery and sometimes we could see different animals and insects. One day my father and I saw a tiny snake. She lay in the sunshine near the tree and did not move. I was not afraid because I was with my father.

By Volda

My Hobbies

My name is John. I am from Gallows Hill in Ennis. My hobbies include listening to music, working on the computer and watching television. My favourite programmes are Emmerdale Farm, Coronation Street, Fair City and Eastenders. I also like working in the garden.

By John

A Weekend In Bantry

I went to Bantry for the weekend. I got there at 11.15 a.m. I went to book rooms in the hostel. I decided to go to the pub and I had a drink. Afterwards, I went to the take-away and had sausage and chips. I ate them in the street. I rang my friend and went to see him at his flat. We had a mug of coffee. It rained all day. At 7 p.m. I went to the hotel to meet Patrick. I brought a friend Ger with me. I introduced him to Patrick and we had a cup of tea. We all went back to the hostel. We met my other friends and then we went to the pub for a drink. Patrick bought me a drink for my birthday and then we went to the disco.

By Paul

A Summer In Kilkee

Last summer I went on holiday with my friends Anna, Rose and young Kieran. When we arrived in Kilkee we stayed in the Kilkee Bay Hotel for one week. Every day after breakfast we went walking for a few hours along the beach until lunch time.

Around four o'clock young Kieran and I went back to the sea to fish. We got different types of fish, crab, mussel, starfish, salmon, squid and plaice.

The town was very small but it was very nice and we had a great holiday. I hope that we will go there again this year.

By Chierno

Be Ready For The After-Life

Life is like a short trip. We know about death but some people don't take it seriously. Perhaps they don't believe that they will be asked about everything they did in their lives. Even some of us don't believe in the presence of God.

So, if we believe, there is a life after death, which is the real life and a continuous life.

We will either go to heaven for a life of pleasure and enjoyment, or to hell for a life of fire and torture. The choice is ours.

We are so busy in our lives that we don't have time to think. Everything is available for us and we can do more or less what we like. But nobody thinks about tomorrow or life after death.

How can we prepare for the after-life? There is much we can do. Look inside yourself and ask yourself what you have missed and forgotten in life.

Look at yourself and ask yourself if you are ready to face God. Do you feel that you have obeyed and respected God according to the beliefs presented in the Holy books?

Until you start to think, I'm afraid your life will be over and nothing will have changed.

By Meissa

My Brother's Wedding

There was plenty of excitement on the 4th of May! That's the day my brother got married.

I went down to Paul Martyn's and got a spiral set. I looked different but I liked the look. When I came home, I swiftly tidied the house.

At last it was time to go upstairs and put on my suit.

My father went to get the car washed and put on the ribbons. We waited until he came back and then we went down to the Poet's Corner to have a drink.

On that day, I met family members that I hadn't seen for ages. My aunt came from Denmark!

My brother got married to Karen at 2.30 p.m. in the Cathedral Church. When the ceremony was over, people came out of the church to congratulate them on their wedding day.

The reception was at the Old Ground Hotel. Karen's father and the best men, Fergal, John and Niall read speeches. We all had a good time at the wedding and the whole day was captured on camera.

They were married 12 months last Saturday.

By Helen

About Me

My name is Karen. I live in Shannon with my family and I attend the Brothers of Charity Training Centre in Ennis. I love most things I do at the workshops, but my favourite activities are working on computers, cookery and playing sports (hockey, table-tennis and football). I'm really looking forward to the Special Olympics in 2003. We are in training for them already. Our coach is Mary and she is very nice.

By Karen

My Worst But Incredible Holiday

Once upon a time there was a little girl.

She was seven years old and she went to a girl's camp on holiday.

She was very nosey like all girls her age and she lost herself in the forest. She felt so lonely and scared and she was so afraid because the shadows of the trees looked like horror faces. She tried to hide herself in a big hole in a big old tree. Because it was very cold and dark, she started to cry and she yelled very loudly, 'Mummy, where are you?'

Meanwhile, in the camp, the girl was not missed until suppertime. Then the carers split into two groups and searched for her. The group who went to the forest called her name and looked behind all the bushes. The time went by very fast and they were getting impatient.

However, one of the carers heard a little noise. He directed his flash light towards the big old tree. The light was shining on a white blouse. She was nearly blinded by the light in her face, but she was laughing hysterically. She was the happiest girl in the world.

The moral of the story is this:

If you never, ever lose your belief in good then it will be with you forever.

The little girl in the story is me.

By Astrid

Aisteoirí – My Link With The Roots

There was always a tradition of acting in Miltown Malbay but in the late 40s, Fr. Mullally organised the drama group under the banner 'Aisteoirí na Cathrach'. The Irish for Miltown Malbay is Stráid na Cathrach. The group won an All Ireland final with 'The Black Stranger' in 1954.

After the departure of Fr. Mullally, my father, Sean M. who is a Scariff man, joined Aisteoirí as both producer and actor when he took up a teaching post at the local V.E.C.

In 1957 he produced two one-act plays, 'Money Doesn't Matter' and 'Paddy Peddlar', a play which got 2nd place in the All Ireland final of 1957.

A selection of other plays performed by Aisteoirí under Sean M. were 'Country Boy', 'Bishops', 'Candlesticks' and 'The Shadow and Substance'.

Aisteoirí is still active in Miltown Malbay even though from time to time the drama group has taken a little 'sos'.

By Ger

The Farm

I am up every morning at 6.30 a.m. I go to the farm and feed the animals hay, silage and meal.

The animals have to be well looked after. Animals that are not talked to, fed, and taken care of will go wild.

When they see a stranger, they will be nervous and will run away. But if they are properly cared for, they will be content and settled.

By Joe

Why Ireland?

I arrived in Ireland on 22nd June, last year (2001) seeking asylum. I choose Ireland because my country D. R. Congo has three main links with Ireland. They are –

- Roger Casement denounced the atrocities, which Congolese had suffered under King Leopold II.
- In 1962, Irish soldiers came with the UN forces to establish peace in Katanga, they saved people in my tribe.
- Irish workers were exploited by the UK and Belgian Kingdom. They built factories, houses, streets, etc...

And other links are – Ireland is the world's capital of music and D. R. Congo is the African capital of music. Irish people are very friendly like the Congolese.

Africa

If you believe and I believe and we together pray
Then The Holy Spirit must come down
and Africa will be saved
(Ref.) And Africa will be saved (x 2)
Then The Holy Spirit must come down (x 2)

God is forever

God is God forever (x 2)
God of Noah is God forever
God of Moses is God forever
God of Israel is God forever
God of Ireland is God forever (x 2)
God of Congo is God forever
God of Doras is God forever
God of Christians is God forever
(Ref.) God is God forever (x 2)

By Zadio

Tiny

Tiny, my walking friend, died last year of old age. She was a brown and white Jack Russell and she lived with us since she was a pup.

She was a very good-natured little dog and loved her walk every evening. I kept her on a lead as she was very nosey and playful and followed every sound, so the walk could have taken forever otherwise. She won 1st prize at the dog show in the Showground in Ennis on several occasions. She also loved a swim in Ballycullen Lake.

I still miss her as she kept me busy. I'm thinking it's time to look for another pup, preferably a Jack Russell, maybe a 'he' this time.

By Sunny

A Wonderful Camping Holiday

Many years ago I went camping with my sister, brother and friends. There were fifteen of us.

We arrived at the destination, White Sand beach, at 3.00 p.m. We found a nice flat place to set up tents and everything that we brought. About 4.00 p.m. we began to set up a campfire to cook the food. When the fire was ready, people sat down around the fire and enjoyed the barbequed food. We sang, told jokes and spoke about ourselves.

After that we played a game of charades. We had a lot of fun with this. I never laughed as much as I did that night.

At night we laid down on the ground to watch the stars in the sky. It was a wonderful night; there were a lot of stars like bright diamonds. The wind was cool on that hot summer's night. We talked and talked until dawn.

By Susanna

Grow

My name is Janice, I suffer from depression. I go to the day centre in Kilrush five days a week. There are 20 to 25 people there everyday. We have two nurses, one called Carmel and the other one is Robert.

My daughter is going to have a baby in September. I am delighted at that news, also my son and his girlfriend got engaged last week so we have to look forward to another wedding.

Grow is an organisation that helps people with depression and I go to the meetings every two weeks. I find the group is really helpful and it helps to know that I am not alone.

By Janice

My Family

There are six people in my family. I have two sisters, Carmel and Michelle, one brother Danny and my mother and father. We also have a dog called Mucky. Our house is in the town of Ennis. I like living in Ennis. I attend the Brothers of Charity Training Centre every day.

By Suzanne

Knock

I was in Knock last Saturday. We went up by bus with a few others. We had a lovely day. It is a beautiful place. I prayed for everyone all around the world. I was a very wet day. I enjoyed my trip up to Knock. We went for a cup of tea in a restaurant we had a lovely day. Knock is all about Our Lady who appeared there. We pray to Our Lady to help us.

By Mary

The Bell Rang Loud And Clear ... 1

When the bell rang loud and clear I woke up and saw the headless horseman riding his horse across the lawn of the house. I was very scared so I ran from the window and hid underneath my bed. Then I heard a terrible thumping on the door. I peered out the window and saw my mother standing at the door. I raced down the stairs in my underwear and let her in.

by Jack

The Bell Rang Loud And Clear ... 2

The bell rang loud and clear. Everyone roared with excitement as the wrestling bell rang. Peter Murphy 'The Thumper' was fighting for the WWF belt. It was a very exciting match.

The Thumper lived up to his name and thumped every opponent that came at him. Everyone cheered as the bell rang for half time.

At the end of the match the Irish guy had won. The bell rang out loud as the match finished and the crowd screamed with excitement.

by Tracy

The Bell Rang Loud And Clear ... 3

The bell rang loud and clear at the church. John and Sheila were getting married. The priest started crying because he was so happy. The bride and groom went away in a limo. They had a big party and they had a big cake. After that they went to Hawaii for their honeymoon and they lived happily ever after.

The Bells Rang Loud And Clear ... 4

The church bells rang loud and clear, dong, dong, dong. It was Saturday the 31st of March 2001. The day we had been waiting for was here at last. It was my sister Clara's wedding at Ballyea parish church. The reception was in the Old Ground. We organised ourselves and went to Fingers and Faces in Parnell Street. Then we put our clothes on and I was a bridesmaid and so was Fiona.

The groom was waiting and all our priests, Fr. Teehan and Fr. Sexton and all our people were in the church. We prayed for Clara and Lorchan. Then Killian and Colm played music. Clara was walking up the aisle. Then we sat on the cross wooden benches along the sides of the church. Lorchan kissed Clara. Now they are man and wife. There was a car pulled up at Ballyea church. My sister linked my Dad's arm down the aisle. Everyone stood to take pictures of Clara with a beautiful crown on her head and a white dress.

The reception was in the Old Ground where we had a big dinner. We had roast beef and roast potatoes. After dinner I danced and danced until my feet got sore from the white shoes. The DJ played a request for me, he said 'Gabrielle wants to hear 'Sleep Dreams' from BoyZone'. I loved my sister's wedding. They went to Italy on their honeymoon and when they got back my mum and I picked them up from Shannon.

By Gabrielle

The Bell Rang Loud And Clear... 5

The Church bell rang loud and clear at midnight. It was a dark stormy night. I was very afraid, the ghost stood near me. He put his hand on my shoulder. His hand went through me. Then all of a sudden he disappeared into the night. The ghost appeared one more time to me and he said "goodbye Patrick"

By Patrick

The Bell Rang Loud And Clear ... 6

The wedding bells rang loud and clear on a fine day. The guests came to the church and the groom arrived in a BMW car. He wore a white suit. The bride wore a long white dress. She arrived in a horse and carriage with her Dad. The bridesmaids arrived in a limo to the church. The name of the church is St. John's. The bishop married them. The reception was in the Old Ground Hotel. Everyone had a good night and the married couple went to Spain for their honeymoon.

by Joe

The Bell Rang Loud And Clear... 7

One night my friends were staying over at my house. My parents were gone out and so were my sisters and brothers, so it was my friends and I in the house on our own. We were all watching scary videos when we heard the door bell ring. I went to answer it but there was no one there. I went back to the others and as soon as I sat down we heard voices outside as the bell rang again so we all went out to the door, but there was no one there. The telephone rang and the voice said 'I know you are there on your own with your friends'. We were all so scared we started to scream. It rang again and the voice said 'I'm upstairs', when we got to my older brother's room, there he was with his friends on the phone. We were all so scared, we nearly killed them for scaring us so much.

By Patricia

The Bell Rang Loud And Clear ... 8

The school bell goes off to let the children know when they have to get ready for home or their lunch. The bell goes off at 10 to 11 for the babies and for the bigger ones it goes off at 10 past 11. Then at 10 to 3 it goes off for everyone to get ready and we go out at 3 o'clock. The bell we have is an electric one. Our favourite is the one at 3 o'clock because that's when we all get to go home.

by Marie

National Games

At the moment I'm in training for the National Games which will be held in Dublin in June 2002. My trainers names are Mary and Dereck. Mary is from Tipperary, but she is not so bad. I'm playing midfield with the soccer team. I train once or twice a week.

In preparation for the National Games in Dublin we play a Munster League and also attend workshops. There are 25 athletes. They are all travelling for the games. We all have new track suits, polo shirts and baseball caps.

We hope to bring home lots of medals.

By John

My Life

I have my own T.V. in my room. I share a house with 5 others. We get on well. Sometimes I watch T.V. with the others but I prefer to watch it in my room. I don't like sport very much.

I have to share the housework. I have my own jobs that I do every week, mopping the floor and changing the beds. I hate doing them.

By Martin

The Seasons

There are four seasons in a year; spring, summer, autumn and winter. My favourite season is summer, and my least favourite is winter. Each season has its different aspects.

Spring is a nice season because after winter everything starts to grow and blossom such as the daffodils, bluebells and the irises. The buds on the trees start to grow again and the temperatures start to rise up a bit. Some swallows and other birds come back in the late spring. Lambs and calves are born. Then spring is ending.

Summer is just beginning. Plants start to blossom and temperatures start to rise. People go to beaches and lakes and dress in their light summer clothes. Summer is a happy season because people get holidays and go to different places. The evenings start to get a lot brighter up until 10:00 at night. The cuckoo is a warm weather bird that comes in early summer and leaves when it starts to get colder.

As we go into September and October the autumn has arrived. The nights creep in and the clocks go back an hour in mid-October. The leaves start to fall off the trees and the summer birds have all gone back to the warm countries.

Most of the animals such as the hedgehog, foxes, and badgers start to hibernate for the winter.

As the winter comes in, the cold and frost start to come. Every plant, tree and animal seems to disappear, except the trees. The trees are bare and have no nests in them. Christmas is here and everything is quite. After Christmas the winter is nearly over.

By Siobhán

The Irish Soccer Team

For many years, we thought that Mick McCarthy would not be a success as manager of the Irish soccer team. The reason for this is that Ireland had failed to qualify for a major final even though they did qualify for the play-offs.

When Mick McCarthy opted to play Holland and Portugal away in our Group G, many thought that he was very foolish.

Ireland played very well in both games and got two draws, which set us up in the group. Cyprus, Andorra and Estonia would have to be beaten both at home and away as Holland and Portugal would be able to beat them also.

This would mean that Ireland needed to perform to the best of their ability at Lansdowne Road. They finished unbeaten on the same number of points as Portugal but had an inferior goal difference. Ireland and Mick McCarthy are now in Saipan preparing for the World Cup in Japan and Korea.

By James R. & James H.

And Teresa Came Too

We went to Lahinch to Seaworld. We saw some fish and crabs. There was a waterfall in Seaworld. There was no body swimming in the sea. We went to the farm, we saw some animals. There was one animal called a Llama. If I had a bag I would collect some turf. Then we had salad sandwiches, cheese and tomatoes. Maura and Caroline and Teresa came too. We were back in time for our dinner. It got very cold in the evening, there was one Peacock.

By Marie

My Trip To Rome And San Giovanni

On October 6th 2001 I went on a Padre Pio Pilgrimage. We flew from Shannon to Fiunicino Airport with Ryanair.

We stayed in the Astoria Hotel in Fiuggi for two nights. While there we went to Rome to see the Pope. After Mass the Pope went around in his Pope Mobile and gave us his blessing.

We then travelled by coach to San Giovanni where there was a very full religious programme arranged. We visited the cell of Blessed Padre Pio, which was open at the time. We did the stations of the cross and I had a turn carrying the cross.

At night we went to the Grotto to say the rosary. There was a light left on in Padre Pio's room all night.

After four nights we left for the Tirrenian Coast and stayed in a hotel beside the beach. It was a very scenic place. We went on a sight-seeing tour 'Rome by night' from there.

It was one of the most enjoyable holidays I ever had.

By Mairead

A Letter To The Clare Champion

Dear Sir,

I was standing near my window the other night and I saw a fire at the back of my house. Shortly after firemen called into my house to see if we were all right. The children were really scared. I am sick and tired of all this carry-on late at night in the estate. Teenagers lit a fire in my garden that night at 10 past 3 in the morning. My children woke up and they were very frightened. Windows are often smashed in the estate late at night. These vandals never think about the young families who live here

who live here. Why don't the police drive through the estate late at night in the squad car? They must be afraid like we are, but their job is to protect us, so where are they?

I phone the police many nights and they say they will drive out but they don't always come. They just never seem to be around when you need them, but my family and I are entitled to live in safety and peace. Would you agree?

By Jacinta

Misunderstandings

When we came to Ennis and rented an apartment my wife was six months pregnant. After re-arranging our apartment and painting it, we decided to take a break for a day and went to the Cliffs of Moher. We bought return tickets and the bus brought us to the bus station at the cliffs. I asked the driver before he left where the bus would pick us up in the evening. He said the same place between 4.00 and 6.00p.m. We had all day to enjoy ourselves.

It was a lovely morning, very unusual for Ireland. The sun was shining and all our worries were gone. We walked around and along the cliffs and enjoyed the wild nature. It was so exciting and beautiful that we had lunch there and decided to stay until 6.00 p.m. We stayed all day and were very tired by the time it was ready to go home.

We waited for the bus until 6.30 p.m. and when it didn't come, we asked at reception about it. The lady said that the Galway to Ennis bus never stops at the station, it stops out on the road and that the 6.00 p.m. bus was the last one for the day.

We tried to hitch-hike but did not have any luck. The taxis were very expensive and also difficult to get so we called a friend of ours. At 11.00 p.m. he picked us up and we reached home at midnight. Since then we have never waited until the last minute.

By Renat, Anna and the lovely Declan

Tips For Potatoes

1 teaspoon of sugar dropped in to boiling potatoes improves the flavour.

A sprig or two of mint added to old potatoes for the last 5 minutes of cooking time improves their flavour.

By Anne

Winter

What I like about the wintertime is the dark evenings when the tea is over and you can sit down either watching television or reading a book. With a nice half-whiskey and not a sound in the house, only the blocks in the fire hissing.

There is another few points about wintertime that I like as well. For example, if you find the evenings long or boring you can take up a hobby like knitting or dressmaking. Anything at all to stop you getting depressed and thinking of the long months of rain and frost ahead of you.

I especially like November because I have six grandchildren now, so I have a lot to celebrate. We have Trick or Treat and I will take the older ones to a few houses to see the bonfire and then back to my house to celebrate Halloween. Last November, my Granddaughter of 2 weeks was christened, her name is Serenna. My son and daughter came home from London for it.

Last but not least comes Christmas. It can be a lonely time for some people and a happy time for others. I love the buzz, the rushing around, getting presents for my family and friends and seeing how much I can spend on each one.

Sometimes I feel like a child myself, putting up the decorations, getting new clothes and showing off some of the presents I get. I look at them every few hours to make sure they are still there, that someone hasn't taken them away from me!

I guess that goes back to my childhood when we did not get very much because times were hard then especially with eleven children in our family. There were happy times as well. My sister Valerie and I often sit and talk about our childhood. Sometimes we have a laugh, or a little cry, but I would not turn back the clock for anyone.

By Berna

I Love Shopping

I like shopping and love going around the shops looking at the lovely clothes and shoes.

My favourite is Dunnes Stores. I shop a lot there. Recently I got an outfit for my niece's wedding. It was black pants, a green blouse and a black string top. It was lovely. I also bought black shoes in Dunnes.

Mary's of Ennis have nice body sprays and I buy my cosmetics in Holly's chemist.

I do my grocery shopping every Wednesday in Tesco. While there I visit Penneys. They have lovely bags there.

Years ago I was working in Dublin and Clearys was another favourite shop of mine.

By Phil

New Hairstyle

One Sunday in March I went to KG's hairdressers in the market. I told the hairdresser what I wanted, two colours and a trim. One girl washed my hair first, then another girl put in blond streaks and copper streaks in the top of my hair. I had to sit and wait for 40 minutes to let the colour set.

Then another girl cut my hair, I asked her to cut it very short at the back and just a little at the sides. When she was finished she put gel on the top and then some hairspray. It wasn't too expensive and now I'm really happy with my new hairstyle.

By Karen

An Enjoyable Trip To Dublin

In March of this year, I went on a trip to Dublin with the Clare Reading & Writing Scheme. Our first stop in Dublin was the Chester Beatty Library where there are lots of rare books and pieces of art work. In the library it was very dark, like a very dark night. The room was like a cave but it wasn't cold. There were no windows. The place was heavenly because it was so dark and quiet.

After the Chester Beatty Library, we went to the Dáil. We made our way to the gallery of the Dáil chambers and had a walk around, but a guard told us to sit down - Bertie was on his way! We listened to Bertie for a little while and then we met Tony Killeen and had a tour of the Dáil.

Our last stop was the new wing at the National Gallery of Ireland. This is where I saw my favourite picture. The picture is by Claude Monet and it is very colourful with lots of yellows and reds. It shows a woman and a child in a garden. They are wearing similar dresses and they both look very serious. The whole picture has a misty look. This is my favourite picture because of the child.

I really enjoyed the trip to Dublin.

By Phyllis

I Went To Lourdes

I went to Lourdes on Easter Sunday with all my friends. While I was there I lit candles and sent postcards.

I went to Mass. I went shopping, I had a picnic and I went to McDonalds.

I got a Lourdes jigsaw for my nephew. I got a Lourdes ring for myself.

I had a great time.

By Helena

Cooking

I live in Cusack Lawn with my friends from the Brothers of Charity. Sometimes we argue, but most of the time we are good friends.

It's nice to have friends to watch videos with or to go for walks with.

We take turns cooking the tea in the house. I like to do potato wedges with sweet corn and fried eggs. Everyone likes this for tea. Sometimes I do garlic bread as well. The house parent is always there if I need help with the cooking.

By Sylvia

The Month Of May

May day is the first of May. It is the first day of summer. The days are getting longer, the birds are singing and the flowers are growing.

It is a very busy time of year. The students are studying for their examinations. The farmers have a lot of work to do on their land. Children have fun playing outdoors. They pick flowers and make daisy chains. They make May altars at home and at school because it is Mary's special month. People make plans for their summer holidays.

I like the month of May because the days are sunny and bright.

By Ruth

Fire

It was on a Sunday evening a couple of years ago, my wife had gone to bingo with her cousin's wife for the evening. Tom and I were babysitting.

They had their caravan parked behind our house. Tom put the kids to bed. He came over then for a while. We had a mug of tea and a chat. Then we decided to have a game of cards for the crack so we started playing for a while. Then Tom checked the children - they were all right.

Time flew, the girls came back from bingo and Tom kept checking the children to see everything was all right. The two of us went out after a while and noticed the caravan was on fire.

We were there in time to get the kids out, thank God. Someone called the fire brigade, but the caravan had collapsed before they arrived.

The fireman said that was the first time they had seen anybody being saved from a burning caravan. He said we were heroes and should be proud of ourselves and so we were.

He said there are good things in Travellers if ye got a chance to show the goodness in ye.

We said 'thanks lads' and they went away. It has never happened since thank God.

By Peter

Coronation Street

My favourite character on Coronation Street is David Platt. He plays Gayle's son. He is about 13 years old and has two sisters.

He is my favourite character because he plays practical jokes on the neighbours. He took a man's bag one morning and he and his friend put sparklers into it. When the man opened the bag the sparklers shot out. The man was amazed.

David is a joker but he gets on well with his mother and her fiancé and his sisters. He gets on well with his father too. He is a good person overall. David is an excellent football-player. His father brings him to matches and football training sessions.

My favourite storyline on Coronation Street is the one involving Maxine's baby boy. This is a very tense storyline. Matt Ramsden is the father of the baby but Maxine's husband doesn't know that. Now, Matt is trying to get Maxine back but this causes rows between Maxine and her husband. Maxine keeps her secrets to herself.

By Kieran

My Friend Mary In L. A.

Mary is a person that I first met in 1995. She was living in an apartment next to where I was staying. We did not speak until 1996 when I went to L. A. for my uncle's funeral. She sympathised at the church and this was the beginning of our friendship.

Mary was born in the U.S.A. and lived with the native American Indians for a period of her life. This seems to have been very inspiring for her as she learned to live and survive by their culture. She carried this learning into her own life when she returned to L. A.

She is a spiritual woman and she believes in spirituality. I was drawn to her and liked her ways. She is a positive woman who has given me good guidance and has helped me to make changes in my spiritual life.

She does Indian craftwork and she taught me how to make a 'dream catcher'. A 'dream catcher' looks like a spider's web but it has a metal rim. It catches your bad dreams and lets them go in the morning light. You can add to the dream catcher. I have put rings, medals and other personal things that belonged to my mother into my 'dream catcher'.

My friend also makes crystal hangings which reflect in the sun light. She earns a small income by selling them at the beach.

I hope that Mary will come to Ireland one day. Then, I can return the compliment of goodwill that she has shown to me.

By Michal.

Recipe For A Sponge Cake

4 eggs
4 ozs caster sugar
4 ozs flour

Whisk eggs and sugar. Fold in flour.

Put the mix into two sponge tins.

Bake in the oven at 190°C for 10 – 15 minutes.

To decorate:

Whip cream, put some of the cream on one sponge. Put the second sponge on top. Pipe a star on the top. Put chocolate vermicelli on sides and orange segments on top.

By Edel

The Horse Drawn Ambulance

Hi Breda,

You know we had a great night last night, we sat around the fire telling stories. Mam started saying "do you remember the horse drawn ambulance". "Do I remember?". When I was young, I remember seeing a man being put in it. Then the horse shied, the door opened and the man fell out and broke his legs.

By Kathleen

Blue

We went to see a play in Galway one Friday. It was about a boy called Ricardo. The boy broke up with his girlfriend because she wanted to go out every night drinking and when he came home, she broke his heart because she wanted to go out with this other boy.

Ricardo went to the doctor and he asked him what was the matter. He said that his heart was broken and that his girlfriend had left him. The doctor said he had to have an injection that turned out to be a love potion and Ricardo was sent to charm school to learn how to be nice to his girlfriend.

I like this play because it was funny and the actors were good. The Blue Teapot Theatre Company is made up of adults with learning disabilities who use drama to entertain and educate, so I felt it was a great achievement.

We had a meal out at the John Paul Centre in Galway and we all enjoyed the day.

Rating: 😊

😊 = very good

😐 = fair

😞 = not good.

By Patricia

Ideal Sunday

My ideal way to spend a Sunday would be to get up out of bed, wash the children and give them their breakfast. Then we would go to Kilkee and play on the beach for a while. After that we'd go to a nice hotel for Sunday dinner. I would have soup, chicken and vegetables with potatoes. The lads would have the same. Then we'd have dessert. My favourite is Peach Gateaux and the kids would have jelly and ice cream.

After that we would go around Kilkee for a nice walk. I'd take the kids to Cappa for a couple of hours on the swings to tire them out and give them a nice day. Then we'd come home happy and tired. Then after the kids have gone to sleep, I might sit down and watch an old romantic movie on the T.V. like *Gone With The Wind*.

By Linda

Westlife

I have lots of tapes and CD's of Westlife. There are five singers in the group. They are all boys and they are very popular. I have two music videos by Westlife. My favourite songs are *Seasons In The Sun*, *Uptown Girl*, *I Lay My Love On You* and *When You're Lookin Like That*.

The names of the boys in the group are Kian, Brian, Mark, Nicky and Shane. Shane is the lead singer in the group.

The boys are funny dancers. They wave their arms about and jump up and down on the stage. They are all Irish and they are all good looking.

By Michelle

Returning To Education After 30 Years

March 2001 two friends and myself were standing in the old school yard of the Convent of Mercy, (Convent of no Mercy as we used to call it). This is where I had attended primary school 30 years ago and at the age of 13 years left to work in Braids factory.

At the time, financially, it was better to get a job and be able to hand up some money at home. This along with the strict school system that didn't suit my personality were some of the reasons I left school.

I told my friends that there was only one time I remember that I liked going to school. I went on to tell them of a time when I went to school in England.

I was 11 years at the time and because I was going to be spending two months over there with my family, the head nun told my mother that I would have to attend school over there as I would miss out on too much of the school year.

The school I went to was so different from the one I was used to. There were girls and boys in the same class and the class itself was more relaxed. We did not have to be so tidy and everything. Their English accent was the only thing I had to get used to.

One day the teacher made a point of showing the class how the sound of a word could make you tend to spell it in the way it sounded. She did this by asking me to spell 'child'. I did so and spelled the word as she sounded it e.g. 'choild' because of her accent, instead of the correct spelling 'child'.

When I came home here again and went back to school, I was glad in a way, because I had missed my friends and missed being able to find my way around, along with being able to understand the accent. I always said I would have loved to have more education but I never got the chance because of working and bringing up my family.

'Well you are not late yet' said one of my friends. He said he had gone back to school by attending the VTOS Adult Education Centre. So I went and applied for the VTOS and after a few weeks I was enrolled for a childcare course.

I chose childcare because it was something different from what I normally work at. I thought it would be interesting to work with children and learn new skills. It is now May 2nd and I have almost finished my first year of a two-year course at VTOS.

I often meet my friend and thank him and tell him how well I am getting on at VTOS. I know that I would never have got this far but for the encouragement and help from the people who work at the VTOS, the teachers and staff. Thanks to all the people who helped me in every way in completing my essays and projects.

By W

A Safe Place

Not every one makes it through whatever particular storm they might find themselves in. Life can be difficult and tough it does not always go as smooth as one would like.

Not everyone was allowed on to the Ark. The ark is a symbol of survival, faith and hope.

The following I took from a parish newsletter

Everything I need to know I learned from Noah's Ark:

- One:** Don't miss the boat
- Two:** Remember that we are all in the same boat.
- Three:** Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark.
- Four:** Stay fit. When you're 600 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big.
- Five:** Don't listen to critics: just get on with the job that needs to be done.
- Six:** Build your future on high ground.
- Seven:** For Safety's sake, travel in pairs.
- Eight:** Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.
- Nine:** When you're stressed, float a while.
- Ten:** Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.
- Eleven:** No matter the storm, when you are with God, there's always a rainbow waiting.

By Maura

