

IRISH FARMERS JOURNAL

IRISH COUNTRY LIVING

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SMOKE ON THE WATER

Sally Barnes, who operates Woodcock Smokery
in west Cork, on her commitment to
only smoking wild-caught fish

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EDITORIAL



Amii McKeever

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When quite young, I read a book series: *The Secret of the Ruby Ring*, by Yvonne MacGrory. The premise: girls my age were magically transported to Ireland in the late 19th century. In one book, spoiled Lucy ended up downstairs as a maid, and in the other, her grandmother Martha lived opulently upstairs. I was fascinated by the lives and the politics of it all. While there are still many fine houses remaining – during the revolutionary period of the early 1920s, at least 275 of the “big houses” were burned down, blown up or otherwise destroyed. As I listened back to my interviews from Strokestown House and the National Famine Museum (P12), goosebumps appeared on my skin. In particular, the story of 12-year-old Daniel Tighe, whose family availed of the Assisted Emigration Scheme during the height of the Famine. Of their family of seven, only Daniel and his nine-year-old sister Catherine survived the journey aboard the Naomi, which sailed to Quebec. My daughter is nine and my goosebumps were a result of transporting her to such a time and horror. And yet, as Caroilin Callery stressed, this is still happening to nine-year-olds every day. Her hope is that the museum can educate not just on the past but on current realities also.

Dr Tony McCarthy wrote about ‘The Irish Land Question’ for *Irish Country Living*, chronicling how when the Free State came into being in 1922, there were still 114,000 unpurchased tenants. Caroilin pointed out that the stories of the famine and the big houses can still be told by people who heard them first-hand. Similarly, the memory of being tenants is also within living memory of many Irish families. My Grandmother was born beside a “big house”, her parent’s caretakers to the Butlers of Ormond, and only a child when the “Big Shootout” happened there in 1921. Following this, her father and uncles were arrested for harbouring the Flying Column men who escaped the RIC and the Black and Tans that night. The Irish Land Bill, designed to complete the transfer of land ownership from landlords to tenants started in 1870, was introduced into Dáil Eireann in May 1923 by the Minister for Agriculture, Patrick Hogan, only days after the end of the Civil War. Suffice to say, it is not surprising that families who have owned their land for just three to four generations would express anger at proposals to rewet it or CPO it. Political editor Pat O’Toole writes (p36) about the risk of these conversations provoking negativity and fear among farmers.

During my tour of Strokestown, historian John O’Driscoll told me a number of stories including: “When [museum renovation] work began the house appeared to have a modern fitted kitchen. But only because a young architect, Mary O’Carroll, had refused to rip out the Georgian kitchen and instead built a box to house the new kitchen requested by the family. Those wielding the sledgehammers found the cobweb-covered copper pots and pans that Mary had hidden wrapped in newspaper stuffed behind the fake walls.”

The second one was more a cautionary tale: “After service when the ladies were gone, a male servant brought a pot into the room for the men to use. If you left the room you could lose land, a title or a promotion in the army, so you stayed put no matter what. It is therefore important to remember the soup pot has two handles and you never drink from the pot with one handle.” Two lessons from these, it is important to preserve and respect history but also when it comes to land, to be properly informed and to stand your ground. **CL**



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DEDICATED TO SOIL

Soil scientist and farmer, Meagan Kaiser represents 515,000 US soya bean farmers

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LIFE ON THE RIVER

River enthusiast (Michael) G Phelan is a pedigree breeder of Irish Angus and Kerry hill sheep from Co Laois. He has just published a book. In conversation with **Caitriona Bolger**

“When I was a young lad, there was probably three Michael Phelans close enough in school together. The teacher, Maureen Cahill, Miss Cahill, was a bit confused, so I became Michael G; G for Gregory.

As time went on, I started to do a bit of hurling and there'd be lads shouting: 'Take off the G.' They were hardly shouting bring him on. Then gradually G became used more often and if somebody calls me Michael nowadays, I find it strange.

UP RIVER

People have asked me about the name Phelan. I've been told that the Phelans were in Waterford prior to the Vikings coming in 795.

Ó'Faoláin chiefs were princes of the Déise at the time. It is said that Ó'Faoláin was the first Irish chief to fall in the resistance at the time of the Norman invasion.

Some of the Ó'Faoláins managed to stay in Waterford while a branch of them moved up river, first by the Barrow and then some diverted up along the Nore.

The Ó'Faoláins that went along the Barrow became Whelan and the Ó'Faoláins that went up the Nore became Phelan. Today, the name Whelan/Phelan is fairly common in the river region of all the counties these rivers flow through – Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny and Laois.

I was down in Cork one day and a fella asked me about my surname; he said he never heard of Phelan before.

PADDLING THEIR OWN CANOE

I always had a great interest in the history and heritage of our area. I was born beside the river. There has always been a connection to the river with local people. Back in the days of Lord Castletown, local people would have been ghillies and gamekeepers when the gentry came to fish. I've heard King Henry VII would have



G Phelan grew up beside the river and has combined his interest in local history and heritage with a new book *The River Erkina from Source to Sea*.

by Caitriona Bolger

been part of a duck shooting expedition here. Then the canoes came along. In 1999, a few of us set off from the woodenbridge and canoed to Kilkenny city. We had a great day and a great night after. When we were in Kilkenny, somebody said to me: 'Why didn't ye do it for charity and raise a few bob along the way?' There was great interest.

So, we said we'd organise something for the Cuisle Centre cancer support facility in Portlaoise.

Then we had to give ourselves a name, so the Woodenbridge Paddlers were born. It's a canoe club to all intents and purposes, but we are a community first and foremost.

We collected €21,000 for the Cuisle Centre and since then we went on to do more fundraisers.

We believe the woodenbridge is possibly the only bridge made from

timber that currently carries public transport in Ireland. The current structure was built in the early 1930s. Up to then, locals made their way across the river by boat or stepping stones at low water.

A few years ago, plans were put in place to replace the woodenbridge with a concrete structure. We held a public rally and the importance of the woodenbridge to our area was discussed.

It is a landmark of historic importance, a unique part of this locality's heritage, a meeting place. The proposed works were then withdrawn and there is now an agreement in place that any works will take into account the heritage value of the existing bridge structure.

MAKING WAY FOR THE BLUEWAY

There is a great demand to establish a

tourism offering here. It is an exceptionally scenic area; people love coming to visit. We put an application in to the National Trails office and we were told that it was suitable for a blueway. All the landowners were like: '100% on you go, if you can get something done, why not.'

We have had objections – not locally – from people with an interest in the pearl mussel and vertigo snail. They couldn't see that everyone could work together; they still objected.

But anyway, to keep going with the blueway, we have to raise funds. So, I said I would go out paddling for 30 days and if people wanted to sponsor me that would be great.

The next thing, I had enough sponsors to keep me out for 60 days and sure then I said, we'll go for the 100 days. If the sponsor wanted to come out with me, they could and I would give them a tour of the area from the water.

As I was doing this, people were saying, you should be writing this down and keeping a record of it.

Then, one night, I was sitting inside and the poor dog [Captain] was after dying. He was with me all the time and it was a kind of a dark time. So, I started to gather up the bits of information and now I have a book called *The Erkina River from Source to Sea with G and Captain*.

We had the launch in Bob's Bar in Durrow on Sunday. It is the only pub on the river so where else could you have had it?" **CL**

“I was born beside the river. There has always been a connection to the river with local people



G and Captain on the river.

A WEEK IN THE COUNTRY

RURAL RHYMES

The Old Gramophone

By Paddy Egan

It lies in the parlour all alone
The old wind-up gramophone
Time was when it had pride of place
When life was lived at a slower pace

A party piece when we were young
When old Irish ballads were played
and sung.
Around the parlour table of a winter's night
With the double wick to show them light

Old time waltzes, jigs and reels
Quick steps, two steps, to clicking heels
Friends and neighbours gathered round.
Fascinated by its magic sound.

The kitchen cleared, they formed a ring
Danced seán nós or Highland fling,
Sparks arise from the old flagged floor.
Then a solo on the old half door.

Singers too of worldwide fame
Had records made which bore their name
McCormack, Crosby, Jimmy Shand.
Vincent Lowe and his céilí band

Vinyl records, dubbed seventy eights
A new conveyance to hear the greats
Worldwide artists now at hand.
By a system known as played and canned.

At outdoor parties, crossroad dances.
The beginnings too of old romances.
Retired now in silent pique
This old masterpiece is now antique.



700

Sheep to be shorn every day at the All-Nations Sheep shearing and wool handling championships this summer at Clonmany Agricultural Show.

Living Life P28-29

Picture of the week



New farmer in training: Siobhan Brady from Longford with Katie (on her back) cleaning out the suck calves. \ Paidi Brady

“When there was the big house, the people who were indentured to work there signed a contract for nine years which stated they would not have to eat wild salmon more than twice a week. How can it go from that to where they are now: an endangered keystone species?”

SALLY BARNES SALMON OF KNOWLEDGE P6-7

ONLINE PICK OF THE WEEK

Check out the work of textile artist Karen Cunneen Bilbow of Fabricate Ireland



Growing wild

with Dr Catherine Keena, Teagasc countryside management specialist

Look out for Lady's smock, a pretty flower of May that can appear in damp areas even in improved grassland. The leaves in the basal rosette are broad while those on the stem are narrower. Dainty mauve or white flowers of four petals held in loose spikes. It is known as cuckoo flower or cuckoo spit because the cuckoo is now singing and the plant can be covered in a frothy spit produced by frog hopper nymphs living in the stem. It is used by meadow longhorn moths, orange tip and green veined white butterflies. Lady's smock is an indicator species on the ACRES grassland scorecard and is part of our native Irish biodiversity.



CHEF'S TIP

Janine Kennedy

Do you ever wonder why other people's soups taste better than yours? They are probably taking a few very minor but extra steps which make all the difference.

1 They let their vegetables saute before adding any liquid. By searing off aromatic veggies like carrots, celery and – especially – onions, you are softening and sweetening them, which will enrich the overall flavour of the soup.

2 They are using good-quality chicken, beef or vegetable stock. Homemade or good-quality shop-bought stock makes all the difference in the world to soup. If using cubes, I always pre-dissolve in some boiled water as opposed to just throwing it into the soup.

3 They season it at the end of the cooking process. In culinary school, I was taught to “season with salt until you think it tastes salty ... then add a bit more salt”.

4 Finally, you can't go wrong with a drop of fresh cream, a dollop of sour cream and a bit of garnish to top things off.

SALMON OF KNOWLEDGE

WHERE HAVE ALL THE WILD SALMON GONE?

In the first of a three-week series on wild Irish salmon, **Janine Kennedy** speaks with Sally Barnes, who operates Woodcock Smokery in west Cork, about her commitment to only smoking wild-caught fish

There is a bridge in the Canadian community where I grew up which spans a crystal-clear, rocky river. As a child, I would be mesmerised by the annual pilgrimage of wild Atlantic salmon from the river to the ocean. You could see the silvery fish perfectly from the vantage point of the bridge – and there were always so many.

Atlantic salmon are quite miraculous, when you think about it. They begin life in fresh water; hatching from pebble-like eggs which are laid and buried into a gravelly redd (the name for their breeding grounds), to keep them safe. Once they hatch, they go through several significant changes before turning into silvery smolt and making their way to the North Atlantic Ocean.

After one or more years at sea, they somehow just know when it's time to make their way back to the very same place where they were first hatched, to breed and lay eggs of their own (this is called spawning).

In Canada, this is the last thing an adult salmon ever does – they don't survive their epic journey. In Ireland, our rivers are shorter, so it is possible for the salmon to swim back out to sea (or get carried by the current) after their exhausting journey.

DWINDLING NUMBERS

Sadly, fewer salmon are making it home to spawn and fewer hatchlings are surviving to adulthood. The most recent estimates from Inland Fisheries Ireland state that wild salmon numbers are down as far as 70% from just 30 years ago. Wild salmon are considered a "keystone species", which means they are integral to their ecosystem. If removed, the ecosystem will suffer the consequences.

According to the Technical Expert Group on Salmon (TEGOS), which provides an annual assessment for Inland Fisheries Ireland, just 48 of a possible 147 rivers in Ireland can be fully opened for salmon fishing this year. Their "green zones" (open for harvesting) include the Corrib in Co Galway and the Blackwater in Co Cork.

THE SERIES

In this series, we investigate the decline in wild salmon numbers within Ireland. Salmon are an important bio-indicator for water quality and are also considered a keystone species, meaning if they disappear, their entire ecosystem will suffer.

Their blue zones (the Suir and the Barrow, for example) are open for catch and release only, while their red zones (including the Upper Shannon around Limerick and into the midlands) are closed for all types of salmon fishing.

They assess these areas by looking at the rates of returning salmon for successful spawning. If there is an identifiable surplus over what they call the "conservation limit", the area is granted green zone status, while areas reaching an excess of 65% of the conservation limit are granted blue catch and release status.

WOODCOCK SMOKERY

Someone well versed in wild Irish salmon is Sally Barnes – an artisan producer and slow food advocate based in west Cork. She owns and operates Woodcock Smokery, which focuses solely on smoking wild fish. Sally tells *Irish Country Living* that wild salmon are extraordinary creatures.

"Wild salmon are my heroes because they're still there," she smiles. "They've survived since well before the last ice age. They've adapted to changing ocean currents. They're an amazing species with skills and abilities way beyond what we're capable of – and we're polluting them out of their own homes."

PRACTICAL BEGINNINGS

Sally first began smoking fish as a means of preserving the bounty her then-husband – a fisherman – would bring home. Having no freezer and little culinary experience, she wondered aloud how people originally used to preserve fish.

"They would smoke them," her husband said. And with that, Sally began honing her craft; smoking her first



Sally Barnes owns and operates Woodcock Smokery in west Cork \

Donal O'Leary

fish in 1979, then slowly developing a business to supply smoked fish to her local community.

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

From there, Sally has made a place for herself among Ireland's most beloved food producers, winning numerous awards over the years for Woodcock Smokery (including Supreme Champion at the Great Taste awards for her cold-smoked Wild Atlantic Salmon and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Irish Food Writers' Guild in 2022).

Alongside her smoked fish products, she offers fish smoking courses (which can be booked through her website) and provides educational outreach on our indigenous fisheries. She is concerned about the future of west Cork and is angry about how commercial fishing has been managed; particularly since Ireland joined the European Economic Community (the EEC, now the EU) in the 1970s.

"I've been in west Cork for 46 years – a long time. It was a different country then," she notes. "No coastal communities are able to host their young people anymore. In the future, west Cork will be derelict, except for holiday homes – and that's beyond a tragedy. It all began with giving away 95% of our fish in 1973-74. Ireland gave away 95% of a primary resource in very fertile waters – it was an outrageously silly deal."

DRIFTNET BAN

Then, in 2007, Ireland banned driftnet fishing which was another blow to rural coastal communities. Today, over a decade since, we are seeing little to no benefit in terms of returning salmon numbers. Sally says the ban was partly introduced from pressures of the international angling lobby, who believed lower salmon numbers in our rivers was the fault of Irish commercial fishing.

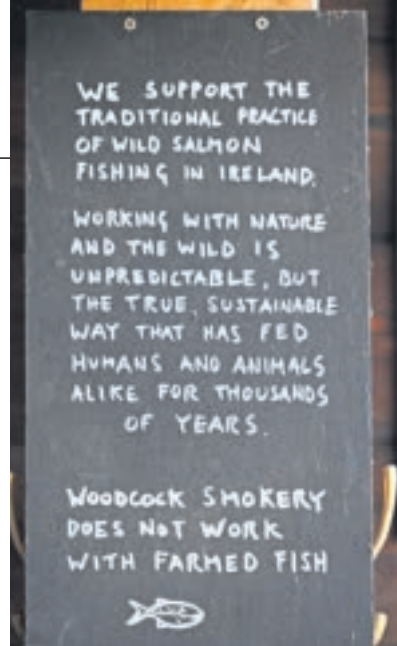
"That was the end of day boat fishing," she says bitterly. "[Up until then], communities in coastal areas were vibrant and had a bit of money coming through, and the fishermen would spend the money locally, not in Dublin or on a shopping trip to Dubai.

"What would [maintaining our fishing rights] have been worth to the Irish economy over 50 years?" she muses. "Food and drink exports are so important, but what about our oceans? The ban on drift-netting at sea, here, was the death-knell for inshore fishing."

SEASONALITY

Because Sally solely smokes wild caught (never farmed) Irish fish, she is limited in terms of the amounts she can acquire each year. She works seasonally; purchasing salmon from three draft/snapnet fishermen who have commercial quotas on the Blackwater River in Co Cork. Each year, she smokes fewer and fewer salmon.

"One of these fishermen is fourth-generation, but they're only allowed



Sally Barnes maintains a firm stance on only purchasing wild fish for her smoked products. Her salmon is cold-smoked over beech wood and is sold directly to chefs and consumers online (currently €350/1kg). \

Donal O'Leary

a third of the quota on the river," she says. "The anglers are on the water from January to September and they were given a bigger cut. Meanwhile, the commercial fishermen have a lifetime's worth of experience, skills and knowledge."

POLLUTION

River pollution is one obvious reason as to why salmon numbers are lower today than in previous times. Salmon are extremely sensitive to changes in water quality and temperature. Previous to the industrialisation era, salmon numbers were so prolific people grew tired of eating them.

"There's an article I read some years ago which referred to salmon in the 1920s as being a 'verminous' fish," Sally says. "When there was the big house, the people who were indentured to work there signed a contract for nine years which stated they would not have to eat wild salmon more than twice a week. How can it go from that to where they are now: an endangered keystone species?"

MISSED CONNECTIONS

Agricultural run-off is one typical river pollutant, while others come from domestic or community origins. Sally says habitat alterations or loss in rivers are also a huge problem for domestic wild salmon numbers. "For a while there was a predilection for taking gravel from the riverbeds to make pebbledash for walls, or nice gravel for driveways," she says. "That 'gravel' is terminal moraine [gla-

cial sediment] – left since the last ice age – and it's pea-sized, which is the same size as the mature salmon egg. It's vital for them to lay their eggs in.

"What humans have lost touch with is that we are all connected," she continues.

"If you use chemicals at the top of the mountain to kill the bracken, it's going to run all the way down to the oceans and rivers below. Using biological washing powders and bleachers in your toilet – all of that goes into the main drain.

"Biological powders don't stop working once they're flushed. They're still going. I don't think people think about it – they just think it gets their clothes nice and white and it's in the shop, so it must be alright."

A BETTER APPROACH

For Sally and many other marine enthusiasts, it's not about giving up on eating fish – it's about having well-managed fisheries run on a firm base of science. This could not only help increase wild fish numbers, but also revitalise rural communities. Sally says there is always hope to bring wild salmon numbers back, and there are good people out there doing great work.

"I heard of a volunteer group in Meath taking buckets of gravel back up the rivers to try and rehabilitate the redds that the salmon used to spawn in. Literally carrying buckets of gravel. There are some really good people with good energy being put out, there." **CL**

woodcocksmokery.com

NEXT WEEK
We discuss salmon farms, sea lice and what - if anything - can be done to mitigate the effects fin fish farming has on wild fish populations

SAUCY STUFF



Neven Maguire serves up some summer dressings to spice up your mealtimes

Today I have three dressings that I use regularly. This Madeira sauce is great with all meats, and I also like it with monkfish. Madeira is a rich fortified wine and I am looking forward to a visit there in the not too distant future filming for my upcoming *Portuguese Food Trails*. A really good stock is important and I love Carol's Stock Market and use them at home.

The chilli jam is great in sandwiches, over grilled meats or stirred into mayonnaise. People in our cookery school love making this and you can add more chilli if you like it a little hotter.

This sun-dried tomato pesto is brilliant as a dip, and lovely with pasta. In the restaurant we serve it with homemade bread and guests like it. If you are baking soda bread you might add a few spoonfuls and it really gives it a lift. The pesto can be made up to three to four days in advance and kept covered with clingfilm in the fridge.

Happy Cooking,
Neven



Sun-dried tomato pesto.

\ Photo: Philip Doyle \ Food styling: Janine Kennedy

>> Recipes

MADEIRA SAUCE

Makes 200ml (7fl oz)

1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
1 tbsp soft light brown sugar
200ml (7fl oz) Madeira
100ml (3½fl oz) red wine
600ml (1 pint) beef stock
1 tsp chopped fresh thyme
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

- 1 Pour the balsamic vinegar into a small saucepan and stir in the sugar.
- 2 Bring to the boil, then lower the heat to a simmer on a medium heat for about 2 minutes, until reduced to a syrup.
- 3 Add the Madeira and red wine and return to a simmer for 6–8 minutes, until reduced by half. Add the beef stock and thyme and reduce again for about 20 minutes, until thick and

“ This sun-dried tomato pesto is brilliant as a dip, and lovely with pasta

glossy and the sauce has become more concentrated in flavour.

- 4 Season to taste, then pass through a fine mesh sieve into a clean pan. Reheat gently and use as required.

CHILLI JAM

Makes about 450ml (¾ pint)

2 tbsp olive or rapeseed oil
2 onions, roughly diced
2 red peppers, cored, deseeded and roughly diced
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 red chilli, finely chopped
1 tbsp tomato purée
50g (2oz) light brown sugar
4 ripe tomatoes, diced
1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
1 tbsp dark soy sauce
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

- 1 Heat the olive or rapeseed oil in a heavy-based pan on a medium heat. Add the onions, red peppers and garlic and sauté for 2 minutes, until just beginning to soften.
- 2 Stir in the chilli and tomato purée and cook for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 3 Stir in the sugar, tomatoes, balsamic vinegar and soy sauce and pour in 300ml (half-pint) of water to just cover. Simmer for 45–50 minutes, stirring occasionally, until well reduced and thickened.
- 4 Remove the chilli jam from the heat and leave to cool completely, then tip into a food processor or liquidiser and blend to a purée.
- 5 Pass through a fine mesh sieve set over a bowl and season to taste.
- 6 Transfer to a rigid plastic container

and store in the fridge for up to three weeks. Use as required.

SUN-DRIED TOMATO PESTO

Makes about 400ml (14fl oz)

175g (6oz) semi sun-dried tomatoes, roughly chopped
8 large fresh basil leaves
2 garlic cloves, peeled
200ml (7fl oz) olive or rapeseed oil
1 tbsp tomato purée
¼ tsp smoked paprika
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

- 1 Place the semi sun-dried tomatoes, basil, garlic, oil tomato purée and smoked paprika in a food processor or blender and pulse to finely chop.
- 2 Blend until the pesto has emulsified adding more oil if necessary.
- 3 Transfer to a container and season. **CL**

MY LIFE HAS COMPLETELY CHANGED

Katherine O'Leary has begun tough chemotherapy. She has cried a lot and now she has to stop and get the job of recovery done

kkoleary@gmail.com



At what point do you admit that your life has completely changed? I am now a fraud of my former self. I couldn't feed a calf to save my life and it breaks my heart. I couldn't make a dinner or stand in front of a home economics class. Attend a gym class; the idea is preposterous. I imagine addressing a conference would feel like an out of body experience.

The people around me look on with a mixture of love and confusion. They want to do and say the right things. They see that I am in a separate existence, a thing apart; partially broken, desperately trying to come back together.

I'm trying to steer myself through the nightmare of tough chemotherapy. Yes, there it is, the word is finally on the page. Now another word has to follow. Cancer has returned to my life. How blissful it had been to be without it. How wonderful to have a clear scan – no evidence of cancer, malignancy, tumour, or metastasised cancer.

Nearly three years ago, cancer entered my life. It was dealt with and gone. When my consultant oncologist pushed out my next scan to August, a nine-month gap between scans, I remember the struggle with emotions – on the one hand elation at the idea of moving away from cancer, and on the other panic. Did that panic set something off in me? If not, what did happen?

I guess this is the conundrum for doctors all the time. How far can one trust the science? So much more research is needed to understand the devious ways that cancer cells can multiply, finding pathways around the body that are still undetermined by science.

CHANGE

I have often written on this page that life can change in a heartbeat. One day back in February, I dragged my arm while removing a feeder from a calf pen. It was a bit swollen.

In hindsight, that's not what happened. My cancer had returned in a surreptitious way, starting with a small

lump under my arm. We were busy. I forgot about my hurt arm until a few weeks later, I felt it again. Sickening panic rose in my chest. I showed it to Tim. "It's not a bone Kay, It's a lump." That night, Tim said: "Show it to me again."

I'm sure he too experienced the rising panic. Trying to get an appointment to be seen and be scanned is quite challenging. Our health system is under serious pressure. It manifests itself in sinister ways for patients; e-mails not read, phone calls not

returned and waiting times for scans and consultations drag on.

Eventually, the cogs move, scans happen and the news goes one way or the other. The lump had become a tumour. It was now bigger. The next step was chemotherapy. The cycle is 21 days and I will have four cycles followed by surgery.

I wake during the night. The silence is deafening. I'm agitated. I want to go outside and scream but I'd have to go far away not to terrorise the household. Little Ricky would wonder what was wrong with his Granny! Diarmuid would probably not hear me due to his deafness. Tim and Julie would definitely wake. Dave might not. So instead I scream inwardly for my ordinary life to return.

LOVING LIFE

I love that life of farming, teaching, activism, writing, caring, gardening, cooking and even cleaning.

I adore spending time with Tim and my family, doing nice things, going nice places. I have so many truly wonderful friends. I love my garden and my music and going to a concert.

I missed Bruce Springsteen last week. My friends sent me clips and I cried for other times when I was with those friends. I cried for me and for Tim, I cried because my children Julie, D, Philip and Colm were hurting. I cried for my daughters in law, Aileen and Elaine and my son in law, David, for the turmoil I was bringing to their lives. I cried for my siblings. I just bloody cried and then I had to stop.

Now, I have a job to do. I have massive support to help me get it done. I am taking my own advice of getting through this, one day at a time. When that becomes overwhelming, I return to one hour at a time. **CL**



I'm agitated. I want to go outside and scream but I'd have to go far away not to terrorise the household

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Bernard Óg Keaney, the third of Marieann and Bernard Keaney's sons, had a difficult start in life. Born in Galway University Hospital in 2010, his condition required immediate transfer to Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin (OLCHC) where he was diagnosed with kidney failure and more. Immediate treatment included commencing dialysis and the fitting of a colostomy bag.

Marieann only came home to Galway once in the following three months, so serious was Bernard Óg's condition.

"It was touch and go for a long time," Marieann says. "Bernard Óg was baptised before he went to Crumlin. We had to tube feed him initially and be trained up on doing home [peritoneal] dialysis. It was a big change learning how to use the machine and how to administer extra medication if he was sick. It involved scrubbing up and everything being so sterile. Dressings had to be changed every second day, too, where the tube was coming out of his side. When he started PEG feeding, that tube had to be kept sterile too. He continued to be PEG fed until after the transplant."

Working as a care assistant in a nursing home while her husband worked part-time at a golf club as well as farming, rearing cattle and horses, they managed during the difficult years with a lot of support from family.

"It was stressful enough at times," Marieann says, "but our other two boys, Jack and Patrick who were 10 and four at the time, were very good. My parents and mother-in-law were a great help too. We were lucky we had support."

Home dialysis took place until Bernard Óg was three years old. When that ceased to be effective, haemodialysis (blood dialysis) was required in OLCHC.

"This had to be done in Dublin three days a week. We used to leave at 4am and be home at 4pm with Bernard Óg three hours on the machine from 8am. We drove for the first while, then transport was provided, which was a great help because only one of us needed to go with him each time."

That continued for three years until a kidney transplant was possible.

Asked about developmental milestones like walking and talking,



Brother Patrick, cousin Lauren, Bernard Óg, mum Marieann and dad Bernard Keaney, Roundstone, Co Galway. \ Sean Lydon

The GIFT of a KIDNEY

Bernard Óg Keaney from Roundstone, Co Galway received a kidney transplant when he was six years old. Now 12, he is living life to the full. **Margaret Hawkins** writes

“We knew he'd want his organs donated because when baby Bernard was born he said, 'I have two kidneys. I could give him one, I don't mind

Marieann finds it difficult to recall.

"He was so tied up in machines that it's hard to remember exactly," she says, "but he didn't really talk until he was over two and didn't walk until he was 18 months or so."

TRANSPLANT CALL CAME AT MIDNIGHT

He was also on the kidney transplant list, awaiting a donor.

"It was lucky the way it turned out. He was just back on it after a period of

being sick when we got the call [that a kidney was available] in December 2016 when he was six."

The call came when they had gone to bed.

"We set off around midnight for Temple Street and stayed with him until the operation was over."

Seeing him after the operation was a very emotional experience for the couple.

"The transplant was a new lease of

life for him and for the whole family."

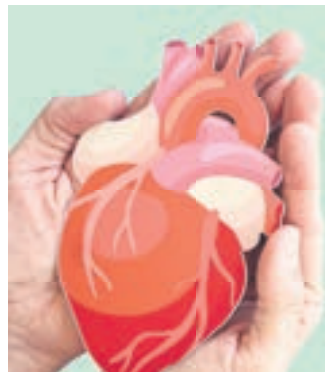
Marieann's emotions were very complicated, however. That was because of an experience in the Keaney family three years earlier where Bernard Óg's 23-year-old cousin, Thomas, had died following an unprovoked assault while working in Perth, Australia in December 2013.

His family had gone through the process of deciding about organ donation in the middle of such a traumatic

WORDS OF LIFE

Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

Psalm 128 v 1 & 2



ORGAN DONOR AWARENESS WEEK IS 20-27 MAY

This awareness day is organised by the Irish Kidney Association. Individuals who wish to support organ donation are encouraged to share their wishes with their family and keep the reminders of their decision available by:

- carrying the organ donor card
- permitting Code 115 to be included on their driver's licence or
- having the "digital organ donor card" App on their smartphone.

Organ Donor Cards can be requested by visiting the IKA website www.ika.ie/get-a-donor-card or by phoning the Irish Kidney Association on 01 6205306 or Free texting the word DONOR to 50050.

time so Marieann was hyper-aware of Bernard Óg's donor's family's feelings.

"I couldn't stop crying," she says. "It was unbelievable to see the improvement in Bernard Óg but we knew it was a young person who died for a kidney to be available and we felt so bad for the donor family, knowing what they were going through. In the end hospital staff encouraged me to focus on Bernard."

The year that followed, 61 hospital appointments took place but Bernard Óg continued to make progress.

"It still meant a lot of trips to Dublin but now we weren't there for hours

at a time. It was just for check-ups."

LOVES HIS PONIES

Bernard Óg is now 12 and has an extra year to do in primary school as he missed a lot due to illness but he is doing very well.

"He is still on a lot of medication," his mum says, "but he plays football and loves farming and showing his Shetland and Connemara ponies in Clifden, Ballyconneely and Roundstone shows each year. The transplant was a new lease of life for him and we'll always be grateful to his donor family."

COUSIN THOMAS

Lauren Keaney was thrilled to see her cousin that she calls baby Bernard thrive after his transplant.

"It was something we hoped would happen after we donated Thomas's organs when he died in Australia," she says.

"We felt that if we made the decision to donate Thomas's organs in Australia in the middle of our traumatic time, that baby Bernard would get a transplant in time here in Ireland too."

Five people in Australia benefited from Lauren's family's decision to donate Thomas's organs. Thomas was 23 when he died.

"It helps us to think of others being helped," she says. "Any parent losing a child or a sibling losing a sibling, it's a horrible time, it's really life changing so to be able to help is comforting. At least parts of Thomas have gone on and are still living and recipients are happy and making progress. It's an incredible thing that the body can do with organ donation. It's a very hard call to come to terms with a loved one's death but lovely to think that someone else could get the organs. Baby Bernard is our youngest cousin and he is so much fun. Watching him grow has been wonderful. His strength and determination is amazing. Now you'd never think there was anything wrong with him."

THOMAS LIVES ON

Lauren's mum, Ann, believes that her son lives on through the organ donations.

"I talk to him every day," she says. "He doesn't answer back but I think he hears me. We knew he'd want his organs donated because when baby Bernard was born he said, 'I have two kidneys. I could give him one, I don't



mind.' That was the sort of person he was. He'd want to help."

Thomas Keaney had gone to work in a bar in Australia for a year and was about to prolong his stay in order to work on the new children's hospital in Perth when, tragically, a late night altercation led to serious injury and 10 days later, death. His attacker was later found guilty of manslaughter and grievous bodily harm.

"It was a single punch to the head and his head hit the kerb," Lauren says. "Thomas didn't really know what had happened only that he hadn't done anything wrong. Mam and Dad spoke to him on the phone a couple of times in those 10 days but we had no idea that death was going to be the outcome. Thomas was very healthy and we thought he would come through, so it was a dreadful shock to be told on Christmas Eve that he had taken a turn for the worse and was now in a coma. My parents couldn't get a flight until St Stephen's Day and, sadly, they had very little time with him when they arrived. It was the loneliest Christmas ever... Organ donation decisions had to be made very quickly, which wasn't easy. We were all called to Granny's house to discuss it over the phone with my parents. We all said, straight away, 100% yes, that if Thomas's organs are donated and live on and help other people that baby Bernard would hopefully get his kidney too. Now he has and it's lovely to see him thrive."



Cousin Lauren Keaney, Bernard Óg, mum Marieann, dad Bernard Keaney with brother Patrick, Roundstone, Co Galway. \ Sean Lydon



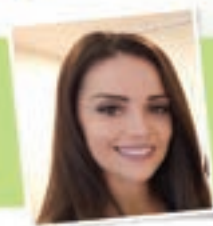
HE IS STILL ON A LOT OF MEDICATION," HIS MUM SAYS, "BUT HE PLAYS FOOTBALL AND LOVES FARMING AND SHOWING HIS SHETLAND AND CONNEMARA PONIES IN CLIFDEN, BALLYCONNEELY AND ROUNDSTONE SHOWS EACH YEAR.



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TRACING THE PATH OF THE GREAT HUNGER

Far more than a Famine Museum. There is a story in every corner of the Strokestown house, the grounds and the gardens, many sad, many tragic but beautifully and respectfully told, writes **Amii McKeever**



Why would an astute businessman buy a historical property with a less-than-stellar historical record in terms of its tenants and spend 40 years trying to tell its story?

“That very short answer is insanity,” Caroilin Callery tells *Irish Country Living* as we sip tea in the bright, modern café of the Strokestown Park Famine Museum.

And she would know, being the daughter of Jim Callery, the businessman that purchased the Co Roscommon estate in 1979.

“I was very young when the Westward Group bought the property, with the intention of holding the land for the Scania business and selling it [the house] on.”

Jim had allowed the previous owner, Olive Pakenham Mahon, to stay living at the house and a “friendship of sorts” had grown between them.

The weekend the contents of the property were being lined up for auction, Olive was travelling to London to visit her children. Jim asked if he could “look around”, to which she replied, “Of course, Mr Callery, it’s your house now.”

CLOONAHEE PETITION

That one visit changed the future of Strokestown Park forever.

The first room he went into was the smoking room with its leaky roof and boxes, floor to ceiling. One of the first things that Jim took out of the first box he opened was the Cloonahee Petition, which is now on display in the museum.

Caroilin explains the significance of this finding.

“That is the townland where my father’s family have lived for hundreds

of years. All of the names, Caulfields, McHughs and McDermotts – all those families – are still in that townland and that was from 1846. It [the petition] was literally saying ‘We’re starving, we went to the public works, we were turned away, what are we to do? We don’t want to do anything unless pressed to by hunger.’

“In that one moment, the fate of Strokestown Park was changed forever. Did it find him or did he find it? Dad put the document back and the next time he spoke to Olive, he said he would buy the contents of the house if they left the archive. He understood what he stumbled on, that this story wasn’t told, wasn’t talked about and that what he was saving was vital.”

HIDDEN HISTORY TO MODERN MUSEUM

When the families left the big houses, everything was auctioned off and scattered. They also, in general, burnt the archives or if they did give them up, it was to the State and many took out the decades of famine.

“They understood,” Caroilin notes, “how it would reflect on most of the families, not all but most, how they treated their tenants at that time.”

For many years, Jim dipped in and out of the archive, with a professional archivist, Martin Fagan, employed only in the last four years. With the archive now catalogued, it’s been made available.

The house opened in 1987 but the vision immediately was to use the archive to tell the story of the famine. To the Callerys, this made perfect sense as “this was the microcosm of what was the macrocosm, of what was happening everywhere else around the country.”

However, not everyone agreed and when the famine museum opened in 1994 there was a lot of criticism on



Clockwise from top: As part of our holidaying in Ireland series, ICL travelled to Roscommon to meet the family and historians behind Strokestown House and the National Famine Museum. Every corner of the house holds a story, which guide John O’Sullivan expertly explains. Caroilin and Jim (pictured on the trail) Callery walked the Famine Way together from Strokestown to Dublin.

how appropriate the house was as a location.

“We weren’t far from the burnings and dismantling of big houses as that image of British dominance in Ireland. Some of the people that criticised in those early years later admitted that, this is where the story should be told,” says Caroilin.

While operated since 2015 by the Irish Heritage Trust (IHT), the museum itself opened in 1994 and the gardens in 1998. Although the recent renovation has added considerable modernity and comfort to the park Caroilin says: “It’s a never-ending labour of love and philanthropy from my father.”

FAMINE WAY

An outreach from Strokestown Park, in partnership with Waterways Ireland, the IHT, Epic Museum and a host of academic institutions, The Famine Way is a trail charting the journey of the 1490 tenants who walked from Strokestown Park to Dublin to the coffin ships that would take them to Canada.

There are 32 pairs of bronze shoes, placed at specific locations where

there is a story in relation to the famine. The first pair and the trailhead are at Strokestown Park.

One of the main stories recounted in the famine museum is that of Daniel, who lost all his family bar one little sister. They were adopted by a French Canadian family going on to inherit their farm. His grandson Leo lived with him and heard him tell his story. Jim Callery met Leo, who was then nearly 90, and heard the story.

How close in time this is resonates with Caroilin.

“That was in 2000, not that long ago to be getting first-hand knowledge. The famine isn’t as far back as we think it is and that’s why it’s so embedded in our psyche. We all know about the ships, but what about their last journey on Irish soil?”

In 2015, Caroilin and a group of friends did the walk, as a memorial. As they went through each of the counties, they put out a call for people to join them and were caught by surprise at the number that did and the subsequent media attention.

From that, a conversation arose with Waterways Ireland about turning it into the permanent trail officially



THE UNHIDDEN BARON HEARTLANDS

Fascinating was the word I kept repeating on my tour from the house, through the equine cathedral to the museum itself. *Irish Country Living* was guided by expert John O'Driscoll, ably assisted by the IHT's Tony Aspel.

Nicholas Mahon was granted the lands for his services to Cromwell in the late 1600s but it was his grandson, Thomas Mahan, who hired Richard Castles – the German architect who designed Leinster House – to design Strokestown House in the 1740s. For their support of the Act of Union, the family was granted a title – becoming known as the Baron Heartlands of Strokestown.

The first Baron built what is described as the widest street in Ireland. John is very proud to claim that the main street in Strokestown is wider than O'Connell Street, but also admits: "I don't believe it but I've been told I have to accept it."

Thomas wanted his street to mimic the Champs-Élysées. John asks if I knew that Strokestown is lovingly called the Paris of the west. "No," I admit, while assuring him I would make sure to communicate this epithet to my readers.

THE STORY OF THE 1490

The last Baron "Poor Maurice" saw the estate fall into massive debt. On his death, the estate went to his cousin Major Dennis Mahon in 1845. This was where the story of the Strokestown famine walkers begins.

"A debt-ridden estate, the beginning of the great Irish famine, many rent strikes. What was he to do?" John recounts.

"Well, the first thing that happened was wonderful. His daughter Grace Catherine married Henry Sandford Pakenham, the combined lands went up to 30,000 acres at this time and the name changed to Pakenham Mahon. On the advice of an agent John Ross Mahon, he began an eviction and immigration scheme to clear his lands. He gathered 1490 men, women and children and had them walk from Strokestown to Dublin along the Royal Canal for ships to Quebec. By the time they got there more than a third of them had died."

Shortly after, Denis Mahon was assassinated. No member of the family lived at the house after that until Henry Pakenham Mahon came to live here and it was his daughter, Olive that sold the estate to Jim Callery.

HONEYBEES KEEPING BEEKEEPERS BUSY THIS MONTH

Beekeepers with good eyesight should be quick to notice the subtle difference in the colour of oilseed pollen versus dandelion, writes **Willie O'Byrne**



The honey resulting from oilseed requires special management since it granulates rapidly.

The recent flowering of the dandelion has given a boost to the honeybee and other bee populations. The swathes of this flower – or from the perspective of some, a weed – are a bountiful producer of nectar and pollen.

All bee species need nectar and pollen for sustenance. The rearing of brood [eggs and larvae] is linked to the supply of these foods. Since dandelion is one of the earlier-flowering plants, being able to produce nectar and pollen at lower daytime temperatures is of great benefit.

These flowers are keenly worked by the honeybee. The rapid onset of volumes of food coming into the beehives at a time when the queens have already been laying will accelerate the rate of brood production.

INSPECTIONS

Beekeepers, when carrying out inspections on hives during a nectar flow from dandelions, are very aware of the yellow hue across the honeycombs. This arises from bees, whose body hair contains trapped pollen grains as well as that contained within the pollen baskets, traversing honeycombs while they offload their booty.

Beekeepers may find that apart from dandelions, oilseed rape may be growing nearby.

While watching pollen-laden bees entering the hive with their pollen baskets full of yellow pollen, it may be difficult to determine if it is coming from oilseed or dandelion.

A glance across the countryside will soon indicate if such a crop is in bloom within reach of the bees.

The honey resulting from oilseed requires special management since it granulates rapidly.

While busy bees will work their backs off for either of these crops, the beekeeper has to consider how to deal with the rapidly expanding brood nest within the hive and also the collection of the nectar from oilseed.

The honey resulting from oilseed requires special management since it granulates rapidly. Removal from the hive must be timed and the honey extracted from the combs without delay.

PEAK PRODUCTION

Now that honeybee colonies are reaching their peak brood production, beekeepers need to ensure that swarm control measures are attended to.

Adding supers [piece of equipment to collect honey] for nectar storage can also give room for the bees and therefore take the pressure off overcrowding, which of itself can lead to swarming preparations.

Beekeepers with unclipped queens need to do their weekly checks for queen cells, while those with clipped queens can push these checks to 10 days.

The loss of a swarm of bees puts paid to getting any real crop of honey from that hive.

The swarming season begins in May and ends in late June or early July. It is a busy time for beekeepers.

Apart from honey production, beekeepers produce nuclei and queens for replacements during this time.

The main aim of the beekeeper will be to keep colonies in peak condition, so that when the main nectar flow arrives, bees will be there to collect it.

Whether it is a dandelion or oilseed crop, honeybees will benefit and their colonies will be strengthened. The bumblebee and solitary bees are also beneficiaries. **CL**



launched in 2019.

But it was not history but modern-day geopolitics that was really brought home to Carolin on this trip.

"On our second day walking in Ballynacarrigy [Westmeath], I got a phone call to tell me that a ship had turned over off the coast of Italy and 600 people had drowned," she explains.

"That really bothered me because I thought this is what happened to our people. People who were not going to make it, people that were going to find the sea as their grave. I thought, how can this still be happening? How can our past be somebody else's present?"

"We have reached out to work with New Horizons, the emigration group in Athlone. They walked along the trail with us and we have had joint events here. Dad would say: 'If this is just a museum telling the history, then it's a dead museum.'

"You are duty-bound to use the archive and story to shine a light on what's happening today in other parts of the world that are similar. Because this isn't just an old story from our past, this is very much other people's stories now." **CL**



It's a never-ending labour of love and philanthropy from my father

Meagan Kaiser with her husband Marc, son Mak and daughter Norah. \ United Soybean Board



‘We need to find what our shared vision is’

In our international farmer series, **Maria Moynihan** talks to soil scientist and farmer, Meagan Kaiser, who represents 515,000 soya bean farmers across the United States

Meagan Kaiser didn't grow up on a farm. But? "I jokingly say I grew up on everybody else's farm," she smiles as she chats over a video call from Missouri in the USA.

It obviously stood to her. Because fast forward to today and, not only is Meagan a soil scientist and entrepreneur who farms soya beans and corn in partnership with her husband, she is also the current chair of the United Soybean Board, representing over half a million soya bean farmers across the country.

Which is why you might find her on a Zoom panel with US vice president Kamala Harris discussing rural broadband, analysing soil samples, or helping her son prepare for his first-grade spelling test.

"And my two-year-old, making sure we have enough bananas in the pantry to keep her satisfied," she laughs.

PLANTING THE SEED

But where did it all start?

Well, you could go back to 1982,

when Meagan's parents established Perry Agricultural Lab in Bowling Green, Missouri – or a bit later, when she received a very memorable birthday present.

"When I was nine, my dad got a go-kart for my birthday and he put one of the very first GPS systems on top of it," she recalls of what she knows now was early precision agricultural technology. "He would let me run around other people's fields."

At 16, Meagan decided she wanted to be a soil scientist after accompanying her father on a business trip to the UK, explaining that what really resonated with her was "the very humanitarian imperative of efficient agricultural production to feed people".

This led her to study soil science, chemistry and agri-economics at the University of Missouri, Columbia, where she also became involved with the Food And Agriculture Policy Research Institute (FAPRI).

Little wonder then that one of her first jobs after graduation was in Washington DC as a legislative assistant, where she quips that she earned her "PhD in human interaction".

"It really is not about what you say,

but how you say it sometimes, and it taught me a lot about shared goals," she expands.

"So, often we hear people say: 'We just need to educate other people.' And honestly, I come at it more as a: 'We need to find what our shared vision is together.'"

SOIL AND SOYA BEANS

All of these lessons are ones that Meagan draws on in her various roles today.

Her "day job" is as chief operations officer (COO) at the family lab, which today tests soil samples from 75 countries around the world and has expanded to include agri-technology to offer farmers precision sampling, testing and prescriptions to meet production, environmental and regulatory challenges.

Meagan feels that beyond the lab, however, the wider public is starting to appreciate the importance of soil health ("it's more like gut health than pure chemistry") and that this is an important message for farmers to communicate to consumers.

"When they hear that farmers are taking care of their soil, they feel bet-

Meagan took part in a Zoom panel discussion with vice-president Kamala Harris about limited broadband access, ironically, on limited broadband. \ United Soybean Board



“
THE
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FULFILLING

tive committee.’ Well, we now have four and I think, in fact, if you look, we have 12 women on our board of 77. Statistically that might actually be over representation if you look at female ownership of farms,” she responds, adding that she personally has never faced any discrimination based on gender.

“So, I think it really gives me a lot of hope that in agriculture, the biggest message is: ‘You’re welcome here,’” she continues.

“I think in agriculture, we look for smart, talented, hard-working people and what you look like or your gender doesn’t matter as much as you being the most qualified person here.”

BEYOND THE FARM GATE

Her influence, however, has been recognised outside the board. In March, she received a 2023 Women of Achievement award from the Office of Missouri’s lieutenant governor, while in 2021, she was invited by the White House to participate in a Zoom panel discussion about limited broadband with vice-president Kamala Harris.

“Immediately, I was thinking: ‘Where can I take this Zoom call to make sure I don’t lose connection while I’m talking to the vice president of the United States?’” she laughs of the irony of the situation, but says that what really struck her was the fact that every person on the call was facing

the same problem, whether they were urban or rural.

“In some ways, I think in agriculture we’re so off by ourselves a little bit that we feel that nobody cares because nobody has this problem like we do, so that was an interesting, eye-opening experience for me,” she continues.

“Don’t think like that. Don’t assume nobody else has the same problem – you’re going to have to reach out past your farm gate to build a coalition [to deal with it].”

One last question then: what encouragement would she like to share with women in agriculture in Ireland who might be interested in taking a step towards a farm leadership role?

“The thing that I always lean back on is don’t be afraid of working hard. And I don’t do everything all the time and I never think I’ve done anything perfectly, but sometimes you have to lean into it a little bit and push yourself,” she stresses.

“But the rewards of knowing that you’ve made an impact beyond your own farm gate, I find that incredibly fulfilling. I think, especially for women, you can be a great role model for your daughters and your sons if you show that you live beyond just your family and your farm, that you can get out there and make a difference to others.” **CL**

See www.unitedsoybean.org

ter about buying our product because they feel like we are being holistic about it,” she expands.

“The consumer ultimately says: ‘You know, I feel better about the nutrition in my bell pepper or my potato because I know it was grown using science.’”

But Meagan not only preaches it, she practices it. Along with her husband Marc – a fifth-generation farmer – the couple grow soya beans and corn in crop rotation on 4,500 acres beside the Missouri river. Though, with weather challenges, ensuring that they have a “resilient crop” is a top priority.

“In 2019, flood was an issue – we lost our entire crop,” states Meagan as one example.

“These things happen, but what farmers do is buffer ourselves as much as possible by really caring for our soil and making all the right decisions throughout the growing season that we can to make sure that we have a resilient crop.”

UNITED SOYBEAN BOARD

For the last seven years, Meagan has also played an active role on the United Soybean Board, which represents 515,000 soya bean farmers across the US.

Each one of those farmers pays .5 of 1% of every bushel of soy that they sell into what is known as the “check off”. This in turns funds the work of the United Soybean Board, which is led by 77 appointed farmer leaders, who work to create increased demand – and a better bottom line – for US soya bean farmers; be that through re-

search or finding new markets for soy meal and oil at home and abroad.

For instance, the board has worked with companies like Goodyear Tyres and Skechers shoes to incorporate soy into their rubber technology. They have also invested in production research in soya bean flower and pod retention – increasing yield potential of 10%-15% or \$50 per acre – and also collaborated with US fleets to incorporate bio-based products, like bio-diesel, into their vehicles and equipment.

For Meagan, such initiatives are proof of what can be achieved when farmers come together to “make an impact that’s greater than any one of us could ever imagine making.”

“I really feel like, in a commodity market, farmers are often price takers – we have to react to the situations the world gives us. At the board, we don’t do that,” she continues.

“We get to write our own destiny and we get to make a stronger proposition for all US soy farmers and so, for me, it’s very rewarding to be part of something that’s bigger than ourselves.”

FEMALE FARM LEADERSHIP

Prior to being elected as chair in 2022, Meagan had fulfilled a number of other roles, including treasurer and vice chair. We ask if it’s unusual to have a female in the top role?

“Statistically yes, it’s unusual. I’m only the second female chair and I remember somebody telling me when I first got on the board (and this came from a woman): ‘Oh, we never have more than two women on the execu-



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FINANCE

If you're working on-farm, it's important to be on the payroll

Qualified financial adviser (QFA) **Carol Brick** outlines the best route to a comfortable retirement if you are a full-time caregiver or you support your spouse on the family farm

Q I'm 45 and I've been married for the last 18 years. My husband is a farmer and I have three children, one of which works full time on the farm. Due to a recent injury my husband suffered, we have been reviewing our finances regarding retirement and estate planning. Our solicitor advised me that I may not qualify for any pension, and I want to know what my options are.

A Your solicitor is correct. Many farmers' wives spend most of their lives working on the farm, but at retirement age find themselves in a weak position when it comes to pension entitlements.

The main issue here is that a farmer's spouse is often not paid a direct income for the work they do, so their work is unrecognised by the Department of Social Protection when it comes to qualifying for the State contributory pension.

If you are not being paid, you are not paying PRSI and therefore are not covered for a contributory pension. As a spouse of a farmer, rather than a paid employee of the farmer, you are also excluded from social insurance which includes maternity and disability cover.

Ultimately, any means-tested benefit payment is linked primarily to your spouse's earnings.

To contribute to both the State pension and a private pension, you need to have a registered taxable income. It is important to be on the payroll - whether that's in an employed/partnership format, or as self-employed - to put you in a better independent financial position in later years.

Speak to your accountant or financial adviser to ensure both of you are drawing an income from the farm in a tax efficient way, and to ensure you are both maximising your contributions to State and private pensions in terms of tax relief.

A good option is to put a formal business partnership in place between you as a married couple, where one spouse is seen as an employee of the farm. You each would then qualify

“ To qualify for a State pension or private pension, you need to have a registered taxable income. So, for those who farm with their spouse, as advised, you should get on the payroll as soon as possible

ABOUT CAROL

Carol Brick is from a dairy farm in Kilmoyley, north Kerry, and is managing director of CWM Wealth Management Ltd and HerMoney (hermoney.ie)



ASK CAROL

Have a question for Carol about pensions, finance or retirement planning? Email advice@farmersjournal.ie

for your own State pension, once you have made the required number of PRSI contributions, and will also be entitled to contribute to a personal pension as you would both be PAYE taxpayers.

Q I did work in a local supermarket full-time before having my children and working on the farm. Does that make a difference to what pension I can get?

A Many people (it has traditionally been women) take time off work to mind children or elderly dependents. During this time, they

may qualify for social insurance contributions through the Homemakers Scheme, but they may not be in a position to contribute to their private pension. It is important to get advice from a financial expert. They can look at how much you have contributed to the State pension through social insurance contributions, as well as any private pension, and advise on how best to fill the gap.

It is possible to put a good support in place - even if you didn't work for a few years - but it's a situation that should be addressed sooner rather than later to benefit fully from tax relief and pension entitlements.

To qualify for a State pension or private pension, you need to have a registered taxable income. So, for those who farm with their spouse, as advised, you should get on the payroll as soon as possible.

We normally find that the spouse of a farmer will be entirely reliant on their spouse's pension; despite maybe having worked their entire life on the farm. However, there is a scheme operated by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection where you can seek to have your contribution to the farm recognised retrospectively. **CL**

HOW MUCH DO I NEED WHEN I RETIRE?

There is a lot that can be done even ten or 15 years out from retirement to maximise a pension fund. Once any children have flown the nest, this may free-up some cash that can be invested in a pension. Generous tax relief is available from the Government on payments into revenue approved pension schemes. Talk to your accountant or financial advisor to ensure you are on track by identifying what income you can expect from various pension contributions.

Check your State pension entitlement and your projected private pension income, and consider any other sources of income - for example, from leasing land, rental properties, or investments. Evaluate what your likely income is going to be, and what your retirement living expenses will be, to see if you have a shortfall.

When you are drawing down your retirement benefits from a private pension, you have a couple of ways in which to take

your income. Both retirement choices will pay you a tax-free lump sum. Many people use this lump to pay off their mortgage, if choosing to retire before the end date of the mortgage. Others use the lump sum to supplement the gap in income from when they retire to when the State pension age will kick in.

As we get older, costs associated with the home and children often lessen, but we can end up with more medical expenses or energy costs. Consider health insurance and life cover within your provision for ageing. Even checking monthly bank and credit card statements now will give you an idea of what you will need in retirement. Some people will choose to work part-time beyond retirement age, and others may have plans to travel the world.

A good look at your income, your assets, your regular outgoings and your pension entitlement or investments now will mean peace of mind and potentially a more comfortable and secure retirement.



TAKE 10

CEO of Belfast City Airport, Matthew Hall

FOR TAKE OFF: Matthew Hall of Belfast City Airport

In the last of our regional airport series, **Maria Moynihan** talks to CEO of Belfast City Airport, Matthew Hall

1 How has Belfast City Airport recovered since the start of the COVID pandemic?

Belfast City Airport is a very different airport now compared to pre-pandemic. The pandemic brought about significant changes, but we have built back an extensive route network with more convenience and choice for our customers.

2 What destinations are available this summer season?

We are privileged to be able to offer passengers direct access to 27 top domestic and international destinations this summer.

These are: Aberdeen, Amsterdam, Birmingham, Bologna, Bristol, Cardiff, Dundee, East Midlands, Edinburgh, Exeter, Frankfurt, Glasgow, Inverness, Isle of Man, Jersey, Leeds Bradford, Liverpool, London City, London Gatwick, London Heathrow, London Luton, Manchester, Newcastle, Newquay, Palma de Mallorca, Southampton, and Teesside International.

However, with frequent flights to key hub airports around the UK and Europe facilitating onward connections, Belfast City Airport is also a gateway to exploring the rest of the world.

3 What do you feel is the greatest attraction for passengers flying from Belfast City Airport?

Unrivalled convenience. Located just five minutes from Belfast city centre, we have been named the UK and Ireland's most convenient airport, and as a compact one-terminal building, passengers benefit from added convenience on site with car to boarding gate times being among the shortest in Europe.

Additionally, our average security processing times of just six minutes are testament to Belfast City Airport's commitment to delivering an exceptional airport journey for passengers.

4 What is your favourite summer holiday destination from Belfast City Airport?

Newquay (South West of England) has a special place in my heart. I am a regular visitor during the summer and love exploring the beautiful beaches.

5 What is the biggest challenge currently facing Belfast City Airport?

We were fortunate to experience a relatively quick recovery following the pandemic – people were excited about being able to travel again – and reached our pre-pandemic volumes by

the end of 2022. This was a fantastic achievement as we were able to offer passengers more routes with a wider portfolio of airline partners, but it did present us with challenges.

To facilitate these increased operations, we had to introduce additional resources while ensuring our high levels of safety and passenger experience. Of course, this is not a bad challenge to face, and we welcome the opportunity and growth that we have experienced in recent years.

6 What more could the government do to support regional airports like Belfast City Airport?

We were fortunate to have received strong support from the government throughout the pandemic and although we welcome plans to reduce Air Passenger Duty (APD), an excise duty charged on the carriage of passengers, we believe that there are significant gains to be made from the complete eradication of APD.

7 What is your favourite city break destination from Belfast City Airport?

With a network of 20 city destinations, it's difficult to pick just one! From the cultural centres of Amsterdam, Frankfurt, and Edinburgh to football hotspots such as Manchester and Liverpool and the rolling highlands of Inverness – it's simply wonderful to

have the choice of so many.

8 What sustainability measures have been taken at Belfast City Airport?

In addition to aligning our sustainability strategy with 11 of the UN's sustainability development goals, we were the first airport in Northern Ireland to participate in the "Airport Carbon Accreditation" programme, a carbon management certification standard run by Airport Council International, which recognises the efforts of airports to manage and reduce their carbon emissions.

Our continued endeavours to reduce our operational impact on the planet recently earned Belfast City Airport platinum status, the highest accolade possible, at Business in the Community Northern Ireland's Environmental Benchmarking Survey 2022.

9 What is the one thing you can't travel/fly without?

I suppose the most obvious answer would be my passport! But legal requirements aside, I would say a good book is a must-have for any flight.

10 Can you share a fun fact about Belfast City Airport?

2023 marks the 40th anniversary of the first commercial flight from Belfast City Airport. www.belfastcityairport.com/

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This event is not a race, you can cycle at your own pace with time to savour some of the most breath-taking scenery that Ireland has to offer.

Registered Charity No. 20077945

Find out more here bit.ly/ROKCC2023
or contact Mary on 021 422 66 55

163ac farm in Offaly ideal for livestock

The land is good quality and very well laid out, while the yard is large with well-ventilated livestock sheds, writes Paul Mooney

A large grazing farm with a good cattle and sheep yard is for sale in north Offaly. This 163ac farm is close to Ballycumber, at Brackagh, and will catch the attention of a lot of drystock, beef and dairy farmers within a 30km radius. It's being sold by auction by GVM Auctioneers Tullamore.

The farm is in a quiet location, 2km up a cul de sac that branches off the Ballycumber to Rahan L2015 road. Day to day essentials can be got at Ballycumber, 4km away. For bigger shopping it's 16km to Tullamore. Killbeggan and the M6 motorway are 17km away.

The farm is essentially in one block, albeit not completely. One division is almost 160ac while about 600m away there is a second division of 3.75ac.

The land is good-quality and has been very well maintained. It's laid out in eight main fields. There are good boundary hedges and fencing. The farm has plenty of frontage on the cul de sac, which is public road.

FARMYARD

The spacious farmyard is close to the road. The sheds are large but not crowded on top of each other. There is plenty of open concreted area so tractors with machinery, and lorries, have room to load, turn and unload.

This yard has winter accommodation for about 150 cattle – depending on size – between slatted pens and cubicles.

The farm is being offered in four lots. Lot 1 is c36.5ac of good land, with road frontage, laid out in three fields.

Lot 2 is c123ac with the farmyard and with road frontage. This lot has an internal gravel road running from the yard out between the fields, giving good access. Most of this 123ac is fenced for sheep.



The yard is spacious with plenty of open concrete area.



The cubicle house with slatted shed at front.



The farm has c160ac in one block with a c3.75ac field about 600m up the road.



The four-bay shed with slatted tanks alongside a centre passage.



The internal farm road.

“There is plenty of open concreted area so tractors with machinery, and lorries, have room to load, turn and unload”

There are two large sheds in the yard. The main cubicle house is a wide lean-to shed with two passages, four bays long. The cubicles in this shed are in two divisions.

In front of this shed is a four-bay slatted shed with feed barriers. Scrapers on the two passages clean down to the slatted tank. This shed has good height to the gutters, spaced roof sheeting over the slatted tank and a ventilation opening over the cubicles, all benefiting animal health.

On the opposite side of the farmyard there is a modern four-bay A-roofed shed with slatted tanks on both sides of a centre passage. This shed

is of modern design with a high roof and a ventilation opening at the ridge, with a rain canopy.

SILAGE SLAB

In addition, there is a large silage slab, a four-bay free-standing lean-to shed for storage and a three-bay round roofed hayshed with adjoining lean-to, currently used for hay and straw bales. There is an electricity connection and water supply is from a private well located on the land.

Lot 3 will be lots 1 and 2 combined – c159.5ac with the livestock yard. This lot is being guided at €1.6m.

Lot 4 is the c3.75ac on the same road but in the next townland, which is Castletown. This parcel has road frontage, a mains water connection and is currently laid out in grass. It is being guided at €45,000.

This farm is currently used as part of a beef and sheep enterprise. However, it could be easily converted to dairying, according to GVM auctioneer Gordon Cobbe.

This farm will be offered for sale by public auction on Friday 16 June 2023 at 3pm in the Bridge House Hotel, Tullamore.

The auction will also run online on the LSL platform. **CL**

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JORDAN 

Auctioneers, Estate Agents
& Chartered Valuation Surveyors

**FOR SALE BY PUBLIC AUCTION
DRUMMIN HOUSE, CARBURY, CO. KILDARE
ON C.345 ACRES (139 HA) - (IN LOTS)**



- 18th Century Georgian House on a magnificent estate in a good location just 15 mins from M4 Motorway & less than 60 mins to Dublin City & Airport.
- Period residence of 640 sq.m (6,896 sq.ft) with several fine reception room & 4 bedrooms (in need of restoration) set amidst extensive mature gardens and trees.
- Outbuildings including Courtyard and Caretaker's house with great potential.
- Land a mixture of arable c.150 acres, grassland 123 acres, mature timber c.60 acres and willow/beechn c.13 acres.
- Property being offered for sale in lots. Lot 1; Res & Yard on c.53 acres. Lot 2: 44 acres. Lot 3: 248 acres. Lot 4: Entire.

Joint Agent

**Sherry
FitzGerald**

Country Homes
01 237 6300

**PUBLIC AUCTION
Thursday 29th June at 3pm**
in the Johnstown Hotel, Enfield, Co. Meath.
Solr: Orpen Franks, Dublin 4.
Contact: Paddy Jordan / Clive Kavanagh

**FOR SALE BY PUBLIC AUCTION
COOLTOWN HOUSE' ON C.143 ACRES (58 HECTARES),
ENFIELD, CO. MEATH.
(Executor sale)**

- Good location between Enfield (6km) and Trim (11km) with the M4 Motorway (Junction 9) circa 7km to the south.
- Dublin airport approx. 40 minutes away.
- Traditional two storey farmhouse extending to c. 42 sq.m (1,528 sq.ft) with various reception rooms and 4 bedrooms (in need of renovation).
- The yard provides a range of stone outhouses & 3 span hay barn.
- The land is all in one block currently in grass.
- Superb mature trees and natural hedgerows throughout.
- Ideal farm for dairy, livestock or equestrian use.

**PUBLIC AUCTION
On Friday the 23rd June at 3pm**
in the Keadeen Hotel, Newbridge Co. Kildare.
Solr: Dawson O'Toole Solicitors, Newbridge, Co. Kildare
Contact: Clive Kavanagh / Paddy Jordan



**FOR SALE BY PUBLIC AUCTION
WOODLANDS, TIMOGUE, STRADBALLY, CO. LAOIS,
On c.31.5 ACRES (12.74 HA)**

- Good location close to Stradbally (4km), Portlaoise (12km), Athy (16km) & Carlow (25km). M7 - 15 mins.
- Land all top quality with extensive Road & River frontage along with mature hedgerows and trees.
- Lands ideal for any number of uses having been tilled in the past but currently in grass.
- Lot 1: c17 acres, all in grass with site potential. Lot 2: c.4.5 acres with River Frontage. Lot 3: c.10 acres, top quality land with River frontage. Lot 4: Entire 31.5 acres.
- Group water scheme on the road.

**FOR SALE BY AUCTION
Thursday 8th June 2023 @ 3.00pm**
In the Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise.
Solr: HG Donnelly & Sons, Athy.
Contact: Clive Kavanagh / Paddy Jordan



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c. 14.7 ACRES**



Auction - Thursday 15th June 3pm

▶ An exceptionally attractive and well developed model Residential Farm in a country location suitable for equine or any livestock.

The Residence: Two Storey Farmhouse constructed in 2007 with single story self contained annex.

The Farmyard: 2 Modern Steel Framed Sheds in fabulous condition providing 12 Loose Boxes and Storage with hardcore and concrete yard.

The Lands: Laid out in 8 regular divisions with mature boundaries giving excellent shelter. All under permanent pasture.

Auction will be at our Auction Room at 3pm and Online. Pre registration for online bidding by 13th June.

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raymondpotterton.com
38 Watergate Street, Navan, Co. Meath

PSRA No: 002488

TORMEY Auctioneers
PSRA 001632

**AUCTION
KILPATRICK, BUNBROSNA,
MULLINGAR, CO. WESTMEATH.
Thursday 15th June at 3pm in the Greville Arms Hotel,
Mullingar and LSL Auctions Online.
(for the Reps of Barry Donegan decd)**



Superb c. 66 acre Residential Farm.

- c. 66 acres of Top quality land with Extensive Road frontage.
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Viewing Highly Recommended

TULLAMORE OFFICE: Tel: (057) 932 1196
• Email: tullamoreproperty@gvm.ie

PROPERTY

Kildare farm has development potential

Paul Mooney

A 42.2ac farm with a derelict house is for sale in Tirmoghan village, near Kilcock, Co Kildare. The property is for sale from Coonan Property and is going for auction, in lots.

Tirmoghan is a small village 6km away from the M4 motorway. It is near Kilcock (6km), Clane (8km), Enfield (10km) and Maynooth (12km). The property for sale is located opposite Tirmoghan national school.

The property is available in the following lots:

- Lot 1: The derelict house on c2.4ac.
- Lot 2: c39.8ac.
- Lot 3: The entire c42.2ac including

the derelict house, with a guide price of €450,000.

The auction will take place on Wednesday 31 May 2023 in the Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth.

Coonan Property is also offering a 13ac holding with a house at Ardnamullen, Towlaght, Clonard, Co Meath, for sale, by private treaty.

The property is situated on a cul-de-sac and is close to the towns of Kinnegad and Enfield. It is just c3km from the M4 motorway.

The residence is a bungalow with a garage. The house has been well maintained. The land has river frontage and is all in grass. The guide price is €450,000. **CL**

€650,000 for west Cork farm



The house has been empty for about 10 years and requires modernisation.

Paul Mooney

A 45ac residential farm has come on the market near Ballineen, Co Cork. The wider area has intensive dairying, so the holding will generate plenty of interest.

The property at Shanaway Middle, centred between Dunmanway, Clonakilty and Bandon and 4km from Ballineen, is being sold by Hodnett Forde by private treaty and this is an executors' sale. The land is in one working block but is divided by the public road into two divisions. It has frontage on to two public roads, one the Rossmore to Ballineen road, the other a local road. The land is all in grass and has been leased out for a number of years.

The house and yard are together and sited on the smaller road. The farmhouse is two-storey and has been empty for about 10 years. It needs modernisation and redecoration. The yard is beside the house and has a number of traditional sheds, some with stone walls.

Auctioneer John Hodnett is guiding this holding at €650,000. That is based on €12,000/ac for the land and c€100,000 for the house and yard. **CL**

€11,000/ac for 71.8ac Galway farm

Paul Mooney

A 71.8ac holding is on the market outside Tuam, Co Galway.

It is located in two nearby divisions in the townlands of Bracklagh and Fearbeg and for sale from Tuohy O'Toole Auctioneers by private treaty. The guide price for the entire is €790,000.

The location is c2.5km from Tuam, out the Birmingham Road in the direction of Clonbern. The property is being offered in lots.

Lot 1 is 36.94ac at Bracklagh. This lot has c320m of frontage on the Birmingham Road. The land is in permanent pasture and used for grazing and meadow.

Lot 2 is 34.87ac at Fearbeg. It has c450m of frontage on the Birmingham Road and c290m of frontage on a smaller, local road.

There is a cottage fronting on to the Birmingham Road, in need of full renovation.

The property can also be purchased in the entire. **CL**

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TUESDAY 13TH JUNE**
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(unless sold prior to auction)

**in The Carraig Hotel, Carrick on Suir
at 12.00 noon, Friday 26th May, 2023**

Farmhouse on 23 Acres

(For Sale in 1 or More Lots)



**CASTLETOWN
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BY PUBLIC AUCTION

**ROSSMORE ERRILL,
RATHDOWNEY, CO. LAOIS.**

Viewing with Auctioneer by Appointment.

For Sale By Public Auction on
Friday 23rd June at 3pm

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C.61 Acres

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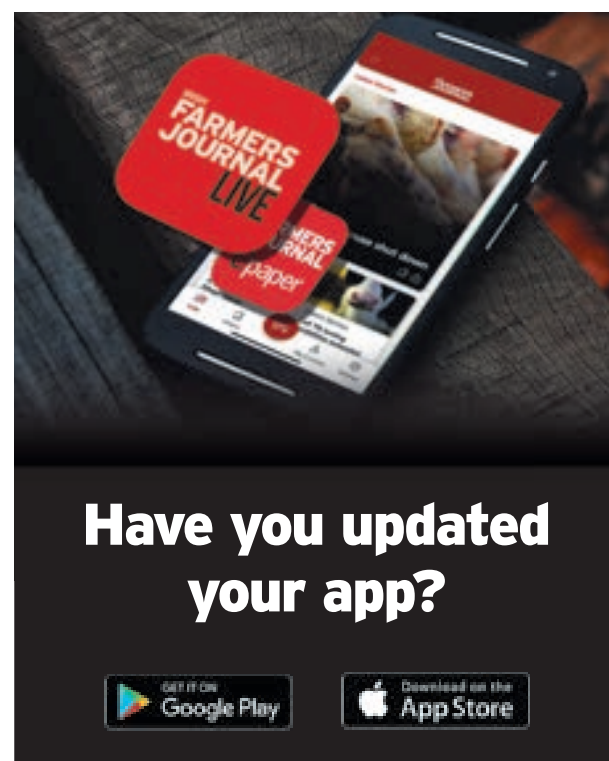
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EXTENSIVE C.1520 ACRE MOUNTAIN HOLDING
INCORPORATING C. 538 ACRES OF HILL GRAZING
LAND & 9 ACRES OF ENCLOSED LAND
FOR ONLINE AUCTION
WEDNESDAY 31 MAY AT 1PM
(IN ONE OR TWO LOTS)

- Lot 1 – Extensive Holding Comprising 1520 Acres Of
C.1520 Acres With C. 538 Acres Of Grazing
Aughavannagh Mountain & C. 1 Acre of Enclosed Land
This Allows For Grazing Of 1 Sheep Per Acre
- Lot 2 – C. 8 Acres Of Lands Adjoining Aughrim / Baltinglass Road
- Lot 3 – Entire

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PSRA Licence Number 002020



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PSRA No. 003051

**FOR SALE BY PUBLIC AUCTION
WED, 31 MAY @ 3PM**

**C. 29.5 ACRES FARM WITH OLD
RESIDENCE, YARD & SHEDS.**

Tavis, Kilmainhamwood,
Co. Meath A82 DE92



Venue: Keenan Auctioneers, Kingscourt, Co. Cavan
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Auction results: €15,000/ac for land in Laois, €14,500/ac in Westmeath

Paul Mooney

WESTMEATH

The land auction scene continues to see strong results as we move through May. Murtagh Bros held a number of successful online auctions of land in Westmeath. This included c41.5ac at Ballinacarrow, Ballynacargy, offered in a number of lots. One of c15.5ac sold for €180,000. A lot of c26ac of forestry was withdrawn at €110,000 – but sold at a higher figure afterwards.

A holding of c29.5 acres at Rathconnell, Ballynacargy, laid



A 41.5ac farm at Ballinacarrow, Ballynacargy, Co Westmeath, sold in a number of lots.

out in divisions, sold for €340,000 or €11,500/ac.

A c32ac holding at Rathcore, Dysart, Mullingar went on the market at €350,000, with the hammer falling at €465,000, equal to €14,500/ac.

MEATH

Raymond Potterton auctioneers put a 23ac holding at Calliaghstown, Balrath, Kells, Co Meath, up for public auction and it was knocked down at €306,000. The same firm auctioned a 118ac residential farm at Corrakeeran, Killmainhamwood, Kells, which sold for €1,150,000.

GALWAY

DNG Martin O'Connor Land Sales sold two plots of land in Co Galway in its most recent monthly online property auction. A cottage and shed ruins on c10.72ac at Attirowerty, Letterfrack was first up. After 38 bids it was sold for €267,000 to a farmer from the general locality.

Next was a holding of undivided shares of commonage totalling to c25.50ac in Attirowerty and Baunoge, Letterfrack. After 27 bids, the holding was sold for €38,000 to a local farmer. The next

sale will be on 20 July.

LAOIS

Jordan Auctioneers, meanwhile, successfully sold a residential farm on 83ac at Clonygowan, Ballyfin, Co Laois. The entire was targeted by the most serious bidding. It opened at €700,000 and then two individuals competed until the hammer fell at €1.22m. Auctioneer Clive Kavanagh said this equated to just under €15,000/ac, including the house. "The buyer is understood to be from the general locality," he said. **CL**

MURTAGH BROS

044 9342512 | 046 9543324

AUCTION

MILLTOWN, RATHCONRATH, CO. WESTMEATH
THURSDAY 25th MAY AT 3PM



SUPERB C. 48 ACRE NON-RES. FARM IN ONE UNDIVIDED DIVISION, RENOWNED FOR ITS FATTENING ABILITIES.

REGISTER WITH MURTAGH BROS TO BID
Sols: J.A. Shaw Solicitors, Mullingar 044-9348721

AUCTION

BALLYHAST, CASTLETOWN-GEORGHEGAN, CO. WESTMEATH
FRIDAY 26th MAY AT 3PM
(For The Reprs. Of Nicholas Jones decd.)



ATTRACTIVE C. 63 ACRES WITH EXCELLENT ROAD FRONTAGE, ALL IN PERMANENT PASTURE (IN ONE OR MORE LOTS).

REGISTER WITH MURTAGH BROS TO BID
Sols: Kelly Caulfield Shaw, Mullingar 044-9348412

AUCTION

FULMORT, MULTYFARNHAM, CO. WESTMEATH
THURSDAY 1st JUNE AT 3PM
(For The Reprs. Of Eamonn Corcoran decd.)



DETACHED TRADITIONAL FARMHOUSE ON C. 26 ACRES OF PASTURE LAND CLOSE TO MULTYFARNHAM VILLAGE.

REGISTER WITH MURTAGH BROS TO BID
Sols: N.J. Downes & Co., Mullingar 044-9348646

AUCTION

GAIGUE, BALLINAMUCK, CO. LONGFORD
FRIDAY 2nd JUNE AT 3PM
ONLINE & IN THE LONGFORD ARMS HOTEL



ATTRACTIVE DETACHED FAMILY HOME WITH SUPERB FARMYARD ON C. 37 ACRES OF EXCELLENT FARMLAND (IN ONE OR MORE LOTS.)

REGISTER WITH MURTAGH BROS TO BID
Sols: Karen M. Clabby Solicitors, Longford 043-3350558

AUCTION

CHARLESTOWN, MULLINGAR, CO. WESTMEATH
THURSDAY 15th JUNE AT 3PM



SUPERB C. 28 ACRES WITH EXCELLENT POTENTIAL AND DUAL ROAD FRONTAGE, LESS THAN 1KM TO MULLINGAR TOWN.

REGISTER WITH MURTAGH BROS TO BID
Sols: N.J. Downes & Co., Mullingar 044-9348646

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CO. LONGFORD

AUCTION WEDNESDAY 31ST MAY AT 3PM

- **BALLINACROSS, GRANARD**
- **44.5 ACRES / 18 (HA)**
- Lot 1: 3 bed residence on c. half acre.
- Lot 2: 44 acres in convenient divisions.
- Mains water / mains sewerage alongside.
- Attractive residential farm on edge of town.
- Possible future development potential.
- Convenient divisions of old pasture.
- View: Residence strictly by appointment. Lands anytime.
- Ref: Thomas Potterton.
- Public Auction & Online via LSL / Pre-register by 29th May.
- Sols: Gerard Carthy, Connellan Sols, 3 Church St., Longford.



CO. WESTMEATH

AUCTION WEDNESDAY 31ST MAY AT 3PM

CO. MEATH

AUCTION FRIDAY 2ND JUNE AT 3PM

- **CLONYN, DELVIN**
- **17 ACRES / 6.9 HECTARES**
- Attractive parcel of farmland
- N52 2km. Delvin 4km. Mullingar 20km.
- Laid out in two divisions.
- All in old pasture. Natural water.
- Possible site potential subject to PP.
- View any reasonable hour -
- Ref: Thomas Potterton.
- Sols: RVW O'Reilly, 12 Trimgate Street, Navan.
- Public Auction & Online via LSL / Pre-register by 29th May.



- **MONEYMORE, LONGWOOD**
- **13 ACRES / 5.26 HECTARES**
- A beautiful parcel of gently undulating land.
- Longwood 1.6km. Enfield / N4 9km. Trim 15km.
- Lands all in one field bordered by the River Boyne.
- Ideal for a residence subject to PP.
- The lands contain valuable sand/gravel deposits.
- View any reasonable hour -
- Ref: Thomas Potterton.
- Sols: Regan Mc Entee & Partners, Trim.



CO. MEATH

AUCTION WEDNESDAY 14TH JUNE AT 3PM

- **BALLIVOR & KILDALKEY**
- **44.34 ACRES / 18 HECTARES**
- Executors Sale (Reps David Burke Decd)
- An attractive & valuable holding in various lots.
- Lot 1: Portlestor: 4 Bed Res on c. half acre.
- Lot 1A: c. 9 acres with outoffices.
- Lot 2: Cloncarneel: C. 8.5 acres.
- Lot 3: Mount Popular c. 4.5 acres.
- Lot 4: c. 1 acre site.
- Lot 5: c. 21.5 acres incorporating approx. 20 acres of forestry.
- Forestry premium approx. €4300 per annum (2 years remaining).
- Prime lands all under old pasture, each with site potential.
- View: Res by appt. Lands at any time. Ref: Thomas Potterton.
- Sols: Joe Curran, DJ Reilly & Co., Trim.



CO. MEATH

AUCTION WEDNESDAY 14TH JUNE AT 3PM

CO. LONGFORD

PRIVATE TREATY

- **PORTLESTOR, BALLIVOR**
- **17 ACRES / 6.9 HECTARES**
- A fine parcel of agricultural land.
- Just off Trim/Ballivor road.
- Ballivor 2km. Trim 12km.
- Laid out in two convenient divisions.
- Permanent pasture. Natural water supply.
- Bordered by mature hedgerows.
- Adjacent to 9 acre field also for auction same day
- View any reasonable hour -
- Ref: Thomas Potterton.
- Sols: Joe Curran, DJ Reilly & Co., Trim.



- **RINCOOLAGH, GRANARD**
- **10 ACRES / 4.047 HECTARES**
- A small parcel of agricultural land.
- Tranquil peaceful setting.
- Mains water.
- Edgeworthstown 10km. Abbeylara 2km. Granard 5km.
- Lands under permanent pasture.
- Elevated field ideal for a res subject to PP.
- Freehold with Vacant Possession upon completion.
- View any reasonable hour -
- Ref: Thomas Potterton.



AGRI CAREERS

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES | COLLEGE LIFE | AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE

Edited by Sarah McIntosh smcintosh@farmersjournal.ie

Young innovators impress

Secondary school students led the way with their agriculture entrepreneurship ideas at the student enterprise final in Croke Park, writes Sarah McIntosh

The 21st Student Enterprise Programme National Finals took place in Croke Park on 5 May, with 82 finalist groups showcasing their innovative business ideas. The programme encourages secondary school students from first to sixth year to learn basic entrepreneurial skills by creating their own business models. A number of students created innovative agricultural products and business ventures.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The programme is funded by the Government through Enterprise Ireland and delivered by the 31 local enterprise offices in local authorities throughout the country. Since the programme began in 2003, over 350,000 students have taken part, learning key skills on how to create a business idea, start a business and grow a business.

The National Final saw students in junior, intermediate and senior categories challenged with creating, setting up and running their own business, which must show sales of their service or product. This year, close to 25,000 students participated.

PLANTING A SEED

Michael Nevin has been the chair of the Local Enterprise Office's Enterprise Education Committee for the last 10 years.

Speaking at the final in Croke Park, Michael told *Irish Country Living* about the lasting impact the programme has had on students since its inception.

"It's a very important programme because it teaches them the practical skills involved in running their own enterprise," he said.

"They are real-life skills around brainstorming, teamwork, keeping books and selling their product and themselves. These skills will stand out no matter what career they embark on in the future.

"We are planting a seed, and if they are interested in self-employment and a career in business, we can nurture them along to become entrepreneurs in the future." **CL**



Freya Whitney, Alexandra O'Looney and Amy Keaveney receiving the junior award for their product Grasper from Minister of State for Employment Affairs and Retail Business Neale Richmond, left, and, right, John Magee, Chair of the Network of Local Enterprise Offices.

FIRST FOR FARM SAFETY

In the junior category, farm safety came out on top with Handled with Hearts winning for their product, Grasper. The three students – Freya Whitney, Alexandra O'Looney and Amy Keaveney – from Drumshanbo Vocational School in Co Leitrim created a handheld farm safety tool used to assist farmers with the opening of slurry tank agitation covers.

The initial product idea came from Alexandra's grandad.

"I was on the farm with Grandad, and I noticed he was struggling to pick up the slatted tank cover. He was always complaining about his back hurting. I brought this back to Freya and Amy and we came up with the Grasper," she explained. "It saves the farmer from hurting their back or getting their fingers caught and it keeps them far away from it [the slurry tank] so the fumes don't knock them out."

Farm safety is a huge aspect of their business and the students met the Minister of State with special respon-

sibility for farm safety, Martin Heydon, who said: "It was great to meet with the passionate team behind Handled with Hearts. Alex, Amy and Freya showed such passion for farm safety and have come up with a very practical tool that can help farmers look after their physical well-being.

"I am a big believer that young people can play an important role in improving safety on farms – they are some of the most powerful influencers around the kitchen table. We should not underestimate their ability to deliver real change when they are empowered to do so."

Alexandra's grandad tested out the product on camera and their video received over 279,100 views on TikTok. They have used social media platforms to spread awareness of farm safety and showcase their product. They now hope to diversify the business into other farm safety products.

To see the product in use visit: www.tiktok.com/@handledwithhearts

OVERALL WINNERS

Senior category

1st – McCompactors – Roscommon Community College, Roscommon
2nd – Colaiste Muire Student IDs – Colaiste Muire, Cobh, Cork
3rd – Hurlr – Heywood Community School, Laois

Intermediate category

1st – Clip Clop Designs – Moyne Community School, Longford
2nd – Premier Woodworking – CBS Thurles, Tipperary
3rd – HD Horseshoe Design – St Kieran's College, Kilkenny

Junior category

1st – Grasper – Drumshanbo Vocational School, Leitrim
2nd – Orlaith's Derrybrien Honey – Gort Community School, Galway
3rd – Clochai Cneasta – Castleisland Community College, Kerry

For more information on the Student Enterprise programme, visit: www.studententerprise.ie



It saves the farmer from hurting their back or getting their fingers caught and it keeps them far away from it [the slurry tank] so the fumes don't knock them out.



Jack Dooley and Killian Ryan.

HD HORSESHOE DESIGN

Jack Dooley and Cian Holohan from St Kieran's College, Co Kilkenny, have created a range of decorative products made from recycled horseshoes.

Taking the time out of their Junior Cert studies, the third-year students have created a business to make use of old horseshoes. "We have ponies at home, and I saw the horseshoes lying around the yard," said Jack. "I was wondering what we could do with them, so I started welding them in the workshop. Once I settled on a few ideas, we stayed going. We attended a couple of markets and it went very well." He isn't as interested in the ponies, but loves machinery as his family are fencing contractors. "I like welding and I am getting good at it. It is a very useful skill to have and you can do a lot with it."

Cian broke his leg so couldn't attend the final in Croke Park, but his friend Killian Ryan attended to help Jack.



Darragh O'Callaghan and Evan Moloney, creators of OCM Light Bars, at the student enterprise final in Croke Park

OCM LIGHT BARS

Darragh O'Callaghan and Evan Moloney from St John Bosco Community College, Co Clare, created their business around manufacturing stainless steel light bars for tractors, lorries and trailers as a safety feature.

Evan, who is from a suckler farming background, came up with the idea for the OCM Light Bars. He told *Irish Country Living*: "I came up with the idea because I was interested in getting one for my own tractor, but they were too dear from other companies. We made a

prototype and we were happy with our outcome.

"We got better materials and advanced the construction."

After spending two hours on the farm, they came up with a prototype, "It was rough and ready but it did the job and got us going. We got a bit of a bug then and started looking for suppliers," said Darragh.

You can find them on Facebook and Instagram and they also have a stand in Clare Hire and Sales.

Instagram: [ocm.lighting](https://www.instagram.com/ocm.lighting)



Students Kiefer Walsh, Odhran Freeman and Owen Monaghan from St Louis Secondary School Kiltimagh, Co Mayo.

ODHRAN'S HEN HOUSES

Odhran Freeman, Kiefer Walsh and Owen Monaghan from St Louis Secondary School Kiltimagh, Co Mayo, are the team behind Odhran's Hen Houses. When Odhran couldn't find the perfect hen house on the market, he decided to take the matter into his own hands.

"I was looking to buy a hen house myself for my hens and it was hard to find the right size for the right price. So, I make them to order. You can tell me what size you want and I

make them then," he explained.

Learning woodwork skills from his grandad (who is a builder), Odhran started coming up with designs and dimensions of a hen house he could sell. He and his fellow first-year students from Kiltimagh have enjoyed talking to people and having "the craic" during the competition.

You can find the hen houses on Instagram, Facebook and TikTok. www.tiktok.com/@odhrans_hen_houses



Join our team

Editor - Irish Country Living

Irish Country Living is seeking applications for the position of Editor.

You will be responsible for leading Irish Country Living, managing the development and production of a high-quality publication and events which encompass the ethos of Irish Country Living – to inform, educate, entertain and be relevant to farm families and rural dwellers.

Candidates are required to have:

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- Deep understanding of rural issues and empathy with needs of dwellers in rural Ireland
- An ability to recognise/develop strong stories
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills
- Experience in public speaking and PR activities
- Excellent people management skills
- High level of writing and English skills.
- Computer literacy and digital skills
- Ability to work to strict deadlines
- Third level qualification

A full job description is available at www.farmersjournal.ie/careers

Interested applicants should forward a CV and cover letter by email to the HR Manager at recruit@farmersjournal.ie with 'Editor, Irish Country Living' in the subject line. Application deadline: Friday, 2 June 2023. Applications will be treated in the strictest confidence. The Irish Farmers Journal is an equal opportunities employer.



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DAIRY FARM ASSISTANT REQUIRED - OAKVALE AGRI LTD., are recruiting 2 Dairy Farm Assistants for their farm at Upper Crubbin, Ballyroan, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. This is a permanent role which include all duties on a working Dairy Farm, milking, animal husbandry, machinery operation, feeding calves and grassland maintenance. Operative will be employed by Oakvale Agri Ltd at Ballyroan, Portlaoise, Co. Laois for a minimum 39 hours per week, remuneration for this position is €30,000 per annum. English language training will be provided where necessary. **If you have a keen interest in dairying, relevant training, and experience, please apply in confidence to: oxana@potentialresources.com** **MEATH**

DAIRY FARM MANAGER WANTED 39 hours per weeks. Salary €30,000. Duties include milking, feeding calves and general farm work. **CVs to edward.treanor@hotmail.com** **MONAGHAN**



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JMW FARMS IRL LTD., ARE LOOKING FOR 5 PIG FARM/SECTION Managers. The successful candidate should have a minimum of 2 years' experience and will be working and managing at one of the following farm operations: Farrowing, Gestation, and Grower Unit. Remuneration for this role is EUR 30,000.00 per year based on 39 hours per week. **If you believe you do have the relevant experience, please feel free to apply to oxana@potentialresources.com** **MEATH SUCKLER & TILLAGE FARM, LAOIS** Seeking Farm Worker. 39 Hour week. Good working conditions and wages. Enquiries to 086-2693164. **+353862693164** **LAOIS**

PAUL & SARAH GLEESON are seeking to hire a Dairy Farm Assistant based in Tuam, Co. Galway. Full time position, 40 hours a week, €31,000 salary per year. Duties include: Milking 300+ cows, calving/calf rearing, machine operations, general farm work. **Applications should be made to pg261663@gmail.com** **GALWAY**

POETS CORNER requires Chef de Parties to join the kitchen catering team for preparing and producing a variety of Chinese food dishes according to the customer orders..The job is based at Poets Corner, Church Road, Croom, Co.Limerick. The annual salary is €30,000, the weekly working hours is 39. **KILDARE**

SOOK HUAN QUAH T/A THE EAST MORNING Chinese Takeaway requires Chef de Parties to prepare and produce a variety of food dishes in Chinese cuisine according to the customer orders.The job is based at Hillcrest, The Commons, Upper Fairhill, Cork,Co.Cork. The annual salary is €30,000, the weekly working hours is 39. **KILDARE**

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AGRI CAREERS

STEPS TO SUCCESS

How to deal with imposter syndrome



Have you ever heard of imposter syndrome? It is something that affects many people, writes **Caroline Murphy**

Iwould wager there isn't one of us out there who has not, at one stage of our lives or another, suffered from imposter syndrome. If you truly haven't, then fair play to you (and can you tell me your secret?).

Imposter syndrome is a collection of thoughts and feelings that – despite external successes and achievements – make you feel like a phony, a fraud, that you don't belong and any day, now, the world will find out the truth about you.

SOUND FAMILIAR?

Let me share something with you: I suffer from imposter syndrome (a lot) and it's something that I have to work on (a lot).

When I talk about my business journey, or if you look at my LinkedIn profile, I will tell you that I am a multi-award-winning business woman, running my free-range egg business while also coaching and mentoring others to have the lives they really want (and not just to settle for what they have).

And this is true. But when my imposter syndrome is in full flight, I doubt myself, my achievements, my hard work, my experience, skills and capabilities.

What I have learned and know now, though, is that these thoughts and feelings are a misconception; completely in my own head. They are simply not true, and I have the certificates, trophies and a healthy balance sheet to prove it.

Even as I am writing this, there is a voice saying,

"People will think you're a right show-off." If you do think this, that is not my intention – I say these things because they are fact.

So, if you suffer from imposter syndrome, don't worry – you are not alone, and the good news is that it can be managed and dealt with. Here are some of the ways I deal with it:

1 Look at the facts and your achievements. In the world of business (and indeed life itself), look back and see what you have done.

It could be a big project or a small one, but it was the actions you took that made things happen. If you had done nothing, nothing would have happened. Your achievements and successes are because of you – don't ever forget that.

Remember to log your wins and achievements as they happen so you can look back at them when you are doubting yourself.

2 Borrow others' confidence in you. This made a huge difference for me. Others believed in me when I didn't, and I took that belief and confidence and used it until I had enough of my own to do what I needed to get done.

Sometimes we need to see ourselves as others do.

3 Be aware of your thoughts and what you are saying to yourself. Imposter syndrome will tell you that you are not good enough and the world will find out what you are really like – but remember (and this is really important): in all aspects of life, you are in charge of what you tell yourself.

So, while those negative thoughts may persist, you can always counteract them with positive thoughts, mantras and the truth. Learn to acknowledge the negative thoughts and put them to one side while you get on with the job in hand; acknowledging your skills and capabilities.

As Denis Waitley said: "It's not what you are that holds you back, it's what you think you're not."

And remember, no one else knows what they are doing, either. **CL**

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Fans often assign great meaning to their chosen team's colours, but they serve a functional purpose too. **Denis Hurley** looks at what happens when colours clash

Team colours can come to symbolise a lot. If a Dubliner were to fall into a Rip Van Winkle-like sleep and then, on his rousing in the deep future, wander into a full Croke Park featuring a team in sky blue and navy up against one in green and gold, he would automatically lean one way, even without any knowledge of the players involved.

Of course he would, you'd say, because he knows that those are the Dublin colours – that's how he knows who to support.

To take a slightly different example – if, through a series of extremely unlikely events, all of Manchester United's players joined Liverpool next week and all of Liverpool's players went the other way, an Irish fan of either club would remain loyal to the badge and the colours rather than the personnel.

To quote the great Jerry Seinfeld, "You're actually rooting for the clothes, when you get right down to it."

And, when it comes down to it, the

When colours clash

primary function of those clothes is to help identify the competitors and, in team sports, to distinguish one from the other.

Traditionally, Derry have played in white jerseys with a red hoop and red shorts but, in part due to the regularity of meetings against Tyrone, the red jersey with a white hoop is a relatively common sight.

Under the current management, that jersey has become the de facto first choice for the team, and it's what they wore last Sunday as they retained the Ulster title for the first time since 1976.

However, their opponents in

Clones were Armagh, who of course wear a reddish shade of orange.

CLASH

Unsurprisingly, it was a bad colour-clash, making it difficult for spectators and TV viewers, with much social media comment on the situation.

It's fine for Derry to feel that the mainly red jersey is a lucky charm – though, incidentally, it's worth noting that the GAA's Official Guide stipulates a €500 fine for a county not wearing its registered first-choice kit – and they would have been loathe to go back to white for a big game while Armagh, not wanting to yield anything, weren't

Ethan Doherty of Derry is tackled by Andrew Murnin of Armagh during the Ulster GAA Football Senior Championship Final match at St Tiernach's Park in Clones, Monaghan.

Harry Murphy/Sportsfile

going to volunteer to wear their black change kit to accommodate the opposition.

At the same time, only a week previously, Galway's footballers had played in their alternative strip of white jerseys and maroon shorts in playing the all-black-clad Sligo in the Connacht final and it didn't do the Tribesmen any harm.

The bottom line is that it shouldn't have been up to either county. It wasn't a difficult problem for the Ulster Council to foresee and to act upon in good time, but the old adage that "prevention is better than cure" is often in short supply when it comes to the GAA. **CL**

Losing the crowds

The week before last, Cork and Kerry played out a draw in the Munster Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) Championship at Páirc Uí Chaoimh.

Played as a stand-alone fixture rather than a double-header, the game was watched by an attendance in the hundreds rather than the thousands. In such a cavernous ground, any crowd that is there is lost. Contrast that with last Sunday in Clonakilty, where Cork took on Waterford.

The numbers attending may not have been much more than the Kerry game in Cork city, but the venue was far better suited to it, creating a better atmosphere and keeping with the sense of ceremony as west Cork hosted a senior championship match for the first time.

On the one hand, the organisers don't want to turn down a place like Páirc Uí Chaoimh if it is available and the players want to play at the best stadia, but in terms of promotion, a young (or old) supporter is more likely to remember the occasion created by a packed ground on a beautiful summer's day.

Murphy makes the cut

Think of something you're really good at – like, something where you're way better than your peers.

If a world ranking existed for that, would you be anywhere close to being in the top 700 in the world? How much better would you need to become in order for that to happen?

A week ago, John Murphy was ranked 627th in the Official World Golf Rankings, though the Kinsale Golfer had found life tough since earning his card for the DP World Tour for the current season.

Ten missed cuts meant the prize-money ticker had yet to get going and, in a sport like golf, where momentum counts for so much, it would have been understandable if confidence dropped.

However, despite only being 24, Murphy is extremely level-headed and he ensured that the belief continued to outweigh the doubts.

At last week's Soudal Open in Belgium, he opened with a two-under-par round of 69 and then made the cut with a 71 on Friday.

It says much about his character that, when the DP World Tour Twitter account mentioned him making the weekend after ten missed cuts, he was able to be self-deprecating in response:

"I appreciate you leaving out the two missed cuts I had on [the] Challenge Tour in between!"

Saturday brought a six-under-par round of 65 and, though he couldn't move further up the leaderboard on Sunday, he finished in a tie for 28th, banking €16,293.66. Hopefully this proves to be a platform on which to build.

John Murphy during day one of the 2022 Horizon Irish Open Golf Championship at Mount Juliet Golf Club in Thomastown, Kilkenny.

Eóin Noonan/Sportsfile



Munster storm to URC final

The tight scheduling meant that Leinster couldn't go bald-headed for last Saturday's URC semi-final against Munster, with Jack Crowley's late drop goal giving Graham Rowntree's side a 16-15 win.

From an Irish rugby point of view, it was probably the best outcome – or at least it will be if Leinster bounce back in this Saturday's Heineken Champions Cup final against La Rochelle in Marseille.

After an up-and-down season, Munster have found form and have a chance to win a trophy for the first time since 2011, though a final clash with the Stormers in South Africa will be a tall order.

For Leinster, there are bigger fish to fry – La Rochelle managed to beat them in last year's European final, but the quest for that fifth title is more important.

Leinster's progress to the decider has been fairly serene and they are favourites, but Ronan O'Gara's side will be tougher than anything they have faced.

LIVING LIFE

Edited by **Caitríona Bolger** cbolger@farmersjournal.ie

THEATRE | BOOKS | ENTERTAINMENT | GARDENING | TRAVEL | CHARITY



Shear class

A site 500 metres from a white sandy beach in north Donegal will play host to the All-Nations Shearing and Wool Handling Championships this summer.

Caitríona Bolger finds out more

“If there is any reason to come to Donegal on your holidays, this is it,” says PRO of Clonmany Agricultural Show and Sheepdog Association, Blaine McCarron.

Hosting the All Nations Shearing and Wool Handling Championships on 8 and 9 August this summer, the show committee are hoping the weather will be as good as when the Irish Open descended on the parish in 2018.

“Sky News took a shot from the

helicopter of dolphins jumping out of the water that weekend; it was phenomenal to see how well the area looked,” Blaine recalls.

FROM THE BEGINNING

Established in 1966 as Clonmany Sheepdog Trials, classes were added over the years and it has become one of the most popular shows in Donegal.

Sheepdog trials are still very much part of the show and will see competitors and their dogs travel from Northern Ireland, some from Scotland and a large following will make the trip up

from the southern counties.

Blaine, from a suckler farm in Clonmany, studied agricultural science at UCD. He works as sales and technical support with Eko Hoofcare during the week and duty manager at Ballyliffin Hotel at weekends. He joined the show committee in 2017 and has been going to meetings every Tuesday night since.

He credits the show site as being a factor in securing the All-Nations Championships this summer.

“The site has stood the test of time; it has been our showgrounds for over 40 years,” he explains.

“It is free-draining, sandy land that doesn’t flood. It holds up in all weather conditions.”

Blaine acknowledges the generosity of the landowners who join up to give access for show time.

Cattle pens stay up all year round and the land is in grazing, with mainly sheep keeping the sward low.

SHEARING AN ADVANTAGE

When the committee held a shearing event in 2019, they contacted the Irish Sheep Shearers Association who supported Clonmany

Blaine McCarron PRO of Clonmany Agricultural Show.

Clonmany Agricultural Show is preparing for the All-Nations Sheep shearing and wool handling championships this summer.

Show in the planning and preparations. After the success of this event, it was a given for the show committee that they would do it again.

With a lull in activity for the duration of the pandemic, the show bounced back, with shearing featuring on show day in the years since. With the All-Nations returning to Ireland, Blaine believes the show’s experience held sway for the Shearing Association.

“They knew we had the site, they knew we had the resources and they knew we had the experience,” he points out.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT?

“First of all, you can expect immense value for money,” says Blaine proudly.

Children go free and there is no charge for parking. It is €13 per adult or €25 per couple. Parking is on-site with no shuttle buses.

The grand prize draw introduced on the show’s 50th anniversary takes place as the show finale, with this year’s top prize a choice of a brand new Valtra tractor or jeep.

Introduced for 2022 was a marquee dedicated to nature. Inspired by the reconnection with nature during the pandemic, and based on the interest this generated last year, the committee are working to develop this section further this summer.

Along with a thriving home industries area and a pet show including classes for cats and rabbits, the committee is hoping that the biggest challenge will be being adequately prepared for sunny August days.

THE CHAMPIONSHIPS

With a purpose-built shearing stage already on site, plans are in place to extend this so that the men and women from competing countries can take part simultaneously.

Entrants are expected to travel from Ireland, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, France and Wales. Competing single-handedly – not entering as a team – the wool handling is a talent in itself, with people travelling to compete in these championships as much as the shearing.

“There is a certain way in which the wool is tied, in which it is processed; they are competing against the clock as well,” says Blaine.

The show committee is tasked with sourcing the sheep for shearing.

With 1,600 sheep selected from the Inishowen area, 1,400 yearling ewes are expected to be prepared – docking tails and pre-clipping – with 700 shorn per day.

The sheep will be collected from the host farm on the morning of shearing and, once shorn,



The site is located half a kilometre from Pollan Strand in north Donegal



MAKE A HOLIDAY OF IT

Clonmany is one and a half hour's drive north of Donegal town and 30 minutes south of our country's most northerly point, Malin Head, so why not arrange a holiday to this most picturesque part of the country?

With the show site just over 500 metres from a white sandy beach, Pollan Strand, and plenty more idyllic beaches nearby, there is plenty of stunning scenery to explore.

Directly north of the show site, beyond Ballyliffin golf club on the Isle of Doagh, you will find extensive sand dunes. Take the Pollan strand walk out to Carraickabraghy Castle and on this peninsula, the Doagh Famine Village will bring to life the complexities of the region's history.

The week of Clonmany Show coincides with the 54th Clonmany Festival. Running from 6-13 August, there are plenty of family fun events taking place during the day and by night, some of the biggest names in Irish country music will take to the open-air stage.

will be taken back to the host farm to get them back to a familiar environment as soon as possible.

"We just had a meeting dedicated to the welfare of the sheep. All the sheep will be under the shade of a marquee and plenty of drinkers will be available," says Blaine.

"The Veterinary Clinic, Carn-donagh, will be on site for the duration of the show."

ANOTHER VET

"Veteran sheep shearer George Graham will be commentating and keeping an eye out for the sheep's welfare too," he adds.

Adding to the experience, a local

master weaver will be demonstrating the skill of weaving wool on a full-size loom. Clonmany has a rich history of weaving from the days of Clonmany Tweed factory.

Taking a break from shearing, wool handling and weaving, there will be jiving and line dancing competitions on both days of the show.

"Jiving is like a second religion around here," says Blaine with a laugh.

"That competition might be as popular as the All-Nations," he adds before continuing with the preparations. **CL**

TV PERSONALITY AND DONEGAL PERSON OF THE YEAR, NOEL CUNNINGHAM RECALLS HIS FIRST VISIT TO THE CLONMANY SHOW

"There I was, a dapper Dan on a sunny day in pink suit and dazzling bow tie. I turned down a laneway as directed and before me lay a large expanse of beautiful farmland. Every farm animal you could imagine, tractors, crafts and bakery stalls, music and dancing.

"I was so inappropriately dressed for such rural pursuits that I could have bolted. Then I spotted Catwalk model agency getting ready for a McElhinney's fashion show and Neven Maguire preparing for a food demonstration. That was when I realised this show is truly something else – I was hooked!

"Year later, my love for the Clonmany Show is as fresh and strong as ever. It is a true celebration of country life. Clonmany is in a class of its own. Key to its success is the inclusion of so much to so many."



WHAT'S ON

Compiled by Caitriona Bolger

IT'S A LONG WAY TO TIPPERARY...

The Galty Vee Valley in southwest Tipperary turns into a mesmerising sea of pink, purple and green as the avalanche of rhododendrons come into bloom.

This June bank holiday weekend, local guides will take you on off-road walking routes. There will be a two-course meal with musical entertainment in Ballyporeen and Clogheen after the walks.

Walks to suit varying abilities take place on Friday, 2 June – Sunday, 4 June. For details and booking: vee.ie

LIVING IT UP IN LIMERICK

The swinging 1950s return to the opulent surroundings of The Library at The Savoy, Henry Street, Limerick. Liam O'Brien (right) performs all the hits in true 'ratpack' style. From Frank Sinatra to Dean Martin, this is a very special evening of fine food using locally sourced ingredients. Three course dinner and entertainment €65 per person thesavoycollection.com



SLANE CASTLE EXPECTING VIKING INVASION

Boyne Valley Viking Experience will be the largest historical re-enactment festival in Ireland this year Saturday and Sunday 20 and 21 May. Twice a day over 200

armoured, full contact Viking warriors will take to the battlefield competing to be crowned Irish champion. Full size replica long-ships will be on display and sailors from the Vikings TV Series will tell tall tales of hair raising adventures.

Booking on www.boynevalleyevents.com/slancastle-viking-festival

TOUR OF KILRUDDERY GARDENS, WICKLOW

As part of National Biodiversity Week, take a tour of the 17th century heritage gardens at Kilruddery House with head gardener, Darragh Farren. Beginning at 12pm on Tuesday 23 May, the tour is expected to last for one to two hours. Members go free, non-members €8.50 with free car-parking.

Advance booking is essential: Kilruddery.com

CREATIVE WEEKEND IN THE HEART OF MID-ULSTER

Learn all you want to know about painting masterpieces and conjuring up stories and poems, as well as tips on how to get published from musician, songwriter and visual artist Jim McKee and global bestselling author, Emma Heatherington at Rosehill House, Roughan Road, Stewartstown, Co Tyrone, BT71 5PU Tickets £275. **CL** emma@writewithemma.com

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GARDENING WITH GERRY



Gerry Daly

gerrydaly@theirishgarden.ie

Name: The common names of this plant are purple gromwell and blue star flower but these names are hardly ever, if ever, used. In general, the correct botanical name, *Lithodora*, is also used as the common name.

Botanical name: While the plant has a paucity of common names, it has no shortage of botanical names. Currently, it has the name *Lithodora*, following on from the previous *Lithospermum* and *Glandora*.

The name *Lithodora* is derived from Greek for stone or rock, and gifted with scent. *Lithospermum* means hard seeds. The word *diffusum* is Latin for spreading, which it does.

Family: *Lithodora* is part of the borage family, the *Boraginaceae*, which contains borage, echium and comfrey. It is very attractive to bees, including borrowing bees and other non-social, solitary bees.

Lithodora is a genus of evergreen shrubs that are low growing in the manner of heathers and rock roses. They originated around Turkey and are native to the Mediterranean region; Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Algeria in North Africa. *Lithodora* has become popular for its blue flowers, which are produced profusely in late spring and early summer.

The shade of blue can vary between different species. For instance, the species *Lithodora oleaefolia* (the species name meaning olive-leaved), has pale blue, cup-shaped flower as opposed to the star-shaped of 'Heavenly Blue', which is the cultivar usually seen in gardens and for sale.

Lengthways, the little flowers are trumpet-shaped, brilliant blue at the mouth and a flash of rose-purple along the stem of the flower. The contrast of colours makes for a very vibrant display.

GARDEN USE

Lithodora, as might be expected from the dry Mediterranean conditions that pertain where it grows naturally, is an ideal plant for growing in a rock garden or similar conditions such as an area of gravel. Its low-growing habit makes it a useful ground cover plant with its evergreen foliage offering a challenge to rock-garden weeds.

It can also be planted to tumble over the edge of a low wall or the front of a border. It can be planted on its



Bring a heavenly blue profusion of colour to your garden.

own in parts and moved into prime areas when in flower, being retired to the background as the flowers fade out. It also takes clipping very well, which is carried out after flowering has finished in summer.

Growing in scrub land and coping with hot summers, *Lithodora* often acts as a scrambling plant, growing through others, and using them to piggyback-up to the light. It is not a true climber as such but has the ability to climb, or scramble, through other more upright plants.

GROWING LITHODORA

Lithodora is a relatively easy plant to grow, matching its territory of origin and the conditions that develop there.

It grows well in rocky-quite-stony ground where some decaying leaf mould settles over and between the stones. While this offers ideal conditions, the plant is not terribly fussy, except that it does not like wet ground, especially in winter, which causes the roots to die.

As might be expected, this plant likes full sunshine. Although it will survive in light shade, producing as much flowering as it would in good light. Any ordinary soil will be suitable as regards the nutrients, it not being a hungry feeder.

Overfeeding can lead to leafy growth and fewer flowers. Plants can be raised by cuttings in summer or by division in autumn. **CL**

KITCHEN GARDEN

PUMPKINS, COURGETTES AND BUTTERNUT SQUASH

Pumpkins, courgettes and butternut squash are part of the same family that also includes cucumbers and gourds. Pumpkins are not hardy and cannot be started outdoors until the danger of frost has passed between mid-May in the south and coastal areas and mid-June in the midlands and north.

At the same time, the plants need to make as much growth as possible during the summer to fully ripen the fruits and grow them to a good size. So, this means sowing in pots indoors in a greenhouse, porch or conservatory, or even a bright window sill. The seeds can be sown from late March to early May. Later sowing runs the risk of the plants running out of warm weather, as can happen if the summer is cool. There are many varieties offered by the seed houses, some of them small and neat for storage. Sow one seed in a small pot and pot up as the plant fills the pot with roots, not giving it a check. Do not be rushing to plant out and be sure to give enough space for each plant to grow. Pumpkins, at least the larger varieties such as 'Atlantic Giant', can make a big plant with shoots extending beyond 3m.

However, that might seem a lot in a small garden, but as summer progresses and crops mature the pumpkin shoots have a way of finding more space. Pumpkins need about 1.5 metres each way and courgettes and squashes need at least 1m each way. When planting any of these pumpkin family plants, it always pays off to plant each plant on a mound of well-rotted garden compost dug into the planting station.

Keep the young plants nicely watered until they have obviously rooted, and then during any dry spell of more than a few days. Do not worry if flowers are slow to develop fruit on pumpkins and squashes. Courgettes, which are marrows, are very quick to produce some usable fruits.

>> This week's reminders

TREES, SHRUBS AND ROSES

Newly planted trees and shrubs can be slow to root out and are very vulnerable to drought. Water heavily once or twice during any dry spell of more than a week. Control weeds and grass around young trees because grass especially can provide severe competition.

FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND HERBS

Make repeat sowings of fast-maturing vegetables, especially salads that go over quickly. Thin out and transplant vegetables that have reached suitable size, and control weeds early. After any continuously wet period, spray potatoes for blight, if warnings are given.

FLOWERS

Feed all containers weekly if they have not had slow-release fertiliser pellets added to the compost. Snails can still cause serious damage during a few rainy days, especially a close, wet night. Watch for greenflies on bedding plants and container plants and control them.

LAWNS

Grass growth has been phenomenal in recent weeks, and there's no need to consider any feeding at this stage of the season. The reasons have been twofold: first, there was an early breakdown of organic material in the soil and then nitrogen produced by lightning.

GREENHOUSE AND HOUSE PLANTS

Continue to feed greenhouse plants and water freely to maintain strong growth. Use a shading material if the greenhouse gets too hot. Check greenhouse plants for scale insects, greenflies and red spider mites, all of which can build up very rapidly at the time of year.

THE FRONT ROW

Leo Powell

For queries email leopowell@theirishfield.ie

A week to access this true classic

I am conscious with this column to not appear Dublin-centric when previewing and reviewing. After all, life does not begin and end in the capital city.

Nonetheless, access to large audiences often means the best offerings are staged in Dublin, and the current appetite for live theatre means companies are naturally attracted to the big venues available. As I pen this, the curtain is coming down on an exceptional piece of theatre, staged for almost a month at the Abbey.

The good news, however, is that not only can anyone in Ireland still have access to the production for a few more weeks, but you can get family and friends in any part of the world to watch it too. There is a catch – you need to activate a link to stream the play by 27 May. You then have a fortnight to watch it. I wholeheartedly recommend that you see this.

A MORAL THRILLER

The play is a well-known and respected piece by Henrik Ibsen, though

this new version was written and is directed by Mark O'Rowe. *Ghosts*, considered one of the greatest plays ever written, is a moral thriller in which the themes of love, duty and family are put to the test. O'Rowe presents a pared back version of the original, and you will be hooked from the get-go.

Taking a path that has previously presented us with *Howie The Rookie* (an autobiographical piece) and *The Approach*, O'Rowe has teamed up again with Landmark Productions and the Abbey Theatre to great effect.

The five-person ensemble of Cathy Belton, Simone Collins, Declan Conlon, Lorcan Cranitch and Calam Lynch is world class, and the intensity of their performances leaves no margin for any acting weakness. Cathy Belton, in the role of Mrs Alving, is exceptional.

Ghosts was written in 1881 and first staged a year later in Chicago, Illinois, in a production by a Danish company on tour. Like many of Ibsen's plays, it is a scathing commentary on 19th-century morality. It was not an

immediate success, largely because of its subject matter. Themes which included religion, venereal disease, incest, and euthanasia caused great controversy and negative criticism.

A GREAT PLAY

Time has been much kinder, and today it is considered a great play that holds a position of immense importance in the pantheon of literary work.

"From the standpoint of modern tragedy, *Ghosts* strikes off in a new direction," wrote Maureen Valency 60 years ago, adding: "Regular tragedy dealt mainly with the unhappy consequences of breaking the moral code. *Ghosts*, on the contrary, deals with the consequences of not breaking it."

Mrs Alving is about to dedicate an orphanage she has built in memory of her late husband, despite his many affairs. She stayed with him to protect her son Oswald from the taint of scandal, and for fear of being shunned.

She discovers that Oswald is suffering from an unspeakable illness; that he has fallen in love with her maid



Cathy Belton, in the role of Mrs Alving, is exceptional.

Regina Engstrand, and that she is the non-marital daughter of Captain Alving, and therefore Oswald's half-sister.

There are other sub-plots to the play, before we reach the disturbing climax. Following the revelation of Regina's and Oswald's sibling relationship, Regina leaves Oswald in anguish. He asks his mother to help him avoid the late stages of syphilis with a fatal morphine overdose. She agrees, but with a condition. The play concludes with Mrs Alving having to confront the decision of whether or not to euthanise her son in accordance with his wishes. **CL**

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COMMENT **Christa Dillon**

In praise of horsemanship

Badminton Horse Trials 2023 was both exciting and alarming, and packed with drama from start to finish. Difficult weather conditions in the run up meant that the cross-country phase became an even greater test of horsemanship than usual.

Some riders gave an exhibition of knowledge and skill, nursing their horses around the demanding track and finishing well. Others were quick to realise that their horses were not comfortable running on deep ground, and 11 chose to retire.

There was the usual smattering of hard luck stories, but there was also some questionable riding and decision making. Watching very tired horses being pushed around a very tough course is not pleasant to see.

HORSEMANSHIP

Britain's Oliver Townend was one such example, riding Irish Sport Horse Ballaghmor Class, the duo finished second. However, Townend was subsequently given a recorded warning from the FEI for 'Dangerous riding/a series of dangerous jumps'. In direct contrast, Ireland's Austin O'Connor gave an absolute masterclass in both horsemanship and skill.

A third-place finish aboard his 2021 Tokyo Olympic mount Colorado Blue (ISH) by Jaguar Mail (SF) out of Rock Me Baby (AES), by Rock King (WNTR) was a well-deserved result for the O'Connor family, owners of The Salty Syndicate, and breeder Kate Jarvey.

This great result was also the highest place finish by an Irish rider in 40 years: the last such achievement belongs to racehorse trainer Jessica Harrington, who finished third in 1983 riding Amoy.

HOLIDAY

My own horsey life continues to meander along quietly. A lull in proceedings occurred when I went on holiday for the first time in six years.

A wonderful lady deputised in my absence, even managing to appear unalarmed at the novella of written instructions that I left for her.

The ponies naturally caused chaos on my first night away, one of them commando crawled under two sets of electric fencing into a field with a lot more grass. On the second night, the other pony did the exact same thing. The horses were thankfully far better behaved.

I am quite busy coaching at the moment, and I am also currently doing a First Aid Responder refresher course. The results are mixed.

I obviously excel at wound management and bandaging, but apparently telling someone who has fainted to 'get up and stop fawning around' is frowned upon.

It's a good job that I am not very bright, because I would have made a terrible doctor.

I remain convinced that we would all be far better off if we could go to the vet instead. No waiting lists, quick test results and you can take your horse along, too. **CL**



"That's my boy"
- Judge Kate Nicholson congratulates Tiernan Gill on winning the 2023 Balmoral Show filly championship with Flogas Penelope who is by Jardonnay, a son of the great Kannan. \ Susan Finnerty

Why Irish racing could be back on Sky next year

Mark Costello

THE chances are that not many readers of these pages are subscribers to Racing TV (RTV), the channel which live broadcasts all Irish racing. The service costs about €30 per month.

Up to the end of 2018, you could use *At The Races* which is a free service, as long as you are on the Sky platform. Now rebranded as Sky Sports Racing (SSR), this channel covers racing from 24 British racecourses and last week it emerged that SSR is likely to win back five Irish tracks, starting next year.

This is big news as it represents the first time that all 26 Irish racecourses have not stuck together when selling their media rights.

The current deal with RTV expires at the end of this year, and it seemed another five-year renewal was on the cards when, last October, the Association of Irish Racecourses [AIR] announced that RTV's parent company was the "preferred bidder" and all that needed to be worked out was the small print.

But during the winter, five smaller racecourses



All Irish racing is currently shown on Racing TV, but five tracks look set to switch to Sky Sports Racing next year. \ Healy Racing

came together and questioned whether this new deal was the best for them. Limerick, Kilbeggan, Roscommon, Sligo and Thurles argued that the deal was unfair in two respects – it favoured the bigger tracks with the biggest races, and they said Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) was taking too big a percentage of the takings.

The whole thing came to a head last week when representatives of all the tracks came together to vote on the new deal.

Sure enough, the five 'rebels' opted out, saying they want to explore an offer from a company linked to SSR, which guarantees them a €100,000 media

rights payment per fixture.

We don't have the full details of both offers to allow us make a direct comparison, but it seems likely the Sky offer is around 25% better than the current deal. Which makes you wonder why they didn't win the tender in the first place.

So, what does all this mean for the home viewer? Well, the five tracks have a combined total of 45 racedays per year and they will almost certainly be shown on Sky, which will go down well with many. There should be enough free airtime to give them proper coverage, with interviews, et cetera, though there have been cutbacks on Sky recently.

Their Sunday morning chat show was cancelled, their Irish racing expert was dropped, and they didn't cover the winter racing from Dubai or Saudi Arabia, instead opting to show more greyhound racing in between the horsey action.

It remains to be seen how often they send presenters to the track to cover the Irish meetings. In fairness, Racing TV have been very good at this.

Their problem is that they simply have too much racing at times to fit everything in.

However, you may have noticed that TG4, Virgin Media, RTÉ and even ITV have been showing more Irish racing in recent years.

That's because the current media rights holders are happy to supply pictures to terrestrial channels within reason. That was not the case when *At The Races* held the rights to Irish racing, so viewers – and the sport in general – could lose out too.

Overall, competition is a good thing in all walks of life, so we can at least take some comfort in the fact that there is such international demand for Irish racing. Stay tuned. **CL**

The origins of the Tattersalls Irish Guineas Festival

In the run up to the Tattersalls Irish Guineas Festival, *The Irish Horse* discovers what's in store for the festival of flat racing, and the African origin of the guinea

Established by The Jockey Club, formerly the regulator for the sport in the UK and now the largest commercial horse racing organisation in the United Kingdom owning 15 of Britain's famous racecourses, the 2000 Guineas, for colts, first took place in 1809 in Newmarket, and much later in Ireland at The Curragh Racecourse in 1921.

The first Irish 1000 Guineas race, for fillies, was run at the Curragh in 1922. The 1000 and 2000 Guineas races are regarded as two of the most prestigious horse races in Ireland.

They kick off the Irish summer classics season, which also includes the Derby, Oaks and St Leger races which complete the big five, the most prestigious races in the flat racing calendar.

The 'Classics' form the bedrock of the Irish Flat Racing season and are the benchmark in which legends are made, comparable to Majors in golf and Grand Slams in tennis.

PRIZE FUNDS

So how did the name of the race come about? A guinea used to be equivalent to 21 shillings when the races were first run in the early 1800s in England.

One guinea is the equivalent of £1.05, with both the 1000 and 2000 Guineas being named according to their original prize funds.

The 2000 Guineas is a flat race for three-year-old colts (male horses) at the end of May each year, over a distance of one mile. This race is also open to fillies (female horses), but their participation is very rare.

Meanwhile, the 1000



Homeless Songs gets a kiss from trainer Dermot Weld after their win in the 2022 Tattersalls Irish 1000 Guineas. \ Healy Racing

West Africa

Horse racing is a sport with a long history. While much has changed in racing throughout the years, the sport of kings preserves many customs which would otherwise be outdated. As a consequence, race distances are still measured in furlongs, which interestingly used to be the length of a furrow in a one-acre ploughed field.

So, what is a guinea? Between 1663 and 1813, the United Kingdom manufactured gold coins known as guineas.

They derived from the Guinea area of West Africa, which supplied the bulk of the gold needed to manufacture the coins.

Guineas is run under the same conditions just for fillies on the same weekend, which takes place as part of the Tattersalls Guineas Festival which runs this year from Friday 26 to Sunday 28 May at the Curragh Racecourse in Co Kildare and is hugely popular for both racing fans and for families who like a fun day out.



A delighted Jessica Harrington after Alpha Centauri and Colm O'Donoghue won the 2018 1000 Guineas. \ Healy Racing

Why are horses priced in guineas? Even when the guinea coin was no longer in circulation, it was widely used as a unit of account worth 21 shillings.

For the sale of racehorses at auction, bids are still conducted in guineas, with the purchaser paying the guinea-equivalent sum but the seller receiving just that

number of pounds.

Traditionally, the difference (5p in each guinea) represents the auctioneer's commission (which thus, effectively, amounts to 5 percent on top of the sales price free from commission). So, it is said that horses still being sold in guineas is a gentleman's way of saying, "Don't forget

to include my commission!"

Further to the fun there is of course serious racing taking place, and the weekend's action signals the first two of five classic races in Ireland in the 2000 and 1000 Guineas with some of Europe's fastest horses along with the top trainers and jockeys names in the sport.

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- Is your mare in foal this year? Don't forget to complete a mare declaration online or ensure a covering certificate is sent to us. To order your foal kit you must either have a covering certificate complete with the Sires and Dams details or complete a mare declaration online. Everything you need to know is on our website www.horsesportireland.ie - go to the Passport Section and select Register a Foal. On receipt of a correctly complete covering certificate or mare declaration, Horse Sport Ireland will automatically issue a foal kit.
- Interested in selling your horse or pony? Visit www.irishhorsegateway.ie - HSI's first point of contact for overseas clients seeking information on sourcing Irish horses and ponies.
- Visit breeding.horsesportireland.ie for pedigree, progeny and performance information on the Irish Horse Register.
- Remember to follow @HorseSportIreland on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for the latest updates from our Irish equestrian athletes, both at home and abroad.

In a sport that was historically dominated by males, some high profile female trainers have had 1000 Guineas successes such as Jessica Harrington, who trained Alpha Centauri in 2018, and Frances Crowley who trained Saoire in 2005.

Whether you are a seasoned racegoer at the Curragh or you are thinking of going for the first time, you are guaranteed a first-class day out at this year's Tattersalls Irish Guineas Festival.

The Friday evening meeting will host the ultimate Abba party on 26 May, with racing, followed by the superb 70s tribute band Abbaesque.

Race goers are encouraged to come along in their best 70s and Abba costumes, with Irish Derby tickets up for grabs for the best dressed on the night. **CL**

Readers respond to the search for Mr Right

A recent letter ("I thought I had finally met Mr Right," published 29 April edition) evoked a strong response from our readers. Here are just two examples of the letters that we received. Thanks for taking the time to get in touch.



GET IN TOUCH

Do you have a problem you would like to share with someone who may be able to help? If so, you can write to Miriam, Irish Country Living, Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12, or send an email to miriam@farmersjournal.ie

Hi Miriam,
I was very moved by the letter from Lonely Lady in the 29 April edition.

It struck a clear note with me of a similar experience that happened to me years ago when I visited a friend who was working in Claremorris.

We went to the local disco where a very handsome man asked me to dance and we subsequently stayed together (at the disco), chatting and dancing. Later he walked me home to my friend's house, where I asked him in for tea, which, for me, meant just that, as it afforded us more time to chat, and as happened, snog. So, in my innocence then, I was a bit surprised when he started and continued, to hint at the bedroom. But that was not even a consideration for me and like Lonely Lady's interest, he went off home. However, I was hugely attracted to him. He ticked all the proverbial boxes and, as soon as I could manage it, I went over again to visit my

friend, and hopefully, meet him again. We went off to the disco and, to my delight, there he was having a drink and chatting with his friends. But imagine my disappointment when he completely ignored me! I was gutted! On subsequent reflection, I figured that he was "only after the one thing" and was using his charm to get it. And this is why Lonely Lady's letter resonated so strongly with me.

Lonely Lady had a lucky escape, in my view, and her "wonderful" man's lack of interest in her interests was also a red flag.

She said she has tried online dating, which was not successful. What about the marriage matchmaking agencies which deal with people who are genuinely ready to settle down with someone and which have the means and expertise in pairing people who just might work together?

Also, if her working hours are an issue in forming a relationship, maybe she could consider looking for another job? At this point in her life, finding a companion seems to be a priority, so perhaps she should treat it as such?

She sounds like a lovely lady and I really hope she finds a man who is deserving of her and who would love to enjoy life with her, which would, of course, include

“
I really hope she finds a man who is deserving of her and who would love to enjoy life with her

meals out and going to the cinema!

Dear Miriam,
The letter struck a chord with me as my son is in exactly the same situation and it is having a very negative effect on his psychological wellbeing. He is happy in his work life and in his home environment, but he is very socially isolated and lonely.

He works 12-hour shifts, both night and day, over the seven days of the week and finds it extremely difficult to meet either friends or potential partners. He is living in a county where he did not grow up, so he has no foundation friends in the area.

Like the lady who wrote to you, he has left no stone unturned in his quest for social interaction but it's very hard. He is waiting to join a local club to pursue a lifelong interest but it will take time. Meanwhile, I was searching for some sort of support for him and I heard about the Social Prescribing Service provided by the HSE. I emailed the social prescriber in his area and explained my son's situation and he is now nearing the end of a three-week wait for a consultation.

I can't, as yet, tell you how it will work out but we travel forward in hope. It may be a possibility for the Lonely Lady. **CL**

AGRIWORD 1210

BY FINÉAGAS

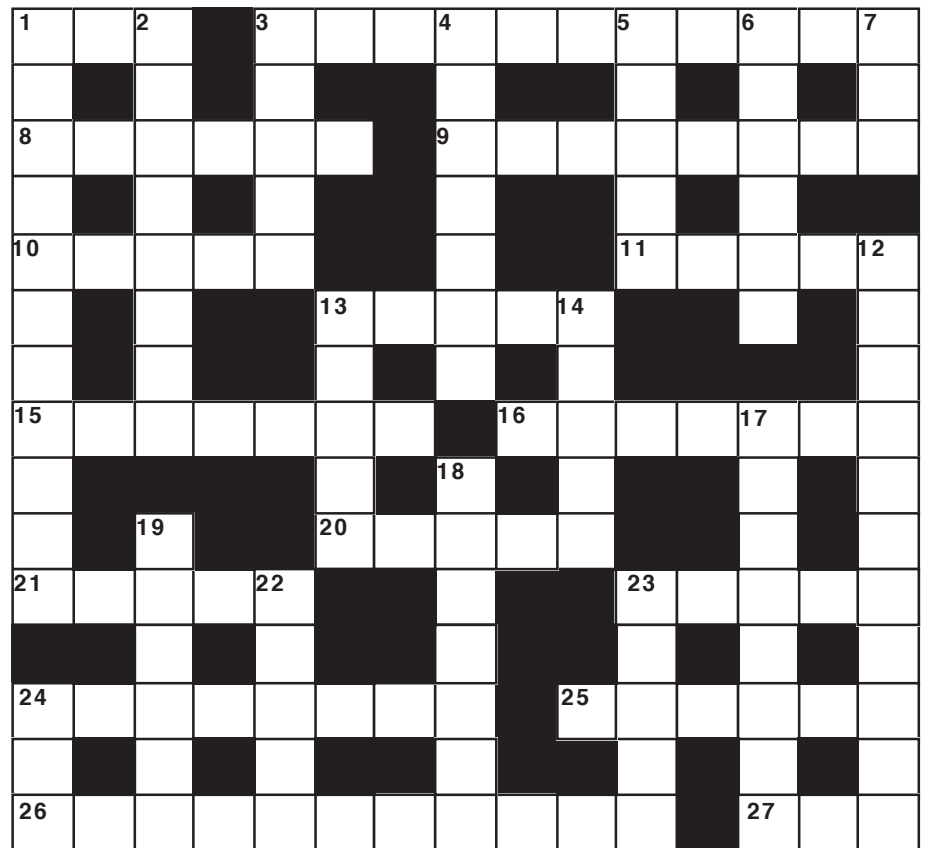
Some clues are cryptic, some more straightforward and some have an agricultural theme

ACROSS

- Task. (3)
- Import cable that's tangled? That's difficult and complicated. (11)
- Powerful. (6)
- Contested a match once more. (8)
- Adorable images in solid form. (5)
- Goes in search of prey. (5)
- Raised a number to the power of three. (5)
- Don't burst this when you have a dance with nothing on! (7)
- An average cut of vegetable. (7)
- Snares. (5)
- More up-to-date. (5)
- Kildare location of many an alley. (5)
- It's at the entrance to an agricultural building. (4,4)
- Material used to make tablecloths. (6)
- With which to gain access to a haunted house? (8,3)
- Cover. (3)

DOWN

- Will this Mexican seed pod get the pulse elevated? (7,4)
- Will the bough let free a home for our creepy-crawly friends? (3,5)
- Plays a golf shot while on the green. (5)
- & 22d. Charles Dickens' fifth novel. (7,5)
- Straw, leaves etc spread to protect vulnerable plants. (5)
- Attempting to be vexatious. (6)
- Bounder. (3)
- This describes a marine vessel destroyed by running aground. (11)
- Small farm, especially in Scotland. (5)
- Sketches. (5)
- The very definition of a short? In no way! (3,2,3)
- The world's most expensive spice by weight. (7)
- Veer, deviate sharply. (6)
- See 4 down.
- Insane. (5)
- Public transport vehicle. (3)



>>Answers

AGRIWORD 1208

ACROSS 1. Twin sister 6. Stem 10. Fit in 11. Beanstalk 12. Airport 15. Lhasa 17. Ooze 18. Prim 19. Sable 21. Cymbals 23. Conor 24. Stud-partition walls 25. Oval 26. Locum 28. Address 35. Evil 36. Birds' nests

DOWN 1. Tiff 2. Intuition 3. Sunup 4. Sober 5. El Al 7. Tiara 8. Make amends 9. Useless 13. Only 14. Tombola 16. Apocalypse 20. Bath salts 21. Crombie 22. Lead 27. Corgi 29. Dined 30. Rowan 31. Kiri 32. Asks

Our next agriword winner will be announced at the start of July. All entries received up until then will be entered into the draw for a €250 voucher.

Solutions: We will publish the solutions two weeks after crossword publication to facilitate a closing date for entries. Entries for each issue will be closed off after one week and those entries will be included in our quarterly draw. Closing date for agriword 1210 is Friday 26 May 2023. **Don't forget to put the agriword number on your envelope.**

Please send completed puzzles to Agriword, Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Contact no: _____

Farm enterprise: _____

Tick here if you agree to being contacted by email with news and offers from *Irish Farmers Journal*.

Tick here if you agree to being contacted by phone with news and offers from *Irish Farmers Journal*.

Getting in Touch

The Irish Country Living Personal Pages

MUNSTER

MUNSTER MALE 50s, N/S with no ties. Own home. Fit and healthy, from a farming background. Likes the country life, weekend breaks away, going for walks, dancing and music. WLTm a nice lady with similar interests. **BOX NO: M0354**

CORK GENT Nearly 70, NS and SD. VGSOH. Interests include sport and current affairs. Likes all types of music especially country western. Enjoys dining out and weekends away on occasion. Would be so nice to find a lady to share all this with. **BOX NO: M0355**

NORTH TIPP GUY 48 and single with no kids. NS, SD with GSOH. Fit and active. Interests include music, walking, swimming, eating out, and weekends away. Enjoys farming part time and is kind and caring. WLTm a single lady in her thirties, early forties for a relationship with similar interests. **BOX NO: M0356**

GENUINE WEST Tipp female 40's, single, no ties, NS, SD, easy going with a GSOH. Love country life, animals, history, music and nature. Enjoys nights in/out, TV/movies, walking my dogs and drives in the countryside. Would like to meet a similar unattached gent also seeking a meaningful relationship. All replies answered, confidentiality assured and expected. **BOX NO: M0359**

CORK LADY 60's with no ties. Genuine, kind-hearted and honest with GSOH. Enjoys meals out and the simple things in life. Would like to meet a gentleman for companionship mid 60's to mid 70's. **BOX NO: M0342**

SOUTH OF IRELAND MAN. Fit, healthy with a good professional job and good farm. Interested in meeting a single lady in her thirties/early forties. I have no ties or attachments. I work hard but equally like my time off, sports, travel and having the craic. If you are interested give me a shout. Your confidentiality is assured and will be respected. **BOX NO: M0344**

MUNSTER LADY: I'm a 40 year old beautiful African lady who is full of life with a bubbly personality. My friends would describe me as honest, reliable, confident, glamorous and funny. I love fashion, travelling, cooking, dining out and watching movies. I'm looking for a generous, kind and loving gentleman. **BOX NO: M0340**

NORTH KERRY MAN, Early 60's, single with no ties. N/S, N/D farming part time. Reliable, presentable and loyal. Interests include travel around Ireland, odd break at weekends, current affairs, DIY, gardening, social dancing and music. WLTm lady 55-65 years in Kerry or bordering counties who would enjoy good conversation. With similar interests for friendship relationship. All replies answered. **BOX NO. M0338**

KIND RELIABLE GUY, 50 years old. WLTm kind reliable lady. Interests include music, being outdoors, walking, weekends away, travel and going to the cinema. Very easy to get along with. **BOX NO. M0337**

SINGLE, OUTGOING, friendly lady living in South East region with good job from farming background in early forties. Interest includes cycling, walking, mountaineering, swimming, dancing and socialising. Would like to meet nice, friendly gentleman from South East region aged 40-50 with similar interests, good personality and enjoys going places. **BOX NO. M0327**

SMALL FARMER, 46 single and genuine with no kids. N/S N/D. I'm very easy going with GSOH. Love the country life, outdoors, animals and all nature. Enjoys nights in, nights out, TV / Movies, walking my dogs and drives in the countryside. Will try anything once. WLTm single unattached lady with similar interests 30-45 with GSOH and a good talker. Must like dogs. Interested in anything from a few days to a long term relationship / girlfriend. Please reply with a phone no and photo if possible for texting with a view to meeting for tea / coffee. All replies treated strictly private. **BOX NO. M0326**

SCORPION, NORTH Munster early 50's. Enjoys life, fit, not really a drinker, likes sports, walks etc, GSOH. WLTm to meet some nice lady, for friendship and who knows if it goes well. **BOX NO M0320**

ELEGANT LADY, Cork city, enjoys the outdoors, walking/hiking, yoga, reading, travel with an interest in self-awareness. WLTm independent gentleman 40-50s, N/S. No ties with similar interests/views in proximity to Cork city. **BOX NO M0321**

TIPPERARY LADY, 50's seeks gentleman **BOX NO. M0314**

KIND HEARTED LADY, late 50's. GSOH, many interests, looking forward to future, seeks kind hearted gent for relationship/happy times. **BOX NO. M0315**

LONELY LADY CORK WIDOW, 70's Tall. Interests include c.w music, TV, travel, both local and further afield. Genuine, NS, SD. Would like to hear from genuine kind gentleman for companionship and to share the rest of life journey etc. Confidentially given and expected. **BOX NO M3017**

RESPECTABLE, HONEST, decent man in my sixties. Want to meet same type of lady for relationship. I'm a country man, retired farmer and still love animals, the countryside, beaches, foreign holidays, music and ordinary honest life. NS, drink only when I go see the bands out. Own house and car. **BOX. NO M0328**

CORK CALLING, Cork farmer, a young 60 separated with a grown family. N/S, S/D. Interests include some travel, live music, a little GAA, and walks to keep active. Would love to meet a lady 45-60 to share life with. Phone numbers please, confidentiality on both sides assured. **BOX NO.M0350**

MID 50'S, warn natured and dignified with a keen sense of humour. Love dancing weekends away, travel abroad and eating out. Home owner. WLTm a lady with similar interests. Looking forward to hearing from a nice lady. **BOX NO. C0336**

NORTH TIPP DRY STOCK FARMER. 50. Fit & looks well. Seeks hot fit lady with love of nature & animals, especially horses for relationship. **BOX NO. M0352**

KERRY MAN who's 37 years old. Likes walking, music, and feeding animals. Would like to meet a lady with a good job, 20-30 years old from the surrounding areas. **BOX NUMBER M0353**

SINGLE LADY, 42 years old from a farming background. Never married, no kids. Enjoys walking, gardening, cycling, dogs, TV/Movies and music. Looking to meet a man 35-46 for relationship, possibly long term. Phone number and photos please. **BOX NO: M0357**

CORK, 35 YEAR OLD, no ties, pleasant personality. I own and work the family business and I live in the countryside. NS, SD. I enjoy the outdoors and weekends away. WLTm a pleasant girl 30-35 years with a business flair and a view to a long term relationship. Please send photo. Privacy assured. **BOX NO: M0358**

CONNACHT

CONNAUGHT LADY Late 50's from a farming background and separated. Would like to meet other separated people for friendship and support. All phone numbers replied to. **BOX NO: C0362**

MAYO MALE Mid 40's. I'm an honest, respectful and kind person. WLTm a caring, genuine, single lady with similar interests. I love sport, walking, running, movies, music and reading. **BOX NO: C0359**

NORTH WEST RETIRED WIDOWER, N/D, N/S, GSOH. I am active genuine and caring. I enjoy sport, dancing, and current affairs as well as going out for meals and weekends away. WLTm a sincere lady for friendship and see where it goes. **BOX NO.C0333**

MAYO MALE Part time farmer, early 50's living in Mayo. Liverpool fan. No ties, NS and SD. Quiet, shy, honest, sincere and respectful. Loves cycling and the outdoors. WLTm warm hearted, caring and genuine single lady to travel the road of life with. **BOX NO : C0337**

52 YEARS OLD. No ties, never married. Loves all types of sports. Love dancing weekends away, travel abroad and eating out. Home owner. WLTm a lady with similar interests. Looking forward to hearing from a nice lady. **BOX NO. C0336**

INSPIRING GALWAY GENTLEMAN, single, 60, mature, kind, easy-going, good humoured, happy. Secure professional, bright with lots to offer a girl with compatible qualities. Many interests include keeping fit, swimming, travel, nature, sport. Etc. Would love to hear from a bright energetic girl to share dreams with. Confidentiality assured; all genuine replies answered. **BOX NO. C0335**

52 YEARS OLD. No ties never married. I love all types of sport. Loves dancing, weekends away, travel abroad and eating out. Home owner. WLTm a lady with same interests. Looking forward to meeting a nice lady. **BOX NO. C0325**

LEINSTER

HAZEL EYED Good natured female, 5ft 9 who's a NS and SD. Single with no ties. Enjoys music, travel, cinema, meals out, walking, socialising and good conversation. I am genuine, honest and warm-hearted with a GSOH. WLTm a like-minded male of similar height, NS, aged 45-55, preferably in the Leinster area. Confidentiality given and expected. **BOX NO: L0360**

LONGFORD CALLING! Early 60's WLTm a lady who'd sincere and genuine. Love country, life, nature, dancing, cinema etc. Looking forward to hearing from you. **BOX NO: L0361**

HELLO, Meath man sixties, N/S, kind, enjoys gardening (flowers), music, reading. WLTm kind lady, with similar interests for friendship and sharing. **BOX NO. L0330**

LEINSTER MAN, early 50's N/S. Sociable, kind, fit. Own home, part time farmer who loves the outdoors. WLTm genuine lady with similar interests. **BOX NO L0347**

KILDARE GENT Very genuine man, 49 years old with no ties. Hobbies are sightseeing, cinema, meals out, weekends away and the simple things in life. WLTm a very genuine lady aged from 35 to 59, to have a relationship. Status unimportant. Genuine replies will be answered. **BOX NO. L0349**

RESPONSE PACKAGES AVAILABLE

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SILVER THREE MONTHS	€125	UNLIMITED REPLY – RAPID RESPONSE – 1 WEEK FREE ADVERT
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Getting In Touch, Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12

For any queries call us on Fridays 10am to 4pm – 01 4199 555 or email gettingintouch@farmersjournal.ie

MIDLANDS MAN 30, somewhat sociable and self-contained. I'd like to meet a woman of a similar age for a congenial relationship. Interests include travel, food, personal and spiritual development. **BOX NO: L0345**

MIDLANDS LADY. WLTm a sincere gentleman late 60's early 70's. Has a hearing lost and would like to get in touch someone who may also have a similar problem as myself. Loves country life, reading, classical and traditional music. Perhaps what gives me most joy are the simple things in life that comes our way every day. Why not get in touch: remember nothing ventured nothing gained! **BOX NO: L0343**

NORTH LEINSTER MAN, 32, engineer, 5ft 9 no ties well-travelled from farming background. Interests include hiking, kayaking and playing GAA. Like to socialise with friends and family and go for weekends away. WLTm a lady with similar interests for a relationship age from 24 to 36. **BOX NO: L0341**

LONELY LAOIS CALLING, farmer/business man, fit and active. Early 60's, 6ft, very genuine, average build. GSOH, N/S, divorced, no ties, enjoys travel, holidays, good times, trad & country days, and vintage days. WLTm a kind caring lady in her 50's, from surrounding counties, preferably from a country background and animal lover. Phone number and photo apprenticed confidentiality assured and expected. **BOX NO. L0332**

SOUTH EAST WIDOW 70'S, farming background and hospitality. Interests include, walking, horse racing. Country music and dancing. WLTm gentleman of similar interests for companionships and friendship. All replies answered. **BOX NO. L0334**

DANCING AT the crossroads Male 66 seeks female for friendship/relationship in the Wexford area. Own home and likes animals. Own home and likes animals. Genuine, Honest and Sincere. Enjoys country music, walking and meals out. **BOX NO. L0329**

WICKLOW WAY Genuine Leinster Farmer, single and aged 62. GSOH NS / SD, 5'10 tall and easy going. Interests include walking, country music, nights out, and cards. WLTm single lady from any part of Ireland. **BOX NO. L0328**

KILKENNY MAN Full time farmer based in the SE. Enjoys being outdoors, interests include swimming, walking, GAA and movies. GSOH and good outlook on life. Mid 40's NS SD. WLTm lady with similar interests, 30's to early 40's with GSOH. Would be open to long term relationship with the right woman. **BOX NO L0323**

I AM A nice attractive and fit lady in my 60's living in County Laois. My interests include walking, reading, gardening, baking and dancing. I have my own home and I live alone. I love animals and the outdoors life. I would like a nice country man to keep me company and hold my hand. **BOX NO L0324**

MIDLANDS MALE, semi-retired, business man, very caring. WLTm a nice lady for companionship, age or build not important. Phone number and photo appreciated. **BOX NO. L0322**

LEINSTER MALE Retired Widower, very caring. WLTm a nice lady for companionship. Age or build not important. Phone number and photo appreciated. **BOX NO L0316**

MEATH CALLING. Farmer from Meath, fit and active 60's, 5'9 average build. Kind and loving with GSOH. N/S S/D, no ties. Enjoys good films, concerts, country music, sport, nights out and cosy nights in. Looking for that special kind and caring lady, with similar interests to share the simple things in life. From Meath or surrounding counties. All phone numbers replied to, confidentiality assured and expected. **BOX NO. L0313**

KILDARE RARE Breed - Pretty, kind, shy, blue-eyed blond, 5'7, late 30s from a farming background with no ties. I'm social, well travelled, independent and free time is spent volunteering at home & abroad but I also enjoy country life and quiet nights in. I'm looking for a quiet, kind, honest country man for relationship, late 30s to late 40s, GSOH, ideally big enough to roll out a round bale or pull a calf! **BOX NO. L0307**

HSEPARATED LADY EARLY 60'S. Farming background. GSOH. Interests include walking, cycling, hiking, arts, crafts, music, gardening, baking, and socializing. SD. I adore animals. I like Sunday drives and traveling. I am a Jack of all trades, but a master of none. Would like to meet a tall man from SE area with similar interests and age for friendship and someone who can make me laugh. **BOX NO. L0311**

ULSTER

PROFESSIONAL down to earth midlands lady late 50's GSOH looking to meet kind hearted respectable gentleman, looking for a serious relationship. Hobbies includes walking, cinema, meals out, weekends away and sun holidays. From farming background. Non-smokers please. **BOX NO U0348**

ULSTER MALE in my early seventy, love to meet a lady in early seventies. I am tall, slim easy-going chap, loves going out for meals. I go for walks. Would love a long-term relationship. **BOX NO.U0331**

REGISTER

To send a reply, or place an ad you must register with your contact details: Name, Address & Contact Number.

You can send replies and ads to the Getting in Touch team by post to Getting In Touch, Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12

REPLYING TO AN AD

To reply, please send your reply, details of the box number you're replying to, your contact details (to register) and payment to the Getting In Touch Team by post.

COST: A single reply to one advert costs €15, alternatively we have additional response packages listed at the top of the page, to register for one of these options please contact a member of the team.

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By responding to an ad, you are consenting to your personal details to be sent to the person who has placed an ad in the Irish Farmers Journal.

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Send your ad along with your contact details (to register) and payment to the team by post.

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Please see our advertising terms & conditions on farmersjournal.ie. Responses to your advertisement come directly to The Irish Farmers Journal. We then forward on the responses to you.

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Card (Please call the office (01) 4199550, 10am-4pm Friday, **Postal order** or cheque only. We cannot accept cash. All payments must be made out to the "Irish Farmers Journal".

Love of the land is a positive force, but ...

It's a beautiful May morning and I'm on an early bus to Dublin. The countryside is looking its absolute best – grass is lush, sheep and cattle are content, and crops are growing at last, having spent most of the spring in the bag in the shed.

My overwhelming emotion is one of gratitude. I'm grateful to live in such a picturesque, fertile country. I'm grateful to own a tiny piece of it, and to be a farmer.

And then I correct myself, as I don't really think of myself as owning land. For me, possessing land is like having a child; you are responsible for it, and you are tasked with looking after it, it's wellbeing should be your priority. I am the legal owner of some land, but I have an ethical and moral obligation to look after that land.

That obligation is due primarily to the generations that went before me. Like most people, I inherited much of the land I farm. The land was passed to me on the understanding that I would care for it and pass it on in good heart to the next generation.

This was never said explicitly, but from the time I was in short trousers I was carried on shoulders around fields looking at livestock and crops.

A love of the land and an understanding of the enduring relationship between a farming family and the few



Pat O'Toole
potoole@farmersjournal.ie



Scan the QR code to read Pat O'Toole's long read on rewetting.

acres in their stewardship was passed on to me.

I'm on my way to meet British climate communicator George Marshall. After decades of being outsider voices, people like George are now close to the heart of power. He's here in Ireland at the invitation of Minister for the Environment, Eamon Ryan, similarly a lifelong climate activist, to look at the dialogue around climate change. I'll be communicating the complexity of farmer reaction to what is being asked – demanded – of them.

Some commentators would like to portray farmers as knee-jerk opponents of all environmental restriction on land management and food production. That is not my experience.

CARE FOR THE LAND

I find farmers deeply care about their land. They innately understand that how they manage holdings has a profound effect on the wildlife, the wild flowers, plants, and trees.

Farmers and their families can literally taste, smell and see that water, air and soil quality are all linked to systems of farming.

The farm stories that hit the headlines in national news are frequently the bad news stories. However, this should not skew farmers' understanding of how they are regarded in society.

Research and polling consistently show the Irish public are strongly supportive of farmers and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Given some of the public discourse, one could be misled into thinking farmers have a negative attitude towards change. Nothing could be further from the truth. There has been constant evolution in food production and land management. The emphasis has switched from increased intensity of production and output to reducing the impact of that production on the surrounding natural world, but that's no reason for farmers to fear the change ahead.

However, there is a huge deficit in information in relation to some of the key asks of farming, especially around rewetting, the subject of last week-end's online long read. Farmers have improved their land from a productivity perspective, with the encouragement and support of the State and the EU. Now they are being told that must be unwound and reversed.

The danger is that issues like rewetting will create an atmosphere of negativity and fear among farmers and their families. And that the deep love people have for the land could be turned from a positive force driving change to a negative one resisting change. That would be awful. **CL**

>> Backchat Growing at school



The not-for-profit social enterprise Grow It Yourself (GIY) is aiming to raise €1m in order to deliver the food education and mental health programme, GROW At School, in 500 additional primary schools across the country for 2023.

GIY CEO Michael Kelly said: "Food growing is a great leveller for children of all abilities and ages. Sometimes the most marginalised children can participate and thrive in the school environment where they may not be thriving academically."

GIY also aims to improve students' mental health in a curriculum which is heavily academically based. The programme has not yet been Government funded, but they organisation has managed to raise €300,000.

GIY is seeking funding from other businesses, donors or philanthropists. Donations are part of a three-tier donation scheme starting at €2,000 per school, donating up to 10 schools; though donors or organisations can donate upwards of €100,000. Organisations or potential donors can contact Seanie or Nell at GIY at growatschool@giy.ie

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IRISH FARMERS JOURNAL

IRISH COUNTRY LIVING

11 FEBRUARY 2023



'GIVE OUT LOVE AND LOVE WILL COME BACK'

Getting remarried at 70 was never part of Phyllis MacNamara's plan. But as she celebrates 50 years in business, the newlywed is proof that love really does endure all things

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EDITORIAL



Amii McKeever
amckeever@farmersjournal.ie

The tweet read: “Up the aisle with a full farm and down the aisle with half.” Although written in jest on the happy occasion of the young male farmer tweeter’s wedlock, there is none the less an ingrained fear in the comment. This being that a partnership can break down and threaten the future viability of a farm business.

Katherine O’Leary (P11) is writing this week about the Women in Agriculture dialogue that she attended on St Brigid’s Day (see also Caitríona Morrissey’s report P18-19 of the *Irish Farmers Journal*). I called her to talk through the concerns the event flagged for her. The conversation turned to the prenuptial agreements that were mentioned by Mary Curtin in last week’s *Irish Country Living*. The University of Limerick researcher recommends legislating for prenuptial agreements to make them enforceable as they could, she claims, “help challenge the patriarchal norm in farming communities by giving the marrying in spouse a say and a voice from the outset”. Her theory is that legislation would aid succession planning in that people can “plan and have greater autonomy and certainty over their own life and their farm”.

In the absence of prenups, I explored with Katherine if the law currently negates the concerns that a marital breakdown can cause for a farm. The legal aspects of this have been covered by our solicitor Aisling Meehan on numerous occasions. She wrote previously that it is not the case that a family farm will automatically have to be sold if a marriage breaks down or indeed that the farm will have to be divided in half. The situation and the facts differ in each case.

She explains that the contribution of each party will be taken into account, including the financial and the personal contribution of each party within the marriage and family, particularly where there are children. The length of the relationship and marriage is also a factor, together with the ongoing financial prospects of each individual spouse.

Nevertheless, the law is not a panacea and can work both ways. And with all the law in the world there is no escaping the emotional attachment to land we have in Ireland. Take for example the current discussion surrounding the Gresham House deal with Coillte that assists foreign investors to purchase land to plant forests.

On the one hand, we want trees planted to meet climate change targets but on the other hand, we are not keen on the investment required to support this target coming from abroad. We don’t want faceless foreign investors buying land. We look at them as “vultures” and therefore not to be trusted.

This suspicion is not unfounded due to both our ancient history and our more recent experience through the financial crisis. Our new series on the “Irish land question” with historian Dr Tony Mc Carthy (P17), recounts the former. In the first article, Tony examines ownership of the land from ancient times up to the late 18th century when the dispossession of land from the Irish people was enshrined in law. Works both ways!

Not all partnerships stem from a romantic entanglement; they take various forms and in most cases for succession and economics – they make sense. There is, however, anecdotal evidence that the number of farm partnerships failing is increasing. This week we are starting a new series (P18) looking into the legal and financial fallout of the breakup of a farm partnership. If you have questions or want to share your experience please e-mail me directly in confidence. **CL**



8 HEALTH
Melissa Ryan was diagnosed with epilepsy when she was 10. She shares her story in the hope of helping others



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‘This Valentine’s I am sending love to all our (LGBT+) community’

Hayley Fox-Roberts works in Youghal, east Cork, and lives in west Cork. She tells **Caitriona Bolger** about her life in community development

I came to Ireland in 1992. I’m from England originally and moved to the midlands, then Dublin initially. I then settled in Leitrim. Living in a rural setting is so much more preferable for me. I am a poet and I find the land and natural world inspire a lot of my poetry; it’s the beauty of it, the ease of it, the calm of it. I feel very lucky to be able to live in a rural setting. Here, in the countryside, I can be out with the dogs, I can be out for a walk, I might meet someone to say hello to or I might not see anyone and that can be very lovely. Peaceful!

To have a little bit of land to keep animals or even just to see animals, it is beautiful and not to be underestimated. I’m not a farmer but I love watching farming through the seasons.

“So, call out the homophobic jokes, talk about Graham Norton, talk about the gay story line in the soaps on the telly”

INTERESTED IN PEOPLE

I now live in west Cork and work in east Cork. Let’s say I have a great preference for the under used parts of the country.

Since my young years, I’ve been involved in community arts as a writer and performer. When I came to Ireland, I did various jobs; hospitality mainly but as soon as the opportunity came up, I took a community development job because I’m just really interested in people and I feel really strongly that everybody’s voice deserves to be heard to the extent they want to be heard.

I work with Cumann na Daoine in Youghal which is a community development organisation. We provide programmes to support the inclusion of all kinds of people in our area; older people, migrants, people of low economic status and the LGBT+ community. The whole point of community development is that you get people to a point where they can take it on themselves and have the confidence to do it. And that’s true of my work as well. We say in community development, if you’re doing it right, you’re going to make yourself

redundant.

One of my main focuses is LGBT+ rural inclusion because most of the national organisations, quite understandably, are based in the cities because that’s where the resources are. That means the rural voice is not heard as much. It is not deliberate, it’s just the way it is.

It helps to be a member of the community in this work; it gives a level of trust. What I do is simply unconscious because it is my nature, you know, I am out. I have always been out. I will be out anywhere.

Not everyone feels they can be out. Not everyone can do this. I am in the fortunate position of having the confidence and peer support to do that. Having the support of my family and friends. I grew up in Liverpool; I could take the flak! What I can do as an individual to empower the community is to really be myself.

INCLUSION

One thing that can help people feel less marginalised is visibility. There is so much really good stuff going on in rural Ireland, especially here in Cork. If, for example, you are hosting a local

festival, it’s a good idea to put a rainbow sticker on your posters or advertising. Let people know they are included. Those that don’t know what the rainbow sticker is for will ask and that will get people talking. Talking is the biggest thing anyone can do to help people feel included. I find people are genuinely afraid to say the wrong thing and because they are afraid of saying the wrong thing, they end up saying nothing. We all make mistakes! So, call out the homophobic jokes, talk about Graham Norton, talk about the gay story line in the soaps on the telly.

The past couple of years have not been good for any of us. There are a lot of lonely people and they are not getting the opportunity to meet other people. This Valentine’s, I’m sending love to all our community.

It’s my dream job is to be able to focus on my own community. To be able to use fruitfully my skills and energy. I have to say, it is very fulfilling to be able to focus on a job I love and enjoy the surroundings that I am in. I consider that an absolute blessing.” **CL**

A WEEK IN THE COUNTRY

RURAL RHYMES

A cuppa tea

By Sean O'Callaghan

A steaming cuppa tea,
A soothing gift for thee.
In the morning, strong and bold,
A pick-me-up never gets old.

No mug too big nor too small,
Enjoyed by you, by me, by all.
Spoon of sugar or drop of milk,
Goes down smoothly, just like silk.

From a flask, pot, or bag in cup,
Boiling or warm - it picks you up.
Encompass cup with tender hands,
That rich taste - never bland.

In the evening, warm and sweet,
A cosy treat, neat, complete.
With honey and a slice of lemon,
A cup of tea is my solace, a given.

Through summer's heat and
winter's chill,
A cup of tea always fulfils.
A need for something warm and
bright,
A cup of tea, a simple delight.

So, here's to tea, a drink so fine,
A daily pleasure, yours and mine.
A cuppa tea, a slice of heaven,
A simple pleasure, freely given.

- Sean O'Callaghan is a member of
Awbeg Macra Avondhu and winner
of the recent Macra creative writing
competition in the poetry category.

Picture of the week



Donnacha watches daddy (Matthew Carey) feed the dairy cows on a cold Saturday afternoon, making sure it's done right.

Growing wild

with Dr Catherine Keena,
Teagasc countryside
management specialist

Look out for hazel – very conspicuous in hedges, woodland and scrub habitats just now, as the male catkins burst open and expand into beautiful fluffy yellow flowers, fluttering in the breeze which facilitates pollination when clouds of released pollen drift to the tiny bud-like female flowers fringed with a tuft of red hairs. Bees use this early source of pollen. The sight of hazel catkins called lambs' tails appearing before the leaves is a true sign of spring. Hazel was one of the first trees to grow in Ireland after the ice age – part of our native Irish biodiversity.



CHEF'S TIP

Janine Kennedy

Here's the thing about air fryers: I could see myself using one if I lived alone. It does seem to work well for us salty, fried food lovers - and the "hacks" I see online (making air fryer cheese burgers, steamed buns, grilled cheeses, dumplings, etc) are very entertaining to watch.

However, I - like many of you, dear readers - live on a farm. I feed so many people in the course of the week. I never know who might be popping in for lunch, dinner or a cup of tea. And I have three growing, very hungry kids. I can't physically cook the amount of food I need to feed everyone in an air fryer.

Today's ovens are very high-tech and multi-functional – with a million settings – which do a lot of what air fryers do. I know air fryers come in different sizes, but nothing I have seen so far is big enough to warrant finding space in my kitchen or pantry for (yet another) plug-in appliance. I did buy one for my father-in-law for Christmas, though.

7
tips for
preventing the
breakdown
of a farm
partnership
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“For that one day a week of unpaid work, we've had access to the best vegetables just outside our house every day of the year. We've met an absolutely brilliant group of people who share our loves and concerns and joys ... And for one day a week, that seems like an unbelievable small price to pay!

JO FAGER OF THE EDIBLE FLOWER P12-13

ONLINE PICK OF THE WEEK

Avoiding
foodborne illness with
a few simple steps





‘Give out love and love will come back’

Getting remarried at 70 was never part of Phyllis MacNamara’s plan.

But as she celebrates 50 years in business, the newly-wed is proof that love really does endure all things, writes **Maria Moynihan**

I was going to wear this blue dress, but as I approached the wedding, I decided, do you know what? I may be 70, but I am still a bride and I am going to wear white.”

Phyllis MacNamara – radiant as any newly-wed – is positively shining as she flicks through the photographs from her 2021 wedding to her husband, Jimmy McGing.

“Isn’t he gorgeous?” she whispers conspiratorially, as she shares the details of the day; from the full-length Max Mara dress she bought online, to the intimate ceremony in the Augustinian church in Galway, followed by a reception at home in Oranmore.

Then, a pause.

“Isn’t it amazing to think I’m 72 in March and I could have this great joy,” she reflects. “And I do want to tell the whole world about it, because I want to say, ‘It can be yours.’”

This is not the first time that *Irish Country Living* has interviewed Phyl-

lis, who is well-known in the west as the owner of the exquisite Cobwebs jewellery shop in Galway city. A decade ago, she shared with our readers her very honest account of life after losing her much-loved husband, Michael, to suicide in 2008.

Then, a few weeks ago, an email popped into our inbox from Phyllis. Not only was Cobwebs celebrating 50 years in business, but she had also remarried.

“My story is one of hope,” she wrote, “and I want to shout from the rooftops that I have survived all that has happened.”

BUSINESS OF LOVE

It’s also a story of love, and not least because many newly engaged couples make the pilgrimage to Quay Lane to meet Phyllis and find that perfect ring.

“The hope and the belief in the future together is such a marvellous thing,” she smiles, though she has witnessed proposals go the other way too.

“The girl said no in front of us,” she recalls of one occasion. “But those moments stick out, because they are rare.”

Much of the engagement jewellery sourced by Phyllis utilises antique stones in new settings, and little thrills her more than matching the right piece to the right person.

Her advice when it comes to making the final decision, though?

“I always say to them, ‘Unless your heart is beating faster, this is not the ring for you,’” she responds. However, she is keen to point out that jewellery not only represents romantic love, but self-love. “We are seeing more and more women buying that right-hand ring for themselves and, at the moment, that ring is often an aquamarine,” she says. Many people also buy a piece of jewellery to commemorate somebody who has died.

Indeed, she explains, there are many examples of “mourning jewellery” in the antique world, be it a



WHEN MICHAEL DIED, I THOUGHT I HAD LOST LOVE FOREVER. BUT WHEN I LOOK AROUND ME TODAY, I SEE I STILL HAVE LOVE. I HAVE IT ALL AROUND ME, I JUST HAVE TO LOOK IN DIFFERENT PLACES

the wrong places and love can come pouring out to you in areas that you had never expected.”

SECOND CHANCE

Which brings us, so tenderly, to Jimmy.

Phyllis explains that she was attending an antiques event in Dublin when she was asked if she would like to join the Royal Dublin Society (RDS). Despite some initial reluctance, she agreed to go along to their stand to find out more.

“And there’s Jimmy on the stand,” she takes up the story.

“I walked over and I said to him, ‘Why did you join?’ And he said, ‘My wife’s just died and I’m completely lost.’ And I said, ‘My husband has just died and I’m totally lost.’ And that’s how we met.”

They got to know each other better by phone, as they supported each other through their respective losses of Michael and Jimmy’s wife, Ann.

“Jimmy would phone me and say, ‘How did you get on?’ And I’d say, ‘Well do you know what? I didn’t cry until 4pm today.’ And he’d say, ‘That’s amazing!’” recalls Phyllis of their early conversations.

One day, however, he asked to meet for lunch in Dublin.

“I asked all my women friends and they said, ‘It depends on where he’s asking you. Like if he’s at One Pico, it’s a date, and if he just says someplace ordinary, it’s not a date.’ And I said, ‘Well, I’m definitely not able or ready for a date.’ He suggested Brown Thomas upstairs, so we decided that’s a safe place to go,” recalls Phyllis.

“So, I met him at half twelve and we came out at half three. Only because they were closing, we’d be still there. It was wonderful. I just thought, ‘Oh my God, what a wonderful man.’ I just thought he was the last word.”

And when Jimmy visited Galway shortly afterwards, Phyllis knew this was something special.

“I remember just sitting in the living room and we were both reading the papers and I just thought, ‘Oh my God, this is bliss,’” she recalls.

“Happily doing what we always did, but we were doing it together.”

SAYING YES

That said, they moved “very, very slowly”, as they were both still “fragile”.

Certainly, Phyllis had no intention of remarrying and even when Jimmy proposed in Paris one weekend after a number of years together, she said no.

Instead, they had their own commitment ceremony to each other, which involved a deeply symbolic exchange of jewellery.

“We went to this restaurant and we took off our wedding rings that we had from our previous marriages and we put them into a little silver box and we put a lid on it,” explains Phyllis.

“He proposed a toast to Michael and to Ann and then we gave each other a ring and we committed to each other for life.”

COVID-19, however, would prove an unlikely catalyst for making things official. Having lived with Jimmy through lockdowns, Phyllis explains that on the morning of St Patrick’s Day 2021, she had been sea swimming with some friends when two of the group produced instruments and started playing tunes on the pier.

“We were all dancing around in our swimming togs and in our Dry Robes in the freezing cold. We were roaring laughing and the next thing, we saw the guards coming in the car. ‘Run! Quick, quick! What’s wrong? What’s wrong? It’s an illegal gathering!’ A group of 70-year-old women dancing on the pier in their togs,” exclaims Phyllis.

“So, I ran home and I was laughing so much. Jimmy came into the kitchen – I was still laughing, and absolutely paralysed with the cold – and he said, ‘Would you marry me?’ and I said, ‘Yes, I would definitely. Yes, yes, yes!’”

What does Phyllis think had changed the second time?

“I was ready. I was ready,” she states. “In the beginning, I still felt married to Michael, even though he wasn’t here. And then that slowly dawned on me that he wasn’t here. And that it would be alright. I can’t put it into words. But I was ready.”

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

Life and love are good and so is Cobwebs. Celebrating 50 years in business is no small achievement, but Phyllis measures her success differently these days.

“After 50 years, I now own the building and I own the stock, so my success now is in matching the item to the person and that’s what gets me out of bed in the morning,” she says.

That and her love for life.

“Never, never, never give up,” she advises. “Open your arms to the universe. See the joy in nature. Say yes to everything and have hope and give out love and love will come back to you.” **CL**

Visit www.cobwebs.ie



Main: Phyllis MacNamara and her husband Jimmy. **Top:** Phyllis’s antique jewellery shop in Galway has been in business for 50 years. **Middle:** Phyllis with Jimmy in the shop. **Bottom:** A selection of antique jewellery.

by Claire Nash

brooch inscribed with the date of a loved one’s death or a locket encasing a lock of hair.

“Whether that gave them the chance to face the grief, but not speak about it, I don’t know, but there’s lots of jewellery dealing with pain and suffering,” she says. “So, the pain of love, as well as the joy of love.”

LIFE AFTER LOSS

Perhaps nothing illustrates that juxtaposition more poignantly than a strand of pearls given to Phyllis by her late husband, Michael.

She explains how she had coveted the necklace for months, and was so thrilled when Michael bought it for her as a present in early 2008.

“But six weeks later, Michael was dead,” she states, devastatingly, of the anxiety attacks that escalated with tragic consequences in such a short space of time.

“The importance of those few beads to me, it’s just breathtaking.”

In our last interview, Phyllis explained how in losing Michael, she very nearly lost herself. She is so grateful to the people who stuck by her side during her darkest days.

“I have a friend who’s a monk and he used to come and say to me, ‘I’m here.’ That’s all he needed to say. He didn’t need to say platitudes like, ‘God fits the back for the burden.’ It’s just, ‘I’m here.’ It’s a really simple thing,” she says.

A clear turning point, however, came as an almost startling revelation at her 60th birthday party, where – surrounded by her loved ones – she felt suddenly compelled to make a speech.

“I stood up and I said, ‘When Michael died, I thought I had lost love forever. But when I look around me today, I see I still have love. I have it all around me, I just have to look in different places,’” she explains.

“And that moment was another life-changing moment, because sometimes people can look for love in

Life with epilepsy

Melissa Ryan (19) from Borrisoleigh, Co Tipperary, was diagnosed with epilepsy when she was 10. Life has been challenging for her and her family but here they share their story in the hope of helping others understand the condition, writes **Margaret Hawkins**

MELISSA'S STORY

I was only 10 when I was diagnosed," Melissa says. "Before then I was happy, I was shy and liked swimming and spending time with friends and family. I used to go to the farm with my dad too and cycle and I liked singing and drama.

"It (epilepsy) started with me waking some mornings and I'd have been sick or I'd have bitten my lip and would have a bad pain in my head. A CT scan didn't show up anything so I was referred to Crumlin Hospital where I had the worst seizure I ever had when I got there. Because they could see what happened it meant that I was diagnosed quickly. For most people, though, diagnosis takes a long time.

"My epilepsy is very complicated. It's in two parts of my brain. I've tried so many tablets over the years. They will work for 70% of people with epilepsy but not for the other 30%. I'm in that 30%. I have lots of different kinds of seizures. I could do everything from stare at the wall to fall on the floor. Sometimes I know seizures are coming, other times I don't have a clue. I could recover in a few minutes or it could take a day or two.

"After diagnosis was the worst time. I'd never taken a tablet in my life and now I was taking all these tablets twice a day. I didn't really understand what was happening. I wasn't allowed to do sports anymore. I had to sit in with the teachers while watching my friends run outside. It was a very different and a hard time.



I wanted to wrap her in a cocoon and keep her safe and keep her beside me at all times



AWARENESS

"There was very little awareness of epilepsy in our village back then, in our house even. My mam was reading about it and we had to learn a lot, but now everyone is great – they all know about it. If I have a seizure they don't panic, they know straight away what to do, so I'm not too worried, I know I'll be safe if I have one."

Melissa explains that even where tablets help control the seizures at first, this can change and so she has tried a lot of different medications.

"It would be great to have a medication that can stop the seizures.

"I think having no more exams has helped a lot as I used to stress about them and stress can trigger seizures. Counselling with a person who is trained to help people with chronic illness was very useful during my leaving cert last year as it helped me manage the stress.

"I now work 20 hours a week in an after-school creche and I love it. I always knew I wanted to work with children. I'd love to be an SNA myself because my SNA was a great help to

me in school but I know I can't be that at the moment. Next month I'm starting a childcare course online so I'm looking forward to getting qualifications.

"I would encourage everyone to remember the Time, Safe and Stay instructions (see below). People remembering these three things makes everyday life possible for me and so many others."

LISA (MELISSA'S MUM)

Lisa's initial reaction to her daughter's diagnosis was to protect her.

"I wanted to wrap her in a cocoon and keep her safe and keep her beside me at all times," Lisa says, "then I went the complete opposite after realising that if Melissa was to have any kind of life I had to ask for help and not just from Epilepsy Ireland, who have been great.

"For me and Eamon it was unusual to ask for people's time and help but the school and the camogie club were wonderful. She needed exercise so she went to camogie, just for the training, with her friends. Volunteers trained in what to do in the event of a seizure.

WORDS OF LIFE

For by grace are ye saved through faith, and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

Ephesians ch. 2 v. 8

ABOVE: Melissa Ryan, now 19, was diagnosed with epilepsy at the age of 10. Now working in a creche and studying childcare, she is sharing her story to raise awareness of epilepsy and the steps you should take if you see someone having a seizure.

EPILEPSY IRELAND

Epilepsy Ireland is the support charity for people with epilepsy. While it is 61% State-funded, the rest must be raised voluntarily. The charity provides community resource officers across the country to help people who have been diagnosed. They liaise with the person, their family, their school or workplace, as necessary.

"Many people don't realise how common epilepsy is," says Paddy Geoghagan, advocacy and communications manager with Epilepsy Ireland. "One in 100 people have it. Many don't realise, too, that you can be diagnosed with it at any stage of your life and that 50% of cases have no known cause. We would ask people to learn about the condition so that they can help if they witness someone having a seizure. Our key message is seizure first aid – make it general knowledge."

The people in our village have been amazing. Her teacher researched getting an SNA and the staff trained in what to do, too, so the help has been wonderful. Our GP and pharmacist were also very good."

Melissa's illness has meant that she and the girls (Melissa and her sister Emma) don't go to the family beef rearing farm (outside the village) as much as they used to.

"It's a change for us as a family. There is definitely more on Eamon's shoulders now when it comes to the farm."

For Lisa it's a matter of trying to stay positive and live life day to day.

"At the moment life in the Ryan household is good and we are enjoying the little things," she says. "Melissa is working 20 hours a week and we are able to talk about her online course. We are also able to do small things like go to mini golf for Emma's birthday. Outings weren't always possible. It's about appreciating the little things when things are going well."

For Lisa, Melissa's diagnosis meant doing a lot of research and hoping that a medication could be found to help Melissa.

"Often people think that tablets solve everything but the consultant told us that you have to be lucky to get the tablet right the first time," she says.

Melissa's doctors tried her on a mix of medications but when they failed to control her seizures she was admitted to Crumlin for a telemetry in 2016.

"It's like an ECG but they hook up your head to a video monitor," explains her mum. "Doctors could then see her brain patterns over a number of days. We found out that her epilepsy started from two different sides of her brain so it was a complicated form, unfortunately."

COVID COMPLICATED TREATMENT

The outbreak of COVID-19 complicated matters hugely for the family. As an adult, Melissa was meant to transition to Beaumont Hospital when she turned 17, but with clinics closed and consultants unavailable it was a very difficult time for everyone.

"Luckily prescriptions could be refilled," her mother says, "but we still had tablets that didn't work, so we fell through the cracks. Trips to University Hospital Limerick because of seizures were complicated by the fact the doctors there couldn't get in touch with Crumlin."

Lisa remembers being very tetchy at the time.

"I wanted something done. I felt like we were hamsters on a wheel with Melissa at the centre of it, going round and round."

Since then Melissa has been receiving good care in Beaumont Hospital but another telemetry in 2021 yielded the same results as the 2016 tests.

"She had 40 seizures over 10 days. The medication she is on now is FDA approved in the US and is couriered to us once a month on compassionate grounds."



ABOVE: Melissa is pictured here on the family farm with her mum, Lisa, and dad, Eamon. \ Odhran Ducie

EAMON (MELISSA'S DAD)

"Life changed for us in the sense that one of us has to be around at all times," says Eamon Ryan.

"Melissa wouldn't feel safe if we weren't fairly near. She rings us if she knows a seizure is coming on but she doesn't always know. Or her friends would ring and we'd have her home in bed before it happens sometimes."

Eamon says it's difficult to under-

stand the illness.

"Over the years it's been all trial and error with different tablets and things. You can't figure it out really, it's nearly different every time. Sometimes she has a warning, but one time she just fell in the street – no warning, bang, down."

He is very glad that Melissa has good friends and that some of them can administer the recovery medicine she requires at times (medication given via

syringe between gum and cheek).

"After some seizures, as well as the recovery medication, she would have to go to bed as it knocks her out," he adds.

As a family they get on with life and supporting Melissa, he says.

"What can you do but get on with it as best you can. I often say to her that she could have something worse. That's the way we look at it." **CL**

Learn and use the Time, Safe, Stay approach if someone is having a seizure

TIME

The first thing you should do is TIME the seizure. This is because if a seizure goes over five minutes, an ambulance should be called.

SAFE

Keep the person SAFE during the seizure. If a person is having a convulsive seizure, cushion their head with something soft, if possible, and remove any harmful objects, such as furniture, from their vicinity. NEVER put anything in a person's mouth or restrain them during a seizure.

Be aware that there are also types of seizures where the person does not experience convulsions. Instead, they may "zone out" or stare blankly, become confused or agitated, display behaviours like chewing, smacking their lips, fiddling with their clothes, or wandering aimlessly. In this type of seizure, the person's awareness of their surroundings is affected, and it is important to gently guide the person away from any danger. As with convulsive seizures, you should never restrict the person's movements.

STAY

During the seizure and after it passes, stay with the person. Often after a seizure, a person with epilepsy will be confused and, in many cases, exhausted. Make sure to stay with them until recovery is complete, explain what has happened and gently reassure them. The person may have experienced an injury if they have fallen, and if this is the case, ensure normal first aid steps are taken.

For more visit <https://www.epilepsy.ie/content/seizure-first-aid>

Midweek meals



It can be hard to have the time to plan wholesome midweek meals, but here I have some staples that won't let you down, writes **Neven Maguire**

These are two lovely recipes for feeding a family. First of all, the chicken and leek sourdough gratin is a really flavoursome dish. Chicken thighs are great value and very versatile. The leeks, chicken and lemons work really well together. These are flavours I really enjoy. You can use any beans that you like and they give great texture and flavour. Look out for Carol's Irish-made stock – she makes natural stocks and bone broths which are perfect for using in recipes like this. I am not a huge mustard lover but it is delicious in this recipe. Velvet Cloud in Co Mayo do a great sheep's cheese that you could use instead of parmesan, and you could also top it off with regular breadcrumbs.

Bacon chops are very versatile and good value for money. If they are dry cured then they are full of flavour. Look out for the Bord Bia quality mark. You could use also use pork chops instead in this recipe. I love the combination of rosemary, honey or an apple syrup, like the Highbank Orchard one in Kilkenny. It is like an Irish maple syrup, but made with apples. It is lovely in salad dressings and worth having in your cupboard. You get a lovely balance of sweet, sour and sticky. Use whatever root vegetables are in season and it makes a great one-tray dinner. This will be lovely with a big bowl of mash too.

Happy cooking,
Neven

>> Recipes

CHICKEN AND LEEK SOURDOUGH GRATIN

Serves four

Knob of butter
400g boneless, skinless chicken (thigh or breast), cut into 2.5cm pieces
2 small leeks, trimmed and sliced
2 garlic cloves, crushed
2 tsp of finely grated lemon rind
1 tsp fresh thyme leaves, plus a little extra
2 tbsp rapeseed oil
175g sourdough bread, torn into chunks
1 x 400g tin of cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
100ml hot chicken stock
100g creme fraiche
1 tbsp Dijon mustard
50g freshly grated parmesan cheese
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

To serve:

Soft green leaf salad, or steamed vegetables

- 1 Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/gas mark 6).
- 2 Use the butter to grease the roasting



I love the combination of rosemary, honey or an apple syrup, like the Highbank Orchard one in Kilkenny. It is like an Irish maple syrup, but made with apples

Chicken and leek sourdough gratin.

Images by Philip Doyle.
Food styling by Janine Kennedy

tin and add the chicken, leeks, garlic, lemon rind and thyme. Drizzle over half of the oil and season generously, then toss with your hands until evenly combined.

- 3 Roast this mixture in the preheated oven for 30 minutes, until the leeks are softened and the chicken is just tender.
- 4 Meanwhile, tear the sourdough into small pieces and place in a bowl. Season and drizzle over the rest of the oil, tossing to coat.
- 5 Tip the cannellini beans into the roasting tin and pour in the hot stock, stirring gently with a spatula to combine, then fold in the creme fraiche and mustard.
- 6 Scatter over the bread and sprinkle

the parmesan on top and another sprinkling of thyme. Bake for another 10 to 15 minutes, until crisp and golden brown.

- 7 Serve straight to the table with a separate bowl of salad or steamed veggies.

BACON CHOPS WITH GLAZED ROOT VEGETABLES

Serves four

6 large carrots, cut into batons
3 parsnips, cut into batons
1 small turnip, cut into similar-sized wedges
1 tsp chopped fresh rosemary
3 tbsp rapeseed oil
4 dry-cured bacon chops or medallion

steaks (unsmoked)

3 tbsp apple syrup or honey
1 tbsp soy sauce
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

To garnish:

Chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

- 1 Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/gas mark 4).
- 2 Place the carrots, parsnips and turnip in a roasting tin. Sprinkle over the rosemary and drizzle with two tablespoons of the oil, then season generously and use your hands to toss everything together until well coated.
- 3 Roast in the preheated oven for 20 minutes, until the veg is tender and



CHARTING A PATH TO MORE RECOGNITION FOR WOMEN IN FARMING

Katherine O'Leary attended the first ever National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture, which was convened by the Government on 1 February

kkoleary@gmail.com

The National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture was held in the Midlands Hotel Portlaoise. I could not attend without the support of Tim and Colm.

It's all hands on deck during calving and one person down puts pressure on the team.

I got as much of my calf-rearing work done as I could before leaving my duties to the men.

Tim filled the car with diesel and Colm handed me a coffee. It was strange to have this gathering midweek, at the busiest time for many farmers.

That said, the model of the family farm was acknowledged and the need to champion the role of women on farms was driven home by the chair of the dialogue, former Minister for Agriculture, Mary Coughlan.

The current Minister, Charlie McConalogue, spoke of St Brigid and her legacy as the patron saint of livestock. Apparently it was in her honour that the day was chosen. He said he wanted to take the role of women on farms out of the shadows and to do more on gender equality.

SUPPORTS

There were a lot of women present who were working in agribusiness, some may also be farmers. Still, I worried that the voice of full-time farming women was possibly absent.



Former Tanaiste and Minister for Agriculture Mary Coughlan and Minister for Agriculture Charlie McConalogue hosted the National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture in Portlaoise. \ Fennell Photography 2023 .

The Department officials assured the crowd that there would also be engagement with the farm organisations and groups such as Dairy Women Ireland (DWI) and the Women in Agriculture Stakeholder Group (WASG).

It is clear that there will be extra opportunities and supports for women if we are focused about what we need.

It is paramount that historical qualifications and a lifetime of working on the farm is recognised by the decision-makers.

There were two discussion panels with young, vibrant women who were leaders in their fields – Caroline Brocquel, CEO of Bord Iascaigh Mhara; Karen Brosnan, management consultant and CERES co-founder; Siobhán Talbot, group managing director of Glanbia plc; Maura Farrell associate professor at UCG; Aoife Forde, suckler farmer and Teagasc adviser; Ciara Lynch, dairy farmer and chair

of DWI; and Edna Curley, principal of Mountbellew Agricultural College. They were clear that more recognition was needed for women and also that barriers were sometimes of women's own making.

SUCCESSION

The need for a succession plan on farms was emphasised. Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture Martin Heydon encouraged women to champion farm safety.

There was a strong view that men in agriculture needed to be in the room too. We then broke into workshops.

I joined Sinéad McPhillips, assistant secretary at the Department of Agriculture, in the workshop on Leadership and Visibility.

A formidable lady, our thoughts were well placed with her. A report will be compiled to advance policy in supporting women in agriculture. **CL**

PADRAIG WALSHE RIP

As I was returning from the workshop, I got a text from Tim to say that Padraig Walshe had died suddenly (RIP). Could it even be true, with Padraig being the same age as ourselves?

I thought of his devoted wife, Ella, and his adult children Julieanne, Catherine, Elma and Pat. I headed for home. I remembered all the times we called to their home at Bishopwood – especially before the motorway took them off the Cork-Dublin road.

Padraig, a progressive dairy farmer,

was almost always in the farmyard in those days. He'd stride across the yard as if he'd all the time in the world, gesturing towards the back door.

There would always be fresh baking and Ella would have the kettle on with a gushing welcome. Shock and deep sadness don't begin to express the feelings of the farming community at the loss of Padraig.

He travelled the highways and byways of Ireland and beyond during his time as Macra president, IFA president and COPA president. He was one of Ireland's

first Nuffield Scholars. At the time of his untimely death he was chair of Farm Business Developments plc and a director of the FBD Group, among other things. He was a community man, a GAA enthusiast and most certainly a family man.

Despite his towering presence and hardline negotiating techniques on behalf of farmers, his six grandchildren melted his heart. Padraig's best supporter was always his darling wife Ella. I know she is heartbroken.

My sincerest sympathies to all who mourn Padraig.

just beginning to caramelize.

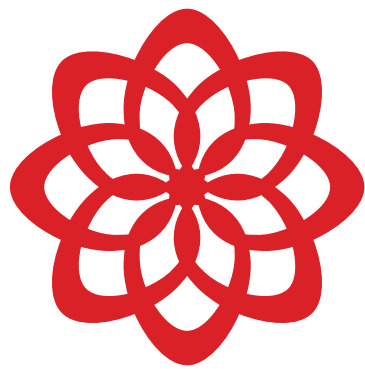
4 Meanwhile, brush the bacon chops all over with the remaining oil and season them with pepper.

5 Mix the apple syrup or honey and the soy sauce in a small bowl.

6 Drizzle half of the apple syrup mixture over the root vegetables and then toss until everything is evenly coated. Place the bacon chops on top of all the vegetables.

7 Roast for another 20 to 25 minutes, until cooked through and tender, basting the chops after 10 minutes with the rest of the glaze.

7 Scatter over the parsley and then serve straight to the table for the family to enjoy. **CL**



Flower power

In week two of our Thriving Rural Hospitality series, **Janine Kennedy** meets Erin Bunting and Jo Facer, who have grown their small food business through measured investments over the years



Many people have dreamed of giving up the day job, moving to the countryside, starting a small business and, more or less, living the dream. You often hear of people giving up corporate jobs to open a restaurant or small food business. You also hear of people going back to a corporate job when living their dream didn't work out the way they planned. How does one work long-term viability into a small food business plan?

Erin Bunting and Jo Facer met while studying in university in England. Erin was born and raised in Northern Ireland, while Jo grew up in London. She jokingly tells *Irish Country Living* that, where Erin had the surrounding fields to play in as a child, she would play on the concrete.

"There is no real reason why, but from a young age I thought I would grow up, move to the country and grow my own food."

THE EDIBLE FLOWER

Fast forward a few decades and that is exactly what Jo and Erin, alongside their four-year-old twins, are doing on their smallholding in Ballinahinch, Co Down, with their food, hospitality and community-supported agriculture (CSA) business, The Edible Flower.

Jo and Erin started out in London and eventually left their corporate jobs to pursue their dreams. Erin attended Ballymaloe



THE EDIBLE FLOWER BOOK

In case they haven't been busy enough, Jo and Erin recently wrote their first book: *The Edible Flower: A Modern Guide to Growing, Cooking & Eating Edible Flowers*. It will be published on 9 March 2023 and is currently available for pre-order. theedibleflower.com

NEXT WEEK

We have focused on holistic opportunities for growth so far in this series, but next week we will discuss the practicalities of running a small food business and how you can use technology to your advantage.

Cookery School to train as a chef, and Jo realised her childhood dream of growing her own food. After six years they are still growing their business, and they openly share the highs and lows.

They are driven by a passion for community building, a love of sharing food with friends and a desire to leave their patch of earth a bit better than how they found it. Being financially successful isn't their only goal, but they are also realistic about their business needing to provide – not just for them, but for their children and their locality.

TAKING THE PLUNGE

After Erin attended Ballymaloe – and while the couple were still living in their London home – they started hosting supper clubs. This was a creative outlet, but it also gave them valuable insight into how their approach to food and hospitality might be received if they put all of their energy into their own business. They decided to take the plunge, selling their London home and moving to Erin's locality in Northern Ireland.

"We both had corporate jobs – with nothing to do with food," Jo explains. "I convinced Erin to move out of the city and it seemed logical to come to Northern Ireland as Erin's from here, her family are here and mine, at the time, were all pretty much in London."

Erin adds: "We moved back here in 2016 – in April – and we took a bit of time, did a bit of market

research and met some people. We didn't have [the house where we now live and operate our business from] at that time, but we started doing some catering and running some supper clubs out of other venues, like the Irish food shop, Indie Fude. We bought [our smallholding] that October and started preparing the grounds for growing food immediately."

SMALL STEPS

Year by year, Erin and Jo increased their growing area for vegetables and began restoring the outbuildings around their main house. They started hosting summer food events. In November of 2021, they invested approximately £150,000 (€167,860) on more advanced renovations on the outbuildings, building a kitchen and heated event space. Erin cooks – using as much of Jo's homegrown produce

as possible – and they have three staff members who work part-time.

Besides hosting events and their regular supper clubs, they also offer food, drink and craft workshops and welcome the community into their home and farm through their CSA scheme, Farm and Feast.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

Also known as cropsharing, CSA schemes welcome members of a community to become shareholders (though Jo and Erin prefer to use the term "members") in a local farm. In this way, the community supports the farm financially (regardless of how successful any given harvest might be) and take their shares of the harvest.

Farm and Feast at The Edible Flower came about as Jo and Erin were planning to cater several weddings before the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

Erin and Jo's advice for longevity

START SMALL

"This is a great way to minimise investments and overheads while you test your ideas and decide if this is really what you enjoy doing. We ran lots of supper clubs from other venues before we invested in our own event space, and we spent a few years growing produce for our own events before running our CSA scheme."

BUILD IN TIME FOR REST

"Everyone will say you need to create boundaries, have days off and proper holidays. And it is very easy to think that applies to everyone else, but not you. We are definitely guilty of this and have learned to our cost that if you don't make time for rest then you will be tired and grumpy and find it hard to enjoy what you are doing."

ENJOY THE JOURNEY

"If you are running a small-scale, values-led food or agricultural business, you are probably not doing it to become rich quickly," Erin says. "Instead of always focusing on long-term goals, we try to make sure that each event or project we work on brings us happiness and positively contributes to the ethos of our business. If parts of our business aren't doing that anymore, we stop doing them."

While both admit the work is difficult in many ways, neither can really see themselves going back into a corporate role. It's la (realistic) bella vita.

"We're really lucky," Erin says, "we've built up a mailing list over the years, so we have 1,500 people on it and that really helps with selling tickets [for events]."

"The first ones after COVID sold out in just a few minutes. I was a bit worried maybe that popularity would die off – and it's definitely slowed – but we know our events will always sell [by the day of the event]."

REDEFINING SUCCESS

Jo sums up how they feel at the end of her blog post: "Let me put our £9,000 (€10,073) loss into context," she writes. "It isn't of course actually £9,000 missing from our bank account. "It's 90 days of Erin's and my time (90 x £100 = £9,000), so less than one day a week, each."

"For that one day a week of unpaid work, we've had access to the best vegetables just outside our house every day of the year. We've met an absolutely brilliant group of people who share our loves and concerns and joys. We've eaten lots of leftovers!

"And every day (except the moments when we're doing boring human resources admin, or VAT returns, or COVID Risk Assessments) we get to do work that we really, really love and really, really care about. And for one day a week, that seems like an unbelievable small price to pay!" **CL**



"We were growing for all these weddings and suddenly everything was cancelled," Jo recalls.

"We bagged and sold our salad greens through a local farm shop and a few other vendors in Belfast. Once we got going, then, we started a tiny vegetable box scheme," Erin adds.

Once people could meet up again, the couple started their summer garden evening workshops, which were well attended. As interest in their farm grew, they started taking on community garden volunteers and in 2022 the CSA scheme really got under way. The 2023 Farm and Feast season is yet to begin, but Erin and Jo hope to have 30 members this year (double the numbers from 2022).

HOW IT ADDS UP

In a recent blog post on their website, Jo posted, with full transparency, how

their CSA scheme is doing financially.

"The dream was that everyone in the scheme would come together, that we would help build a vibrant community of people committed to eat well, supporting local and honouring the land," she wrote.

While their first season of CSA was successful in many ways, Jo says the finances, unfortunately, did not add up. Aside from the other areas of their business, the scheme alone brought in £11,000 (€12,312) of income while the running costs of the scheme were £20,000 (€22,386).

In this way, Jo says, it's "not yet achieving one of its goals", which is to be sustainable – in every way, including financial.

"We are continually putting prices up and doing more events, but there is this constant battle to make it add up," she tells *Irish Country Living*. "We

did nine nights of a solstice supper club [in December, 2022]. I did the maths – we had £18,000 (€20,148) of income. Twenty per cent goes straight to VAT, then £4,000 (€4,477) goes into ingredients, £5,000 (€5,596) goes into temporary event staff and another £5,000 (€5,596) goes to regular employees [Erin, Jo and their three other employees]. That's the reality."

THE TRADE-OFF

While making a loss in Farm and Feast's first year was a setback, Erin and Jo are far from ready to pack it in. In her blog post, Jo outlines the changes they will make to the system to make things more profitable in 2023. These include extending their growing season from 20 weeks to approximately 28 weeks, increasing membership and selling excess produce by creating a small farmgate shop.

Main: Erin Bunting and Jo Facer of the Edible Flower. **Top:** Erin and Jo swapped London life for Ballinahinch, Co Down. **Middle:** at work in the gardens. **Above:** the goal is to "build a vibrant community of people committed to eat well, supporting local and honouring the land".

\\ Colum Lynch



When love crumbles



Real-life love isn't always hearts and roses. Psychotherapist **Claire Lyons Forde** looks at the common pressures that may challenge any relationship and how to reignite that old spark

Life is an ocean and love is a boat. In troubled waters that keeps us afloat.” These are lyrics from *The Voyage*, a beautiful song made popular by Christy Moore and sung at many wedding ceremonies over the years.

Love is wonderful, but it is only one aspect of a relationship. It also needs to be unconditional, otherwise problems can and do arise. If there are conditions attached to love, then it will not keep the couple afloat in troubled waters for too long. Respect is equally important, as is the abil-

ity to effectively communicate with each other and be comfortable talking about your feelings and emotions.

But what happens when couples become disappointed with their marriage? Each person has their own dreams and expectations of how life will be.

They put their heart and soul into their vows and look forward to a happy future together but life doesn't always work that way.

It is natural and important to have hopes and dreams about how life will be together as a couple and later on perhaps as parents too. The reality is, however, that nothing is guaranteed.

Psychotherapist Claire Lyons Forde is based in Co Kerry and offers therapy in person, as well as online and over the phone. For further information, call 087-939-9818.

FACING CHALLENGES

Although the practice is thankfully changing now, traditionally the family farm has been handed down to a son. That said, it can still be the case that when couples are blessed with only daughters and no male “heir”, it can be stressful, with the couple feeling judged or under pressure to keep the family name going.

At the start of the marriage, the couple may have been very comfortable financially. Many farmers have part-time jobs and most women keep working after marriage now. A change in circumstances may see the farmer having to give up his/her work to focus on keeping the farm or if they were farming full-time, they may now have to take on

a part-time job to keep going. The other partner may find themselves working extra hours on the farm, as well as keeping their own job and caring for the home and their children. The extra pressure they may find themselves in can lead to burnout and an inability to focus on the relationship. The elderly parents who bequeathed the farm may become ill and incapable of looking after themselves, thus putting the couple under pressure because duty of care will fall on them as they inherited the property.

Such challenges can lead to disappointment. Disappointment can be likened to a sadness that comes over us when life doesn't go as we had hoped and planned.

REVIEW EXPECTATIONS

Look at expectations. Be honest and share your expectations of each other in the relationship. Are some of your expectations gender-related? For instance, male farmers may be reluctant to ask their wife for help out on the farm because they fear she would find it too difficult. Women may feel reluctant to ask their husband to help with the domestic chores or even childcare because of self-limiting beliefs about this being “women's work”. You will never know until you ask.

Are you the parents of wonderful,

girls? Are you feeling under pressure to produce a son? Who are you trying to please? There is absolutely no law that states only men can run a farm. Let go of the need to please others. Rather than feeling anxious about having no boy, give gratitude for the amazing daughters that have been gifted to you. Enjoy them.

Are you finding it difficult to conceive? This, too, brings its own pressures and disappointments. The yearning for a baby and the pressure of others' perceived expectations can really weigh a person down. It can help to speak to a professional.

BOUNDARIES WITH IN-LAWS

Many people are caring for elderly parents or in-laws. When this happens, boundaries need to be established. If your parents live with you, other siblings can forget that this is not their home and that they do not have a right to simply pop in and out to visit their parents without running it by you first. The flip side of the coin may be that siblings want to help, but do not wish to be seen as intruding in the couple's private lives and are unsure how to offer support without giving the wrong impression.

Elderly parents can also forget that they do not have a right to tell their adult child how to live their lives. Occasionally, a person marrying into the family farm has to deal with a spouse who allows their parents to constantly dictate the pace, and refutes any ideas she may have about making the farm more viable and perhaps easier to manage. This can be soul-destroying and have a detrimental effect on the relationship.



IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING FEELINGS OF DISAPPOINTMENT IN YOUR MARRIAGE, REMEMBER THAT COMMUNICATION IS THE FIRST STEP IN GETTING THE RELATIONSHIP BACK ON TRACK AGAIN. A GOOD WAY TO START IS TO SIT DOWN TOGETHER AND HAVE A CUP OF TEA AND A CHAT. REMIND EACH OTHER OF WHEN YOU BOTH MET AND WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO EACH OTHER

TIME TO TALK

If you are experiencing feelings of disappointment in your marriage, remember that communication is the first step in getting the relationship back on track again.

A good way to start is to sit down together and have a cup of tea and a chat. Remind each other of when you both met and what attracted you to each other. Give each other that uninterrupted time to simply speak from the heart about your worries and disappointments, without the need to cast blame on the other person. You are simply talking about your feelings. If intimacy has been non-existent, try the simple act of holding hands or giving each other a hug.

Next, I would encourage you to write out a list of things you are grateful for despite the current situation. Compare them. Being grateful restores a little positivity back to the relationship.

It can also help one feel less bitter and resentful. Right now, what small changes can help you start navigating your boat over troubled waters once more? If finances are a worry, make an appointment to speak with your financial adviser. MABS are also very helpful and supportive in this field. Remember, you are never alone and nothing stays the same. This too shall pass.

Is burnout an issue? Are you both feeling emotionally drained as well as physically exhausted trying to juggle everything? How do you spend your day? What adjustments can you make to bring more balance into your lives? Have you ever considered asking for outside assistance from family or engaging with farm relief services just to get a break?

There are four aspects to our psyche: mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. When we neglect any of these, it has a ripple effect. Remember to put self-care high on your agenda.

QUALITY TIME

How long is it since you have enjoyed some quality time together? What happened that it stopped? What can you do to reverse this trend? For every problem, there is a solution. Sometimes it can take a while to work it out, but if you persist, it will happen for you.

St Valentine's Day is almost upon us, so why not plan something romantic together? It may be as simple as getting a takeaway for dinner and sitting back and relaxing in front of the TV for the evening. Light a scented candle. Small changes can achieve wonderful results over time.

Not talking about things, predicting what your partner is thinking or how

they might react to something you wish to say, does not help the situation. At the start, it may be uncomfortable to sit across the table and try talking. Going for a walk together around the farm and talking with ease may help you to start focusing on what changes you both would like to make to help improve your lives. Make a habit of it. Be mindful also as you walk. Allow nature to soothe and ground you.

Disappointments happen in all areas of life, including marriage. We can go down the road of victimhood or we can take ownership of it and look at ways of getting back on track again. If the situation has become really difficult, then couples counselling may be worth considering. **CL**

LOVE IS IN THE AIRWAVES



When you are an avid radio listener, love is always in the air, writes **Kate Durrant**

As we celebrate love in its many guises this week, we're also celebrating World Radio Day, so it would be fair to say that love really is in the air.

There is so much to love about Irish radio; from Gay Byrne, the pioneer of confessional talk shows in Ireland, to one of our greatest exports Terry Wogan, a most important Irish voice on British airwaves during that turbulent time in Anglo-Irish history.

We also all know if you want something done your first port of call is not to your local councillor but to Joe Duffy. And who could forget the much-loved Gerry Ryan, so sympathetically interviewing the poor lady married to the man who never put the bins out or picked his underpants up off the floor, not realising it was his own wife he was talking to.

But it was the day I rushed up to the local breakfast show host on the street and greeted her like a long-lost friend that I appreciated how personal this medium is, and how big a part of my life it is.

"How are you?" I said as I reached my "friend", so happy to see her. I put my hand on her arm and, as I did, it dawned on me that, whilst I knew her voice as well as I knew my own

and her face from local newspapers, I didn't know her at all.

She smiled, presumably used to this, and, once I got over my embarrassment, I realised that I had greeted her like a close friend because to me that was what she was.

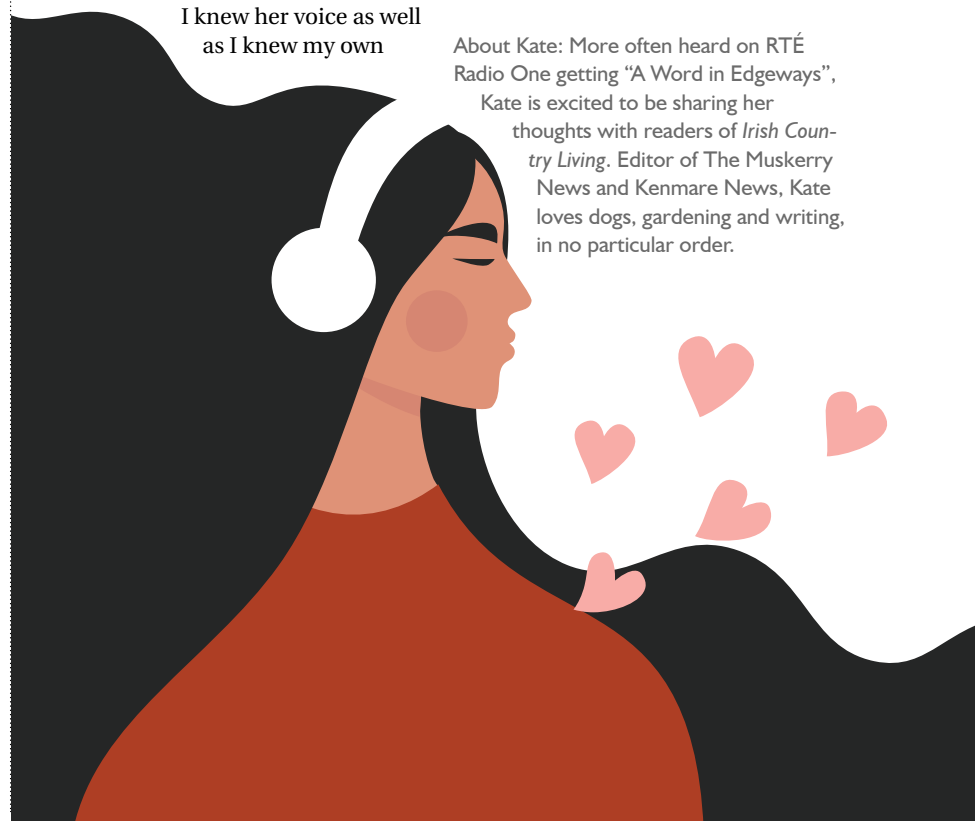
That is the power of radio, this wonderfully intimate space in which we listen individually while sharing the same experience together.

The familiar voices come from bodies that I never see, yet not seeing them doesn't make their words any less powerful; quite the opposite in fact, with nothing visual to distract me, their words become all consuming.

Radio celebrates our best of times with requests and congratulations, and sits with us through the night with its gentle music and softly spoken broadcasters during those times when thoughts make sleep impossible.

I may not listen every day, sometimes life gets in the way, but the presenters are patient and as soon as I make the choice to tune in, they're there, as they have been all the time, gently keeping the conversation going and just waiting for me to join in once more.

About Kate: More often heard on RTÉ Radio One getting "A Word in Edgeways", Kate is excited to be sharing her thoughts with readers of *Irish Country Living*. Editor of *The Muskerry News* and *Kenmare News*, Kate loves dogs, gardening and writing, in no particular order.



love is in the air

Show your wardrobe some love this Valentine's Day, writes stylist **Cathy O'Connor**

@cathyocstylist



Yep, it's that time of year again when the world as we know it changes for a day.

Shop windows are festooned with blazing red hearts, florists are bracing themselves for the rush on roses, restaurants dim the lights to create an even more romantic mood and jewellers' displays sparkle bright with anticipation. Like it or loathe it, Valentine's Day is here.

Now, while the generosity of giving to another is to be applauded, I'm advocating for a more significant and transformative gesture. The gift of giving to yourself. The potential of that offering is endless: it could be the blessing of time alone, a much-wished-for luxurious experience, or an indulgent purchase. All are equally worthy and the only rule is that you are the one who benefits. What would lift your spirits and bring a smile to your face?

But for fashion lovers, here is a selection of some of my favourite treats and the reasons why you might love them too. Here's hoping you feel the love on 14 February, no matter where you find it.

MAKE A STATEMENT

If the winter feels like it's dragging, these vibrant fuchsia and amber glass stone earrings will add some much-needed sparkle. They're lightweight, great value and made in Kilkenny.

Zante long cherry earrings €30
www.kkajoux.com



DECLARE YOUR LOVE

Declare to the world that love matters with this eye-catching pendant. The reflective surface will add some shimmer to your look. As it sits flat, it can be worn as a statement piece or in a more demure way under the collar of a shirt. The Love Pendant €25 www.pluckanddevour.com



DREAM COLLAR

Imagine a single accessory that could smarten up your look. This handmade collar offers that. With its vintage rose print, its delicate lace trim and distinctive style, this will be the versatile add-on that just keeps on giving. Dream Rose Collar €35 HandmadebyRasa on Etsy



JUMP INTO SPRING

Now that spring is a little closer, it may be the time to slowly step away from the darkness and embrace some colour. This jumper will work really well with your favourite black basics and will add colour to your look. Heart flower check jumper €38 www.very.ie



This knit vest perfectly combines heritage stitching with contemporary design. Sweetpea diamond vest €85.95 www.irelandseyeknitwear.com



MAXIMUM STYLE

This striking dress is one-piece dressing at its best. The draped detail in the front is very flattering and the colour will give your winter complexion a healthy glow. Tie knot dress €69 by Mango www.veryireland.com

SUSTAINABLE STYLE

Karen Jackson has gone to great lengths to have her range recognised as sustainable. It is even GOTS (global organic textile standard) certified. If you appreciate luxurious, timeless knitwear, you'll love this cashmere. €225 www.wearwith.com



ROCK 'N ROLL

Add some rock 'n' roll to your look with this Leo Lips tee. Wear it with your favourite trouser suit and trainers for a street-style vibe or with an oversized cardigan and jeans for a relaxed look. €49 www.coster copenhagen.com





In this three-part series, historian **Dr Tony Mc Carthy** traces the history of Irish land and, in particular, the tenurial systems which determined who owned and occupied it

*Oh! She's a fresh and fair land;
Oh! She's a true and rare land;
Yes! She's a rare and fair land –
This native land of mine.*

– Thomas Davis

Land is at the core of the Irish psyche. Whether one is from the plains of Meath, the hills of Connemara or the backstreets of Belfast, it is infused in our hearts and souls. Since our first Mesolithic ancestors came to these shores around 9,000 years ago, it has entwined itself into our culture, religion, politics, economy, and society. It is central to who we are as a people.

It is doubtful if our Mesolithic forbearers who arrived on these shores around 7,000 BC worried too much about tenurial systems of land ownership. To these nomadic hunter gatherers, a stout stone axe would have been more useful in settling land disputes than a visit to a local solicitor's office. The subsequent arrival of the first Irish Neolithic farmers around 4,000 BC would undoubtedly have brought with it a need for a rudimentary system of rules and customs, by which those early settlers would have protected their interests. Although, I suspect that, on occasions, a good axe might still have come in handy.

THE LAW OF THE LAND

Thanks to the work of scholars such as Fergus Kelly, we know that there existed, from early Christian times (fifth century), a relatively sophisticated series of written laws dealing with land ownership and the rights and duties attaching to it.

Irish society at the time was – to quote the noted academic Daniel Anthony Binchy – “Tribal, rural, hierarchical and familiar (in the sense of family)”. These 150 tribes or families, including the O’Neills in Ulster, O’Tooles and Kavanaghs in Leinster, O’Rourkes and O’Connors in Connaught and Mc Carthys and O’Briens in Munster, owned the land of Ireland. Each family or túath (tribe), consisting of at least 3,000 followers, was led by a king or a chieftain. These leaders apportioned land under a system known as “Gavelkind” [a system of inheritance in which a deceased person’s land is divided equally among all male



The Irish land question

heirs] among his various kinsmen in return for an annual tribute and an obligation to farm it.

WEEK ONE
Ownership of land from ancient times to the eighteenth century.

WEEK TWO
The Act of Union, the Great Famine, turbulent land wars and various legislative land reforms of the nineteenth century.

WEEK THREE
The 20th century measures that finally resolved the once interminable Irish land question.

MORE IRISH THAN ...

The Norman invasion of 1169 changed all this. The installation of Norman overlords such as Hugh de Lacy in Meath, Strongbow in Leinster, and Raymond le Gros Fitzgerald in Munster, introduced the concept of ‘feudalism’ into Ireland.

Under the feudal system, lords held land subject to the Crown, in return for a commitment to provide military services. Tenants of these same lords were obliged to pay them homage, hand over a portion of their annual output and to provide services and labour to the manor.

Many Irish chieftains acquiesced to the new social order and found themselves subject to their Norman overlords, becoming their tenants. Eventually, many of the Norman lords married into the families of these Irish chieftains giving rise to the claim that, “they became more Irish than the Irish themselves.”

Whether this was valid or not is

highly debateable, as the evidence suggests that this group remained culturally, socially, and economically very distinct from their Irish subjects. These Norman overlords held sway for almost four centuries.

In 1542, Henry VIII was proclaimed King of Ireland. Dissatisfied with the way the former Norman overlords were governing the country, he, and his Tudor successors, sought to consolidate English rule in Ireland by a combination of military campaigns and centralised administrative powers. A key component of this was a policy known as “surrender and regrant” whereby Irish chieftains and indeed many Norman overlords would surrender their lands to the Crown only to receive them back along with an English title in return for their loyalty to the monarch and an undertaking to promote English laws and customs.

PLANTATIONS

Those who refused had their lands confiscated and these were awarded to English and Scottish settlers. These “plantations” were to be a central

“

Between 1603 and 1641, it is estimated that 70,000 English and 30,000 Scots were awarded lands and settled in Ireland particularly in the province of Ulster. The military campaign of Oliver Cromwell in the late 1640s saw over 7,500 soldiers awarded lands with a further 1,000 “adventurers” (people who funded the war effort) receiving over 1.6 million acres

plank in establishing English rule in Ireland for the next 150 years.

Following the defeat of the Irish chieftains at the Battle of Kinsale in 1603 and the subsequent “Flight of the Earls” in 1608, the policy of confiscation and plantation gathered pace. Between 1603 and 1641, it is estimated that 70,000 English and 30,000 Scots were awarded lands and settled in Ireland particularly in the province of Ulster. The military campaign of Oliver Cromwell in the late 1640s saw over 7,500 soldiers awarded lands with a further 1,000 “adventurers” (people who funded the war effort) receiving over 1.6 million acres.

The victory of William of Orange over James II, at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, saw a further series of confiscations and awarding of lands to both soldiers and “adventurers”. Of even more significance was the introduction of the “Penal Laws” between the years 1695 and 1728. Far reaching and discriminatory in the extreme, these laws effectively removed Catholics from all forms of public life, from practising certain professions and, most significantly, from owning land.

The process of dispossession, which had commenced with the Norman invasion in the 11th century and accelerated by the military campaigns of the 16th and 17th centuries and enshrined in 18th century laws was now complete. It would be almost 150 years before this injustice would start to be addressed. **CL**

After a career spanning over 40 years – initially as an accountant but later stock-broking, consulting and, for the past 20 years, running his own business – Tony Mc Carthy received his PhD from Maynooth University in 2017. He is a former writer in residence in the Princess Grace Library Monaco, and is currently a visiting fellow at the School of History in Newcastle University. His most recent publication, *Land Reform in the British and Irish Isles since 1800*, which he co-edited with Prof. Annie Tindley and Dr Shaun Evans, was published by Edinburgh University Press in February 2022. He is also co-editor along with Prof. Terence Dooley and Prof. Annie Tindley of a book dealing with Irish land legislation which will be published by McGill University Press later this year.

Farm partnerships have many benefits; but like any relationship, they can also end in tears. Our new series examines partnership breakdowns from a mediation, legal and financial perspective, writes **Sarah McIntosh**

Entering into a farm partnership is like starting any new relationship, in many ways. “If you ignore the little signs of incompatibility at the beginning it will only get worse when you hit a challenge,” says Clare O’Keeffe- a farmer, tutor, mediator and founder of Succession Ireland-who knows all about the difficulties and challenges that can arise during the duration of a farm partnership.

There has been an increase in people entering into a registered farm partnership (RFPs) due to farmers being more aware of the benefits included (see panel). As of June 2022, there were 3,563 RFPs on the register according to Teagasc.

“Partnerships are so positive and they are promoted,” says Clare. “They make huge sense both financially and for the viability of two or more enterprises and bringing people together. They do have a very valid place in the future of Irish agriculture.”

There are, however, many things to consider before entering into a farm partnership, and challenges along the line can create conflict. In some cases, these might not be resolved and result in the breakdown of the agreement, with legal consequences.

THE MAIN CHALLENGES

One of the main problems that Clare sees among clients is when a small issue isn’t addressed in the beginning, it “snowballs” into a bigger problem.

“[It] is not generally about finance,” says Clare, “the identity of one may feel undermined by the other”.

As most people don’t want to hurt someone else, they refrain from saying anything at all. But?

“It’s better to put it out on the table,” says Clare. “If this situation arose, how would you like it to be addressed? There is no right or wrong way, but it just needs to be addressed. There will be pinch points so you need to ask yourself, how can we address them with respect to all parties involved?”

The challenge with family partnerships is the emotional aspect. There is much more at stake, explains Clare.

“You’re living with the people you are in partnership with,” she says.

Partnerships are the beginning of a succession process for many but, “there can be a misconception, that the partnership is purely for certain grant purposes. The long-term plan might not have been discussed” resulting in a misunderstanding in the earlier stages.



Farm partnership breakdown



Clare helps families by coordinating succession conversations and mediating difficult farm family conversations. For more information visit <https://www.successionireland.ie/>

EXIT STRATEGY

At the moment, the exit clause is the shortest part of the agreement. Many people just copy and paste it from existing templates, but Clare emphasises that it has to be tailored to each farm and each partnership agreement.

“Every line needs to be read. You don’t sign the last line and assume some consultant or advisor looked over it,” she says.

It is your responsibility to understand the information outlined is applicable to your individual situation. “If something doesn’t work out, what is plan B? When the partnership ends what do you want your farm to look like? Do you want to be able to continue farming it into the future?”

The partnership is perfect when everything is fine, but when challenges arise you need to address them and not ignore them. Having open

communication and understanding will enable you to work through differences effectively.

ADVICE FOR PREVENTING A PARTNERSHIP BREAKDOWN

1 ADDRESS ASSUMPTIONS: What are you expecting in the partnership agreement? Is your role a part-time or full-time role? “The assumptions can be quite unrealistic at times,” says Clare. It is really important to lay everything on the table, as when things go wrong, finance alone won’t fix it.

2 RESOLVE CONFLICT: Make an agreement to discuss things regularly. Have a discussion about any issues or problems that arise on a routine basis. If a third party is needed to resolve an issue Clare advises, “Go back to the person who teased

[the partnership] out with you in the beginning. Most likely there was an advisor or consultant involved in the partnership.” They know the individual agreement and personalities involved so keep in touch with them. It might be a good idea to have yearly reviews.

3 HAVE SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER DISCUSSIONS: Some farmers find it easier to talk outdoors while walking eg when looking at stock or assessing grass. If there are any concerns or problems you are having, it’s best to talk about them while they are small issues.

4 RESPECT EACH OTHER: It’s essential to respect all differences whether it’s from a family perspective or with unrelated parties. You have to share mutual respect in this vision

Benefits of joining a registered farm partnership [RFP]

TAXATION INCENTIVES

Maximise low-rate income tax band: Depending on the profit-sharing ratio, each partner may avail of the low-rate income tax band.

Access to Young Trained Farmer Stock Relief: A young trained farmer can claim 100% stock relief on the increased stock value of his/her equivalent share of

the farm profit. The maximum relief available under this scheme, the stamp duty exemption scheme, and the Succession Farm Partnership Scheme is €70,000.

Access to enhanced stock relief for the parents: Enhanced stock relief is available at a rate of 50%. €15,000 is the maximum that can be claimed over a three-year period.

NEXT WEEK:

Agricultural solicitor Aisling Meehan looks at the types of partnerships that go wrong and why, and how the various partners fare legally when the partnership is dissolved.

OTHER SCHEMES

Where farmers have farmed on their own prior to forming an RFP, they are eligible to receive payments due to them under the Area of Natural Constraints (ANC) scheme, the Green, Low-carbon, Agri-environment Scheme (GLAS), and the Organic Farming Scheme.

DAFM SCHEME BENEFITS

- **The Young Farmers Scheme:** An application can be made where at least one person in the RFP qualifies as a young trained farmer.
- **Young Farmer National Reserve:** Where funding is available, a young farmer in a partnership may apply to this scheme to receive a top-up on low-value entitlements (less than the national average), or apply for new entitlements on lands that have no entitlements associated with them.
- **Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS II):** RFPs successfully registered with the DAFM may be eligible for a double investment ceiling under TAMS II. The investment ceiling will then be raised from €80,000 to €160,000: 40% grant aid up to €160,000, where the RFP has no qualifying young trained farmer. Where the RFP has one partner qualifying as a young trained farmer, grant aid of 60% on the first €80,000, and 40% grant aid on the second €80,000 is available.
- **Collaborative Farming Grant Scheme:** Grant aid of 50% is payable on the establishment costs of setting up, maximum grant of €2,500 is available.

together. "How do you show respect to the other person?" Clare asks. "By listening."

5 IDENTIFY WHY YOU'RE GOING INTO A PARTNERSHIP:

Don't go into a partnership based on a tax break. "This is the last reason I would be suggesting for people to go into a partnership," states Clare. "It has to be workable; would you really want to be in a partnership with this person? Get to know them and see if you are compatible."

6 HAVE AN ON-FARM VISIT BEFORE ANY DOCUMENTS ARE SIGNED:

Arrange an on-farm meeting to discuss the enterprise, ensuring the farm is run in the same manner you would want yours to be. It is important to ask yourself what role do you want to take. "Do you see yourself as the dominant one or as equal? Tease out the differences and respect the differences," advises Clare.

7 EMBRACE UNFORESEEN CHALLENGES:

While there will always be challenges in a business structure, once you have the right attitude to embrace and work them together, you will be able to navigate through them. **CL**

Are we lifting all wrong?

Is it time to rethink manual handling? writes physiotherapist **Stephen O'Rourke**

Manual handling training has long been a legal requirement in the workplace in Ireland. Employers have a duty of care under Common Law to provide a safe workspace and appropriate training. Most people have experienced manual handling training in some shape or form, from online slide shows to one day courses, practicing safe lifting and moving techniques. National regulatory bodies are charged with improving our awareness and understanding of movement and handling to help prevent injury. The widespread delivery of manual handling training has been challenged recently with a growing body of research examining the effectiveness of such training courses on reducing the rates of low back pain.

Over the years, our understanding of low back pain, both causes and associated risk factors, has developed due to a growing interest in research in this area. Low back pain is one of the leading causes of disability and work limitations worldwide. Most people will experience an episode of back pain in their lifetime. Manual handling training is a massive industry, aimed at reducing the risk of occupational injury by improving awareness and practice of safe lifting techniques. However, manual handling training aims to "fix" lifting postures, which may only play a small role in the development and persistence of low back pain. It appears being taught how to lift safely does not have long-term benefits, but what matters most is to keep objects close to the body, lift confidently and to avoid lifting in awkward postures or when tired.

RESEARCH

Researchers at The University of Limerick, led by physiotherapist Diarmuid Horgan, found that participants of manual handling training were more likely to think that common daily activities that involved loading the spine were harmful. They concluded that a shift of mindset was needed in both manual handling trainers, participants and also employers towards a "safety through exposure" mindset. This shift would echo recommendations already found in injury prevention and

rehabilitation in the sporting world. We do not advise people to avoid sport to avoid injury, but rather to ensure they are physically prepared and conditioned to partake in their chosen sport. The same message should be reinforced for manual handling. It is not about avoiding lifting and bending, but making sure you are physically and psychologically ready for the task you want to do.

POSTURE

There is a common belief that "good" posture protects the spine and prevents injury or pain. Sitting upright, standing tall, bending your knees while lifting and keeping a straight back are all used to define "good" posture, whereas slouching, rounding your back, stooping, or bending over are considered "bad" postures. Little research exists to support the relationship between "good" posture and back pain. No single posture has been found to protect a person from back pain. Researchers from Curtin University in Australia found that people with back pain tend to adopt "straight back" postures, lifting in a manner perceived to be "correct" or "protective". However, those without back pain, tend to lift with round-back postures. Interestingly, they found that those who lift with rounded stooped postures, don't have more back pain.

Back injuries account for 20% of worker accidents, making it the most affected region of the body in non-fatal accidents to workers. The common assumption that low back pain is associated with bending your back is not entirely true. Back pain is a much more complex beast. There are lots of factors at play with too much focus on maintaining "good" postures. Our spine was designed to bend and flex, and some research supports the use of flexed postures for lifting.

IMPORTANT FACTORS

The most important factors for good spinal health are to engage in regular exercise, move freely without overprotecting, and sit and stand in relaxed postures that are comfortable. It is also important to build confidence in your physical ability and if lifting, it is ok to lift naturally with a rounded back once you are strong enough to tackle the task at hand.

It seems it might be time to rethink manual handling training and thoughts around "safe lifting" and low back pain. **CL**

PROPERTY

PROPERTY NEWS | RESULTS | AUCTIONS | SALES | LAND

Paul Mooney pmooney@farmersjournal.ie



Ballykillane House is a hidden jewel full of old world charm.



Ballykillane House, Hacketstown, Co Carlow, along with 211 acres is going for public auction in late February.



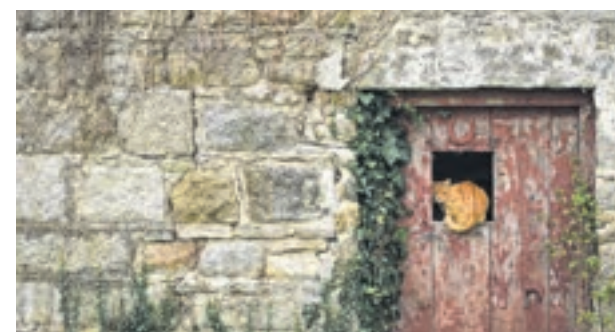
The house is approached via a tree-lined gravel driveway.



On a beautiful parkland setting, overlooking the River Derneen, Ballykillane house has a wonderful backdrop view of the Wicklow Mountains.



The farmyard consists of a courtyard containing stone buildings, a machinery shed and a fenced all-weather sand arena.



The courtyard alongside the house consists of a number of granite cut-stone buildings.

Hidden gem in Carlow's farming heartland

A residential farm set on 211 acres of prime Co Carlow land is due to go under the hammer on 24 February, writes **Tommy Moyles**

An opportunity to acquire in excess of 200 acres in Co Carlow doesn't arise too often but Goffs Property has such a property heading for public auction at the end of February. Ballykillane house set on c211 acres just 3km from Hacketstown and close to the R727 road is sure to appeal to those looking to acquire a significant land holding.

Dating back to the early 18th century, Ballykillane house, formerly part of Lisnavagh Estate, is a hidden jewel full of old-world charm. The c2,200ft² house is approached via a recessed entrance, tree-lined gravel driveway and enjoys a beautiful parkland setting with views of the Wicklow mountains.

In need of significant refurbishment, the residence offers a new purchaser the opportunity to blend their own tastes with this period house. On the ground floor there is an entrance hall, kitchen, pantry, dining room, drawing room and back kitchen. On the first floor there are four bedrooms and a bathroom.

The farmyard, which is close to the residence, has a separate gated access point to the yard from the main road. Closest to the house, a courtyard of cut stone granite outbuildings are a standout feature in the yard. There is also a large three-bay double barn and a 36m x 20m all-weather equestrian sand arena. It offers the purchaser a blank canvas if they wish to develop a new farming enterprise there.

With 12 acres separated from the main holding by the R727, almost 200 acres are divided only by the quiet Ballykillane/Rathvilly road. The top-quality lands are suitable for any agricultural enterprise. The farm is in a mixture of grass and tillage and is being offered for sale in its entirety or in Lots.

- **Lot 1:** Includes the residence and farmyard on c94 acres, c25 acres of which is leased until March 2026 with an annual income of €6,200. The remaining lands, c69 acres, are all in grass. The River Derneen runs to the boundary at the back of this Lot and provides a natural

water supply.

- **Lot 2:** Extends to c117 acres with frontage on to the R727 and the Ballykillane/Rathvilly road. This land is leased out until March 2026 with an annual rental income of €24,611. Further details on the lease are available from the auctioneers.

- **Lot 3:** The entire – residence and lands extending to c211 acres. Unless it is previously sold, this property is for sale by public auction at 3pm on 24 February in the Lord Bagenal, Leighlinbridge, Co Carlow.

Goffs is joint-agent on this property with Mr Edward Donohoe, Donohoe Town & Country, Kilkenny. Guided in the region of €13,000 to €14,000/acre, the overall is close to €3m. A sale of this size is rare in the county so expect all eyes to be on this property come auction day.

Its location in an area with a rich farming pedigree should help. The village of Rathvilly is 7km away while Tullow with its livestock mart is only 20 minutes drive away. **CL**

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GOFFS
PROPERTY

Lands c.85.49 ha (c.211 acres)

Ballykillane House, Ballykillane, Hacketstown, Co. Carlow.
For Sale by Public Auction at The Lord Bagenal, Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow on Friday 24th February 2023 at 3.00pm (unless previously sold).

Extensive grassland / tillage farm with period residence on c.211 acres (85.39 ha).

- Lot 1:** Residence and farmyard on c.94 acres.
- Lot 2:** Lands c.117 acres.
- Lot 3:** The Entire - residence and lands extending to c.211 acres.

Solicitor: David Osborne, OMD Solicitors, Abbey Moat House, Abbey St, Naas Tel: 045 899485
Joint Agent: Donohoe Town & Country, Butler Court, Patrick St, Kilkenny Tel: 056 7770400.
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Lot 1 C. 62 St. Acres with large cattle pen.
Lot 2 C. 27 St. Acres.
Lot 3 The Entire.

This is an excellent quality grassland farm that is offered as an entire or in two lots and worthy of immediate inspection.

Attending bidders must pre-register prior to the auction. If you wish to bid via online auction on www.islauctions.com you will need to register with GVM Auctioneers at least 3 days before the sale and pay a bidding deposit.

Contact Richard Ryan GVM Auctioneers, Kilmallock on (063) 98555 or (087) 8067772

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Gleninagh, Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare

C.70 acres

For Sale by Private Treaty.



This limestone holding which has scenic views of Galway bay is held in Folio's CE32434F, CE2847F and CE9237. The greater part of the lands are held in folio CE32434F, as well as plots 9 & 1C from folio CE2847F {C.66 acres}. The lands are accessed by Folio CE9237 which joins the Ballyvaughan to Fanore road.

Plan no's 10 & 9B of Folio CE2847F {4.25 acres} are located close by. C.54 acres qualifies for the new ACRES scheme while it may also qualify for the Organic scheme.

For further details contact the Auctioneer.
Matthew Mc Mahon, IPAV/ Licence No.001569
Killuran, Broadford, Co. Clare 0868060222



The larger 100 acre block has a history of growing cereals and potatoes.

123 acre Tipp farm for auction

Tommy Moyles

A 123 acre farm in South Tipperary is heading for public auction in early March and Carrick-on-Suir-based auctioneer Shee and Hawe has reported plenty of interest in the property since it has been advertised, from both locals and parties further away.

The farm at Whitehall, Grangemockler, is in an attractive rural setting and prime farming country in south Tipperary.

Described as top-quality land, it is available in its entirety (Lot A) or can

be sold in lots. Lot B consists of 100 acres that have been in permanent pasture for the past seven years and prior to this were used for growing cereals and potatoes.

Just across a local road from this is Lot C, which contains the balance of 23 acres. Divided into three fields of various acreage, this land has always been in permanent pasture and it has frontage on to the River Lingaun on its boundary.

All the lands have mature trees and hedging on the external boundaries as

well as between the various fields and there is a mains water supply.

The property is located just 1.6km from the N76 Kilkenny-Clonmel road at Grangemockler village, 13km from Callan, 20km from Clonmel and 34km from Kilkenny.

The public auction takes place at 12pm on Friday 3 March in The Carrig Hotel, Carrick-on-Suir.

This land is guided at €13,000-€15,000/acre but given the land market at present there's every chance this could be exceeded. **CL**

Three leases in Monaghan

Tommy Moyles

Auctioneer Fee & Associates has a trio of holdings on offer for leasing in the Inniskeen and Donaghmoynne area of Co Monaghan. Described as including some of the finest land in the county, two of the three properties are first-time lettings.

The largest of the three is a 52 acre farm at Inniskeen that is to be leased for five years. Laid out in a number of divisions it is being leased in two lots. Lot 1 consists of c32 acres and is split into three parcels, all of which are in grass but are suited to tillage too. Lot 2 is c20 acres of grass. There are live-stock handling facilities on both Lots.

Close by is a 9 acre plot at Drumganny, Inniskeen. This grass field is available on flexible lease terms.

In the neighbouring parish of Donaghmoynne, Fee & Associates have



There are cattle handling facilities on all three holdings.

a c47 acre farm at Tullyvara lower, Donaghmoynne, known as the "Cow-ans".

Renowned as containing some of the best limestone land in Co Monaghan, this land is laid out in three divisions and is suitable for tillage or grass. The farm is well-fenced

for cattle and sheep with mains water together with good handling facilities. It is available on a five-year lease.

Given the strong start to the land letting season for 2023, agent Raymond Fee has stated there is solid interest coming from tillage and dairy farmers as well as new entrants. **CL**

48 acres for sale in northeast

Tommy Moyles

A farm close to the border of counties Louth and Meath and extending to c47.96 acres (19.41ha) is listed for sale on the books of Ardee-based Kieran and McGee auctioneers. The property is laid out in two large divisions of good-quality pasture and is well fenced throughout.

Located in the townlands of Broomfield and Starinagh, 2.5km south of Collon village and 7.5km north of Slane village, the land has considerable road frontage to both the N2 Dublin-Derry Road and the L56051 county road and is easily accessed from both. **CL**

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NO ENTITLEMENTS - C.62 ACRES.

EDENDERRY, CO. OFFALY

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AGRI CAREERS

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES | COLLEGE LIFE | AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE

Edited by Janine Kennedy jkennedy@farmersjournal.ie

From the Irish Defence Forces to chief executive officer of Macra, Michael Curran outlines his role to Sarah McIntosh

Many people working in the agricultural industry have taken a circuitous career pathway to get to their roles. Michael Curran, the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Macra is certainly one.

In his position now almost a year, he told *Irish Country Living* his pathway into agriculture is “a funny one in one way, but in another it makes perfect sense”.

Originally from a 52-acre farm in south west Kerry, he was conscious that going into agriculture was never viable there, between being one of six children and the relative size of the family suckler farm, which was predominantly bog.

The farm, he explained wasn't viable itself, his mother was a teacher and his father worked as a contractor. As a result, he never contemplated agriculture as a career option.

Michael obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree (economics and social science) from the University of Galway (NUIG).

Reflecting on the economic reality at the time of his graduation, he said “1992, as some of your readers will know, was a dark time in Ireland - jobs didn't exist,”

None the less, Michael started applying for any graduate job he could find. To this day, he says, “I still have an envelope with 48 letters of rejection.”

Having first applied in 1993 without success, Michael reapplied for the defence forces and was accepted into the cadets as a graduate entrant

“To be honest - I loved it,” he says on his experiences there.

He started off in the Curragh and throughout his 24 years in the defence forces, he worked in a variety of roles. “I think that, for most people that go into something like the defence forces, you're a generalist and you kind of find a calling,” he explains.

Michael worked in the cavalry in armoured vehicles before moving into a staff officer position in human resources (HR), where he spent five years writing regulations. Although, it was only jokingly he added that, this skillset was “very applicable to ag!”, there is much truth in that. Michael then worked in logistics for four years as an inventory manager.



‘At 52 years of age I found my tribe’

Michael Curran, CEO of Macra. / Phillip Doyle.

“Some people will think that Macra is all about farming,” he adds. “And farming is - and will always be - a massive part of it, but it is more about young people. It is a youth organisation and that's the bit we can sometimes lose [sight of]”

As he was “spending too much time away from my family”, Michael left the defence forces in June, 2016, and worked for The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport Ireland (CILT), which is the professional body for people in the logistics, transport and the supply chain. Michael spent four and a half years in this membership-based organisation.

MACRA BEYOND FARMING

When the CEO role in Macra became available Michael decided to apply.

“I said, ‘Do you know what? That actually looks interesting.”

“Some people will think that Macra is all about farming,” he adds. “And farming is - and will always be - a massive part of it, but it is more about young people. It is a youth organisation and that's the bit we can sometimes lose [sight of].”

That is what attracted him to the role looking at it from the outside. And from the inside?

“I was actually right,” he says.

There are a few sayings that bounce around the organisation. Michael highlights: “One is ‘members first,’ and that is really happening. Everyone is important and no one will be left behind.”

WORDS OF WISDOM

When queried on what advice he would give to young people looking at their career options, he says: “It's absolutely impossible at the age of

17, 18 or 19 to decide what you are going to do for the rest of your life. Just because you are going down a road, it doesn't mean you have to keep going down that road.”

At any stage, you might decide this pathway isn't for you. Providing a personal example of this, he points to his own brother, who at the age of 42 became an apprentice chef.

“You never really know what's in front of you. Qualifications don't define who you are, they should get you into an interview but then it's up to the individual.”

KEEPING THE SHOW ON THE ROAD

Irish Country Living asks Michael what his role involves.

“This is a hard one, and I am rarely caught for words,” he says. “My role is to be the executive of the organisation, which is providing services for all its members.”

To achieve this, he works closely alongside the president, John Keane, national chairperson, Caroline O'Keefe and the Macra board.

“Macra is the sum of its pieces, and its pieces are its members,” he explains. “11,000 individuals from all different backgrounds.” Bringing it back to the question, he says, “What do I do? I try to keep the show on the road. It's very easy because we have a really dedicated team of staff.”

In Michael's opinion, there are three broad reasons why people join Macra. The first is the social side of it.

“We are all social beings; we like interacting with people who have similar interests.” One of the big things bringing people together from a social perspective at the moment is jiving. “It's fun - don't ask me to do it, but when I see people doing it they look like they are having a ball.”

The second aspect is the competitions the organisation runs. “We have competitions for pretty much everything,” he says.

The final reason that “people do overlook” is personal development.

“A small bit of help goes a long way,” Michael says. “My chairperson is half my age and she will run a meeting better than most people I know. That is a skill she developed through Macra.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARITY WORK

Michael emphasises the importance of charity work to the organisation. Creating charities like ‘Make the Moove’ to tackle mental health in rural Ireland, and delivering programmes to Teagasc students is an essential part of what they do.

After working for the organisation over the last ten months, Michael says he has found his tribe. “Which is weird, at 52 years of age, but I really have.” He adds “They really are special in the best possible way. They support each other and give up ridiculous [amounts of] time. The effort they put in is ludicrous, but they do it without complaining.” **CL**

The benefits of a PhD in genetic research



John O'Grady receiving his gold medal for genetic research into how cattle respond to infection with Mycobacterium bovis, the pathogen that causes bovine TB.

Conway festival gold medal winner John Francis O'Grady speaks with Sarah McIntosh about his progressive genetic research

John Francis O'Grady is from a small beef farm in Killorglin, Co Kerry. Studying biology and agriculture for the Leaving Cert furthered his agricultural curiosity as John recalls always being "interested in the interplay between agricultural science and biology."

After completing his first year in the omnibus agriculture course in UCD, John decided to specialise in animal science. "In the animal science degree programme, there is a good amount of genetics. Most of it is the application of genetics for genetic improvement in animals," he explains.

To get a better understanding of "the medical side" of genetics John went on to complete a master's in genomic medicine and the application of genetics in Trinity College Dublin during the pandemic. This was the first year this new course was on offer.

John is currently completing a PhD which is different from traditional ones. He tells *Irish Country Living*: "I am part of the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Centre for Research Training (CRT) in Genomics Data Science." The SFI CRT in Genomics Data Science was open to all applicants. The application involved submitting a CV and personal statement. Candidates were then shortlisted for panel interviews. John was successful in his application, it is the same as the Walsh Scholarship in that it is fully funded."

This PhD "creates an environment" where students can support and learn from each other. John explains he selected "integrative and comparative genomics of tuberculosis (TB) and livestock" as his thesis title, feeling this topic suited his skillset and experience.

"I had a good understanding of the application of genetics to both human and animal health from my undergrad and master's," he says.

"The purpose of the project is to try and use genetic techniques, genomics and functional genomics to understand the host-pathogen interaction in TB in cattle, to [better] understand how the disease works in humans. This early-stage research could identify potential biomarkers to develop new diagnostic tests for M bovis (the pathogen that causes bovine tuberculosis (TB)) infection and guide the breeding of livestock with enhanced bovine TB resistance."

CONWAY FESTIVAL

John was selected to compete in the Conway Festival competition, which highlights and acknowledges the research being carried out at UCD. Some 120 abstracts across three teams of the Conway Institute (one health, personalised medical research, and discovery research) are selected and judged.

John entered in the one health category, where he presented a poster of his work. He went on to compete against the winners of the other two teams. After presenting his findings to date, John won the overall gold medal for his research.

John, now in the second year of his PhD aims to publish the first paper on his work in 2023. With good progress made in the first year, his research is being recognised at all levels and could result in many papers over time.

ADVICE FOR CURRENT STUDENTS:

John advises people considering a PhD: "If you want to do it, just go and do it. Grab the bull by the horns."

He said the experience has been invaluable to him and exposed him to a wide range of networking opportunities.

"It has been great for me to get to know people," he says. "You gather a lot of technical skills when you're finished – it shows a lot of employers you're resilient." **CL**

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LIVING LIFE

Edited by **Caitríona Bolger** cbolger@farmersjournal.ie

Notes of home

With a world-class chamber music festival taking place in Cork soon, co-founder Sinéad O'Halloran gives us an introduction to chamber music, writes **Caitríona Bolger**

Both my sisters play the violin, but I was very stubborn and said I am not playing the violin!" exclaims Sinéad O'Halloran

Instead, she followed in her mum's footsteps and took up the cello at age six. Luckily, she stuck to her instinct, because she is now establishing herself as one of Ireland's most exciting professional young classical musicians.

Starting out at Cork School of Music, her musical talents secured her a scholarship to do a performer's diploma at the Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, after her leaving certificate. She recently completed a master's specialising in chamber music, which was split between Dusseldorf and Manchester, and loved every minute of studying in Germany.

"Classical music is an integral part of their culture," she explains. "Every city has an opera house, a concert hall, a symphony orchestra and a music college."

Sinéad is now back in Dallas, but this time teaching with her colleagues as part of the Marmen String Quartet.

While home in Cork recently, Sinéad spoke to *Irish Country Living* about her work as a cellist and the upcoming Ortús chamber music festival. She also gave us an introductory guide to the world of classical music.

Q&A WITH SINÉAD

What does Ortús mean?

"Ortús is a combination of origin and the Irish for beginning; tús. The idea is that we wanted to come back to where our musical journeys began."

"So many musicians are going abroad and not getting the opportunity to come back and show off what they had learned," explains Sinéad of the vision she and Mairéad Hickey, co-founder and violinist, had for the festival.

Founded in 2016, over 40 musicians have been invited to play in



Sinéad O'Halloran is bringing chamber music to Cork at the end of February \ Magda Lukas.



Ortús is a combination of origin and the Irish for beginning; tús. The idea is that we wanted to come back to where our musical journeys began

venues across the city and county of Cork. These include: St Brendan's Church, Bantry; Ballycotton Sea Church; UCC Aula Maxima; My Place, Midleton; St Peter's Cork, North Main Street; and MTU (formerly CIT) Curtis Auditorium.

What exactly is chamber music?

"Chamber music is a small group of people playing music together. It comes from the chamber part – usually in a small room – an intimate setting. It is a form of classical music."

You work in Dallas with a string quartet. Forgive us, but what is a string quartet?

"Basically, a quartet is a band. It comprises four people playing two violins, a viola and a cello."

In layman's term, what is the Marmen String Quartet?

"It is a string quartet that was formed in 2013 at the Royal College of Music, London. I joined in 2021. My col-

leagues are a Swedish violinist, a Swiss second violinist and a viola player from New Zealand. Basically, it's our job. We have a jam-packed schedule bringing string quartet music to audiences around the world. This year we are playing in Vancouver, Canada, we'll be in Australia and lots of concert halls in the UK and European cities."

What is it about a quartet that is so captivating to people?

"Good question. I suppose one of the reasons is that so much incredible music has been written for the quartet and that goes back hundreds of years to the likes of Haydn, Beethoven and basically all those great classical composers who were somehow drawn to this ensemble. Joseph Haydn was one of the first people to write for the string quartet. He is known as 'Papa Haydn' because he is basically the father of the string quartet. He was born in 1732 in Austria so he is the one who really launched this epoch of music."

"All of the composers who came

after him had experienced this special sound that this combination of instruments could create. They then started experimenting more and more with how they could expand this art form. We are really lucky in that there are thousands of incredible works of music for this ensemble."

How did you end up teaching in Dallas?

"The Marmen Quartet had a particularly successful year in 2019 where they won the grand prize at the Bordeaux International String Quartet competition, as well as at the Banff International String Quartet competition in Canada. They would be two of the biggest competitions in the world for string quartets and so, part of the prize at Banff was this teaching and performing residency in Dallas. Because of COVID-19, we only started the residency a year ago."

"It is a coincidence for me that we are working in the same institution I studied in. What we do is work with



students there; coaching them, collaborating with them. Basically, we try to share as much love and passion for what we do as well as tips and skills, giving them advice on what they could do in their careers and also performing, recording and doing some outreach work with the other faculties at the University as well."

You will be teaching at Ortús and at ConCorda. What is ConCorda?

"ConCorda is the place where I realised I wanted to be a musician full-time. I think I was 14 when I went there. It's a summer course that is supported by the Irish Association of Youth Orchestras and the Irish Chamber Orchestra. It is usually about a week long and takes place in Waterford. Young musicians come together and they are put in different chamber music groups from all over Ireland.

"There are lessons and it was my first experience of the string quartet. It was at ConCorda that I realised how much amazing music there is and that I could actually do this as a job. So, it is brilliant to go back and teach there."

Now there's something you might be able to explain. What is the difference between a chamber orchestra and say, a symphony orchestra or the national concert orchestra?

"Firstly, a chamber orchestra is smaller – so less musicians – and, as a result, a different sound. When it comes to the other two orchestras, it has a lot to do with the type of music they play. A symphonic orchestra plays a lot

more symphonic work, specifically written for an orchestra of this size and includes mostly classical music. A concert orchestra, while they also play classical music, would be more likely to collaborate with pop stars, musical theatre or play on the *Late Late Show*."

Is it true you will be performing with the National Symphony Orchestra soon?

"Yes! I will be premiering a new cello concerto by Shaun Davey on St Patrick's Day with the NSO in the National Concert Hall, Dublin. The five-movement concerto is called *Refuge* and was written during the 2020 COVID-19 lockdowns. It is a beautiful, reflective piece with a lot of trad in there. I am excited and honoured to be premiering this."

Wait! What is a cello concerto?

"A concerto is a piece of music that is written for a solo instrument with an orchestra backing you, so this piece is for the cello but you could have a piano concerto, a clarinet concerto etc."

And a five-movement concerto?

"A movement is like a single track of an album, like chapters in a book. So, a five-movement piece is basically five songs." **CL**

The 8th Ortús Chamber Music Festival will run from 26 February to 5 March in venues around Cork City and County, featuring eight of the world's most celebrated classical musicians. For further information please visit www.ortusfestival.ie



Marty Morrissey and Sammy the King Charles spaniel at home.

All set for a Marty Party

As the Marty Party prepares to hit the road, **Caitríona Bolger** finds out what audiences can expect from this 21st century variety show

Following sold out summer shows, Marty Morrissey is bringing his variety show back on tour, beginning this weekend in Killarney on Friday before motoring up to Castlebar on Saturday.

"Life is for living. We've all experienced tough times in recent years, so this show brings people and communities together for a night out to laugh, sing and dance," says Marty – and so say all of us.

"I hope this will appeal to all ages from age eight to 80 and that people will go home with a pep in their step and a smile on their faces."

MARTY AND BERNARD

Bernard O'Shea will be joining Marty on the road this year and we hear the show will be as interactive as possible – if you have an aisle seat booked, be ready to have a chat with Bernard.

"I like to think this will be different," says Marty, and even though we were talking on the phone, *Irish Country Living* is sure his eyes are twinkling with mischief. "There is so much talent in our country, I'm hoping these shows will give some local people with that raw ability to perform a chance to share a stage with some better-known stars," he adds.

In Killarney, the Kerry version of Ed Sheeran will be joining the lineup

along with Eurovision winners, Paul Harrington and Charlie McGettigan.

Other acts you can expect are The Galway Tenors and accordion player Liam O'Connor from Cork, dubbed "the fastest fingers in the world" as he is in the *Guinness Book of Records* for playing 11.67 notes per second.

Joining Marty in Killarney, Castlebar and Limerick will be Ceol. Said to be discovered by Nathan Carter, this new band are re-jigging folk music and went down very well when playing *The Dome* at last summer's Rose of Tralee festival.

SAMMY THE SPANIEL

With these dates on the horizon, Marty has to make sure a new pal will be looked after while he is on tour. Sammy the King Charles spaniel was a present from Marty for his mother and since she died, Sammy has moved in with Marty.

"He gets excited when he sees me putting my jacket on to go out and he knows exactly where the ball is and goes and gets it and starts wagging the tail and looking up at me to come with me," he tells us. Marty assures us Sammy is partial to the small ball; a slotar or tennis ball and does not seem as keen on the big ball.

"When I am out most of the neighbours want to meet Sammy – that is how I have gotten to know my neighbours."

And don't worry, while Marty is away partying, Sammy will be well looked after by friends who have a special friend of Sammy's.

"They play ball together and then cuddle up in their doggie bed. They are totally in love with each other!" **CL**

MARTY'S PARTY WILL BE CALLING AT:

- Killarney's INEC Club, Friday 10 February.
- Royal Theatre, Castlebar, Saturday 11 February.
- Limerick's University Concert Hall, Friday 10 March.
- Leisureland, Galway, Saturday 25 March.
- Letterkenny's Clanree Hotel, Friday 31 March.

Tickets are on sale now - see local venue for ticket details.

MIDTERM *fab days out*

Looking for a great day out over midterm break? **Gemma Kingston** of The Family Edit shares her top picks nationwide

Before we know it, the lunch boxes will be given a rest and it will be midterm break. Whether your kids are off for a two-day midterm or the whole week, it's a fantastic time to relax, unwind and spend some family time together.

We've gathered a mix of some family-friendly and family-approved activities, both indoors and outdoors, from all around the country.

For further inspiration, visit <https://thefamilyedit.ie/>

DUBLIN CITY

EPIC MUSEUM A fully interactive experience awaits you at EPIC, The Irish Emigration Museum in Dublin. Suitable for all ages, it is a wonderful way to discover what makes us Irish - from our language, art, music, dancing and so much more. They have some fun activities over the midterm break, including an Antarctic Explorers Camp suitable for 7 - 12 year olds. For any family looking to make a full day trip, just a short walk away is The Jeanie Johnston Famine Ship. Once you step onboard you get an insight into what life was like onboard a famine ship and the stories of people during one of the most famous, and most difficult times in Irish history.

Visit www.epicchq.com



A fully interactive experience awaits you at EPIC. \Nick Bradshaw.

BELFAST

COLIN GLEN If you're looking for adventure, Colin Glen, nestled in the heart of Belfast, might be just what you're looking for. It is one of Ireland's leading outdoor adventure parks and is spread over three sites, a land of storytelling



Colin Glen adventure park in Belfast.



and two sports parks with world class attractions. A 200-acre forest park, Colin Glen boasts activities such as The Black Bull Run, Alpine Coaster, Ireland's longest zipline, Gruffalo Trail, high-ropes, driving range and so much more. Remember to pack your comfy shoes and rain gear! Visit www.colinglen.org

CORK

FOTA HOUSE AND GARDENS While its famous neighbour Fota Wildlife Park may be more well-known, Fota House and Gardens is also deserving of a visit and is well-loved by many



families. The house itself is closed for much of February, but the gardens are worth a visit. Bring the scooters for the kids and they are guaranteed to love checking out all the paths, open grass areas, trees and the incredible mix of flowers, plants and bushes. Bramley Lodge Restaurant is a minute's drive and is an ideal spot for a family lunch or dinner. Visit www.fotahouse.com

sheep and lots more! Depending on how close you live, an individual, monthly or annual pass are options to choose from. While some times of the year are reserved for residents of Newpark Hotel, your little ones can run wild at Jurassic Newpark for the February midterm break! Visit www.jurassicnewpark.com

KILKENNY

JURASSIC NEWPARK, CO KILKENNY Moving dinosaurs, fairy trails, talking trees, ride-on baby T-rex, go karts and a playground... we think it's safe to say that kids will adore a trip to Jurassic Newpark! Entry also includes access to the mini wildlife farm where you can see a variety of animals including emus, goats, alpacas, llamas, ducks,



WATERFORD

SUIR VALLEY RAILWAY What a wonderful opportunity to support a community heritage project in Kilmeadan, Co Waterford? Open for the midterm break, Waterford Suir Valley Railway allows families to enjoy a scenic train journey along the banks of the River Suir. It helps to bring some of the old railway network back to life, for the benefit of kids and adults of all ages. And while you're in the area, why not pay a visit to nearby Mount Congreve Gardens with 70 acres of gardens and their Stables Café

THROUGHOUT IRELAND

The Limerick Greenway 40km trail offers safe cycling and walking options.

GREENWAYS For an activity that doesn't cost too much and is suitable for all the family, cycling is a hard one to beat! Whether you use a bike trailer or child seat, mountain bike, hybrid or electric bike, a trip along a Greenway is a great choice for all ages in your family. We are lucky in Ireland to have a selection of fabulous Greenways throughout Ireland - from the Waterford Greenway to the Great Western Greenway, the Limerick Greenway to the Carlingford Lough Greenway, there

are choices across all provinces. Make sure to bring plenty of drinks and snacks - and check those tyres!

CASTLES February midterm break can be the perfect time to mix a bit of fun with a bit of local or national history. What better way than to explore one of the many castles located all throughout Ireland? From Blarney, Bunratty and Birr to Kilkenny and King John's, help bring the school books to life, while also having a family day to remember.



Above: Little ones can run wild at Jurassic Newpark in Kilkenny. Left Colin Glen is an adventure park spread over three sites in the west Belfast hills. \ Philip Doyle.

and Secret Garden shop? Visit www.wsvrailway.ie

GALWAY

ATLANTAQUARIA

The aquarium in Galway is known for being popular with locals and visitors alike. It is Ireland's largest native species aquarium where education, awareness and conservation of ocean and life under water are celebrated. Kids will marvel at the selection on view over two floors of exhibits and adults will be delighted with free parking and WiFi! Located along the world-famous Salthill Promenade, it's ideally placed for a great day out. And while in the area, take a walk, scoot or cycle along the Prom, followed by coffee and a treat at some of the great cafes on offer, including favourites Ground & Co. and Coco Cafe Salthill. Visit www.nationalaquarium.ie

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to school, doctors and supermarket. No matter their interest, kids get to immerse themselves in play areas that imitate real life. The top floor has lots of S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) based activities, with two creative rooms with options for ages four to 99! Visit www.playtowntullamore.ie



CO DONEGAL

GLENVEAGH NATIONAL PARK

Lying in the heart of Donegal, Glenveagh National Park is a treasure waiting for families to explore it. There are trails for all ages and abilities to choose from, and Glenveagh Castle and Gardens are also a delight and adventure. Facilities include a visitor and education centre, restaurant and tea rooms, wild play area and playgrounds, toilets and baby changing area.

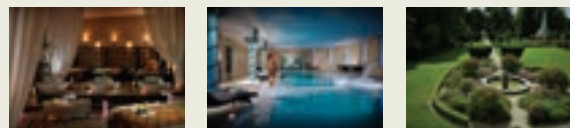
Cycling is allowed at the park, which can be a great way to include younger and older children. Bring water and a picnic so you can stop to eat when suits, or when little tummies demand it! Visit www.nationalparks.ie/glenveagh/



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Green giants



The Irish team couldn't have asked for a better start to the Six Nations. Now bring on the French, writes **Denis Hurley**

As championship openers go, Ireland could scarcely have wished for better. Going in as favourites against Wales in Cardiff last Sunday could have led to complacency, while the return of Warren Gatland as the home side's head coach almost felt it was like tempting fate.

Ireland's approach was exemplary, though, rewarded with a pair of early tries to claim a strong grip on the game. At the outset, there wouldn't have been too many Irish people who would have turned down a 32-10 victory at a stadium where the record hadn't been great in the recent past.

For management, there was the satisfaction that the work done at the team camp in Portugal – and in the months prior to that – had paid

off to such an effect but also the fact that levels had dropped in the third quarter, meaning that the players can be pushed to do even better.

And there's no doubt that they will need to do so, even allowing for the fact that France only got out of Rome with a victory by the skin of their teeth against Italy. If history has told us anything about the French national team, it's that the sublime and the ridiculous are never too far apart and the contrasting ways in which the teams come into this weekend's game at Aviva Stadium won't bother Fabien Galthié's side at all.

To an extent, Ireland are operating in an unprecedented area of having high expectations but meeting them without too much fuss. Of course, after such a dominant away win to start, the noises about the grand slam will

have increased outside the camp but the team group seems to be good at shutting out the external distractions.

As well as the Six Nations points on offer, Saturday's game in Dublin has a sub-plot in terms of the Rugby World Cup in the autumn.

Right now, Ireland are odds-on favourites for the Six Nations but, as hosts, France are still seen as the best bet for the global gathering in the autumn.

Victory for Andy Farrell's side would sow some seeds of doubt in French minds as well as showing that Ireland can back up one strong performance with another one.

There will be an expectant home crowd in the Aviva and it might feel strange considering the Irish psyche prefers the underdog tag, but let's embrace it. The team certainly have. **CL**

James Lowe of Ireland is tackled by Scott Baldwin of Wales during the Guinness Six Nations Rugby Championship match between Wales and Ireland at the Principality Stadium. (Photo by Brendan Moran/Sportsfile)

KIT CHANGES A POSITIVE STEP

Followers of ladies' football may have noticed something unusual in early-season Lidl National League games, without being able to put their finger on it. A number of counties have engaged in kit changes, swapping white shorts for darker colours, such as the black added to Kerry's green and gold, Cork's navy or Mayo increasing the red on their strip. These come back on the back of similar moves in soccer and rugby – the Ireland women's team will have navy shorts for the Six Nations Championship – in a bid to ease concerns players have relating to menstruation.

In reality, such an approach is overdue and underlines how, in the past, female teams were seen as spin-offs of male sides rather than athletes in their own right with specific physiological characteristics.



Indeed, it's only in the relatively recent past that women's teams have been given jerseys designed with them in mind rather than simply donning smaller male sizes. It should be noted, by the way, that camogie was well out in front with its 'skorts' as no county wears a white set.

One disappointment with the ladies' football league is in terms of promotion, however. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a lot of fanfare around double-header men's and women's fixtures, but that has not happened so far this year. As journalist Killian Whelan (@killian_whelan) said on Twitter: "As we now have a new bank holiday in honour of St Brigid, was there an opportunity to showcase ladies' football over this weekend? The GAA and LGFA teams from Kerry, Armagh, Meath, Louth, Longford, Cavan and Laois were all at home and not one had a double-header."

Rachel Kearns of Mayo in action.

(Photo by Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile)

LEAGUE OF IRELAND NEGLECTED

The domestic soccer season begins on Friday night as FAI Cup winners Derry City host Shamrock Rovers, league champions for the past three seasons.

Subscribers to LOITV will have access to the game but, in terms of promoting the match to a wider audience, there hasn't been much from the FAI. One would think that a meeting of last year's silverware winners would be ripe for a national television slot, especially in terms of reminding people that a new campaign is up and running, but the President's Cup seems to fall through the cracks every year.

Given what we know now, it's highly likely that John Delaney was

engaging in deflection tactics when he called the domestic league the FAI's "problem child" but it's hardly surprising when it's treated as something of an after-thought. At a time when the GAA and RTÉ are pushing ahead with a second prime-time weekend highlights show, soccer remains somewhat neglected in terms of being given a platform.

That creates a chicken-and-egg situation where the casual viewer probably won't sit down to watch live matches when they are shown, allowing broadcasters to point to poor viewing figures as a reason why there's not more being broadcast.

Tune in again this time next year, when it's likely that we'll be having to make exactly the same argument.



MARY'S GARDEN

BREAK FOR THE BORDER

The spring tidy-up is well under way this month in **Mary Keenan's** garden

marykeenan@theirishgarden.ie

February is a busy month for us as work in the garden really gets back into full swing. At the moment, borders aren't looking at their best, but this is the time to get them ready for the growing season ahead.

We start by systematically going through each border, removing weeds and cutting back last season's dead stems of all the herbaceous perennials down to soil level. The aim is to get all the cutting back done as early as possible to avoid damaging the new growth coming through. All the cut material is then chopped up and added to our compost heap.

CONSIDER DIVISION

Most herbaceous perennial plants, such as lupins, hardy geraniums and hostas, benefit from division every three to five years to rejuvenate their vigour and improve flowering. When the cutting back is done, we dig up and divide any old, tired and congested perennial clumps, discard the unproductive central portion and replant the young outer sections. It's also a good time to move plants and adjust planting combinations that are not working, perhaps because of mismatched height or colour.

We then lightly fork over the bare spaces between plants to relieve surface compaction, break up growth of liverwort and improve drainage. We finish off by spreading a deep mulch (7-10cm) of compost over the surface of the border. Over the coming months, earthworms will work this

The eye-catching willow *Salix chaenomeloides* 'Mount Aso'. \ Mary Keenan



material down into the soil, enriching it for the season ahead.

Clumps of deciduous grasses, like miscanthus and calamagrostis, that have been left for winter interest, are also cut down now to make way for new growth, but we delay lifting or dividing these until they are actively growing again, which can often be well into April. Evergreen grasses, such as carex and stipa, need nothing more than a good comb through with gloved hands to remove old growth.

VACANT SPACES

Where there are vacant spaces in our borders, we will use some of the perennial plant divisions to plant up these gaps, rather than buying new plants. Repeating plants in garden borders is a great way to unify a plant-

ing scheme. We like to use multiples of the same plant in drifts for stronger impact, spacing them slightly closer than recommended so that the plants knit together with no soil visible. Dense planting like this helps to shade out and inhibit weed growth.

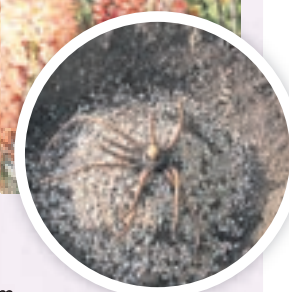
GET A HANDLE ON THINGS

To ensure even spacing when group planting, it can be helpful to use the long handle of your planting spade as a measuring stick. Lay it on the ground alongside a tape measure and use a permanent marker to mark out some common gardening measurements like 15cm, 30cm, 45cm and so on along the handle. When you need to space plants a certain distance apart, you'll have a ready-made measuring device in your hand. **CL**

TIMELY REMINDER: PRUNE ROSES

Prune hybrid tea and floribunda roses now to generate vigorous, new season growth for flowering in summer. Start by pruning out any dead wood and remove all weak, damaged or crossing stems. For hybrid tea roses, prune the remaining stems down to about four buds (10cm to 15cm) from the base or from the point where last year's growth began. On floribundas, prune to about six buds or around 25cm from the base. Keep in mind when making pruning cuts that new stems will develop in the direction in which the top remaining bud is pointing. Good air circulation is important to maintain rose health so, most cuts should be made to just above an outward-facing bud to produce airy, open-centred bushes.

Foxtail lily, *Eremurus* 'Cleopatra'.



Plant foxtail lily

Several of the show gardens at Bloom last year featured impressive displays of *Eremurus* or foxtail lilies, which prompted me to buy some for planting in my own garden this spring. Guaranteed to prompt a wow-reaction, these tall, stately perennials feature distinctive, bottle-brush spires of star-shaped flowers in white, pink, pastel peach, brilliant yellow or burnt orange. Blooming from June into July, they make dramatic, long-lasting cut flowers and are attractive to bees.

Foxtail lilies do best in a really warm planting site in full sun. A well-drained, ideally sandy or gritty soil is essential for success. Choose a sheltered position where the tall flowers will be protected from strong winds and give them plenty of space as they don't do well if crowded.

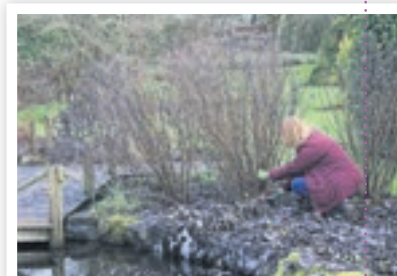
Bare-root crowns are available for planting from autumn to early spring. I prefer to plant them in spring to minimise risk of rotting in winter wet. If the roots appear dry, soak them in water for a couple of hours prior to planting. The brittle roots are fragile so handle carefully.

Dig a shallow planting hole 15cm to 20cm deep and wider than the roots. Position the centre of the crown on a mound of coarse grit, sharp sand or gritty soil, so the central growing point is around 5cm below the soil surface when covered. For best impact, plant in groups, spacing the crowns about 30cm apart.

Above: Bare root eremurus crown spread out on soil at planting time.

THIS MONTH'S GARDEN TO-DO LIST

- Prune late flowering clematis, such as clematis viticella and clematis 'Jackmanii', 'Gypsy Queen', 'Perle d'Azur' and 'Hagley Hybrid', that flower after mid-June on newly grown stems. Cut back to a strong pair of buds, about 30cm to 45cm above the ground, leaving at least two healthy pairs of buds.
- Pot up lily bulbs in containers for a display of summer colour that you can easily move around. I prefer to plant a group of one type of lily per pot for best effect. Terracotta pots are ideal, as their weight provides extra stability.
- Hard prune the purple-leaved smoke bush, *Cotinus coggygria* 'Royal Purple' to contain its size. Cut back hard or coppice stems to within two or three buds of the base to encourage new growth with noticeably bigger leaves, although you won't get any flowers.



Cutting back the dead stems of herbaceous perennials gets the spring tidy-up underway

>> Out & about

- RHSI Bellefield snowdrop open days: the late Angela Jupe's wonderful collection of snowdrops in her garden at Bellefield, Shinrone, Co Offaly, will be open to visitors for two weekends during February as follows: From Friday 17 February to Sunday 19 February and from Friday 24 February to Sunday 26 February, 11am to 4pm daily. See rhsi.ie for booking details.
- The Garden and Landscape Designers Association (GLDA) 27th annual design seminar is on Saturday, 25 February, 9am to 5.30pm at the Crowne Plaza Dublin Airport Hotel, Santry. Theme: letting nature in. Speakers: Randal Plunkett, Mary Reynolds, Barry Kavanagh and Taina Suonio. Seminar is open to anybody with an interest in garden design. See glda.ie.
- Mary Keenan and Ross Doyle run Gash Gardens, Co Laois, which is open to the public. See www.gashgardens.ie.

THE IRISH HORSE

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Helen Sharp hsharp@theirishfield.ie



STABLE TALK Christa Dillon

Onwards and upwards

Last week the sad news came through that the equestrian world had lost two of the best horses we have seen in modern times. The event horse Lenamore and the show jumper Shutterfly were both extraordinary athletes, who excelled at the highest level of their respective disciplines for many years. Each horse enjoyed a happy retirement, all the way into their thirties. These remarkable equines would surely give Snowman and Seabiscuit a run for their money on the big screen.

The loss of two such iconic horses does create room for reflection. When you stop and think about what it takes for a horse to make it to the top of the sport, and to stay there for some years, it seems almost miraculous that it can ever happen at all.

The breeder must match a mare and a stallion, and then safely navigate the foaling. The foal must make it through weaning, and then get to the breaking in stage as a reasonably correct and capable youngster. The young horse must have some sort of potential, and must be well produced to become a confident and willing prospect.

The horse must stay sound, avoid disaster, swap nurtured potential for proven performance, and continue to excel all the way to the top. The horse must meet the right people at the right time, every time; from breeder to vet, farrier to rider. It all has to work out, almost as if the journey was predestined. A little sprinkle of luck goes a long way too. The odds of success must be up there with winning the lottery, and none of us ever win that. As the writer Terry Pratchett once famously wrote, 'It's still magic, even if you know how it's done'.

A LESSON IN INTERVENTION

Life continues apace in my own yard. Last week I took my generally out of control French mare for a jumping lesson. I have put heart and soul into this enigmatic pocket rocket, but to no avail.

Much public humiliation ensued in 2022 - the highlights included forlorn attempts at control/steering, some swearing (me, but also possibly the show jumping judges forced to witness each dreadful spectacle), and also my being sick in a hedge after jumping, from the sheer trauma of the overall experience.

I am not a complete fool, and I recognised that some intervention was required. Hence the lesson. Things went reasonably well, but then the bar isn't particularly high when it comes to my definition of success when riding this horse. After a while, the trainer - who is also a truly gifted rider - got on the horse. And the horse went like an absolute dream. I was equal parts delighted, heartbroken and furious at this most traitorous animal. Onwards and Upwards. Probably. **CL**

Five lessons from the Dublin Racing Festival

Mark Costello

For a racing fan, to be at Leopardstown last weekend was a heart-warming joy. The crowds, the buzz, the roar, the horses, the drama, the shocks, the cheers. It had it all.

Over the two days there were 34,951 people in attendance, a near 40% increase on last year, and well up on the 2020 pre-pandemic figure of 26,474.

So, with Cheltenham now just four weeks away (starts Tuesday, 14 March), what did we learn at Leopardstown?

1 Galopin Des Champs may have been an odds-on favourite for the Irish Gold Cup but he still had to prove himself at this level and he duly ticked the boxes. He is a deserving favourite for the Cheltenham Gold Cup and who could begrudge him victory there, bearing in mind how unlucky he was last year when he fell at the final fence in the Turners Novices' Chase.

2 Honeysuckle's last dance: She was beaten fair and square by State Man in the Irish Champion Hurdle, but Honeysuckle still retains plenty of fight and she can bow out of racing with a win in the Mares' Hurdle on day one at Cheltenham. Mind you, she will have to be in top form to handle last year's winner, Marie's Rock. It should be a cracker.

3 Irish racing has two truly brilliant novice chasers in El Fabiolo and Mighty Potter. Both of them put up devastating displays at Leopardstown. I fully expect El Fabiolo to beat Jonbon in the Arkle on day one at Cheltenham, while Mighty Potter should have no trouble winning the Turners Novice Chase on day three.

4 Barry versus Goliaths: Okay, Barry Connell is not a 'small trainer' in the traditional sense but the multi-millionaire is still a minnow swimming in a shark pool. Somehow, the



Good Land, given a favourable mention on this page last week, duly won at the Dublin Racing Festival and is one to watch at Cheltenham. \ Healy Racing

businessman-turned-trainer has found himself with two Grade 1-winning novice hurdlers in Marine Nationale and Good Land. A win for either of them on Tuesday or Wednesday at Cheltenham would be a great story, and very possible.

5 Don't underestimate Willie's outsiders: After Leopardstown, the pecking order in the Willie Mullins yard is much clearer, so chances are that stable jockey Paul Townend will be on the 'right' horse in all the big races at Cheltenham.

But Danny Mullins rode three Grade 1 winners at the Dublin Racing Festival on outsiders trained by his uncle Willie, and it's a fair bet he will find himself on another couple of winners at Cheltenham at nice prices. **CL**

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»Horsewomen of Ireland

Queen of the Curragh

Jessica Harrington has pretty much done it all and is a true doyenne of racing. **Helen Sharp** reflects on her achievements

The first time I met celebrated trainer Jessica Harrington (75) we were both at the wrong door of St George's Hall in Liverpool trying to get into the Grand National Weights Lunch. Equally flustered, we were pointed in the direction of the right door, and as we circumnavigated the colossal building to try and make the opening speeches, there was no keeping up with her – she's as fit as a flea and as fast as one of her horses.

One thing is guaranteed, Harrington won't be putting her feet up any time soon despite a bit of a shock last place result for talented filly Marie Philippe in the Coolmore NH Sires 'Santiago' Irish EBF Mares INH Flat Race at Leopardstown on Sunday. The Flemensfirth filly was making her bid for blacktype after a successful start for Harrington at Fairyhouse in the Irish Stallion Farms EBF Four-Year-Old Fillies INH Flat Race in December last year. It wasn't Marie Philippe's day on Sunday, and Harrington reported afterwards she didn't scope well.

FAMILY

Jessica Harrington Racing is based at Commonstown Stud, Moone, Co Kildare and is on the doorstep of the Curragh Racecourse. The yard is as busy as a train station whenever you visit. The home facility boasts two-hundred stables, three gallops, fences and hurdles.

The business has grown successfully since Jessica took out her training license in 1989 alongside her late husband Johnny Harrington (a respected bloodstock

man who sadly died three weeks after Jessica won the Champion Hurdle with Jezki in 2014).

Family is central at Commonstown with Jessica and Johnny's two daughters Emma and Kate firmly at the helm of the business – Kate working alongside Jessica as assistant trainer and Emma running things behind the scenes. Harrington started out as an international event rider competing for her country in two Olympic Games before switching to National Hunt and Flat training in 1989. Some people have more than their fair share of talent.

SIZING JOHN

Dual-purpose trainer Harrington says she doesn't remember learning to ride, horses have just always been there. She had her first winner in Lady Olein at Leopardstown in 1991 and she is now the most successful female trainer in the history of the Cheltenham Festival, winning the Champion Chase with Moscow Flyer twice (2003, 2005) and the Champion Hurdle with Jezki (2014) then, in her first ever entry, she was triumphant in the biggest prize of them all, the Timico Gold Cup with seven-year-old Sizing John.

Harrington is versatile in that her success over jumps can be matched with multiple successes on the biggest stages of the flat racing calendar. Pathfork won the Group 1 Vincent O'Brien National Stakes in 2010 giving Jessica her first Group 1 winner, and the superstar filly that is Alpha Centauri gave the Harrington team their first Classic and Royal Ascot winner in the 2018 Irish 1,000 Guineas and



Jessica is versatile in that her success over jumps can be matched with multiple successes on the biggest stages of the flat racing calendar. \ INPHO/James Crombie

Group 1 Coronation Stakes.

GOLD CUP

Harrington is only the third female trainer to win the Gold Cup alongside racing legends Henrietta Knight (Best Mate 2002-2004) and Jenny Pitman (Burrough Hill Lad 1984, Garrison Savannah 1991).

In discussing being a woman in the racing industry she observes: "When I started training 33 years ago, the owners would rather talk to Johnny than me because men wanted to talk to men, you're in a completely male dominated industry – it doesn't worry me now and I don't even notice it. As far as I'm concerned, we're all trainers, we're all doing the same job."

PENNY DROPS

In discussing her feel for younger horses, Harrington explains that she can't always know which horses 'have it'. "It's very hard to know – the penny drops with some earlier than others, and when it has dropped and they're still no good, well they're still no good! On the flat they are

teenager, I've learned to be much more patient than I used to be, give them time."

With her vast experience in eventing, Harrington brings something to her training programme that differs from other trainers: "I like the horses to go in a nice shape, I like to make sure that they trot well, I like them to be calm and we do a lot of loose-schooling before they ever jump. I think they learn to jump better on their own without someone on their back interfering with them, they'll learn to look after themselves."

Harrington's approach has positive repercussions both on and off track. Putting in a solid foundation helps a horse when it comes to its next career too. Harrington is an advocate for off-track racehorses second careers and is also patron of the Irish Horse Welfare Trust.

The ethos quoted by the Harrington camp is, 'The harder we all work, the luckier we get and long may it continue.'

And I think we'll leave it there. **CL**

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NOTES

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- Applications are now open for the Introduction to Coaching course on the 21st of February 2023 in Barnadown Equestrian Centre, Co Wexford. If you would like more information about the HSI Coaching Programme, please email coaching@horsesportireland.ie or phone +353 (0)45 854 533.
- Vetting for Stallion Inspection Applicants must be completed by Monday 13th February.
- Spring Mare Inspections will take place in March and April, applications will open shortly on our website.
- Interested in selling your horse or pony? Visit www.irishhorsegateway.ie – HSI's first point of contact for overseas clients seeking information on sourcing Irish horses and ponies.
- Visit breeding.horsesportireland.ie for pedigree, progeny and performance information on the Irish Horse Register.
- Remember to follow @HorseSportIreland on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for the latest updates from our Irish equestrian athletes, both at home and abroad.



REMINDER

FEBRUARY 14TH DISCOUNTS DEADLINE FAST APPROACHING

HSI reminds breeders that the fee for registering yearlings and older horses remains at the 2022 non-member rates for applications received and paid by February 14, 2023.

If you have any questions in relation to registrations for 2023 please contact info@horsesportireland.ie

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'I'm being guilted for hiring a cleaner'

Dear Miriam, I am married to a dairy farmer and I also work full time myself. We have three children all in primary school so, as you can imagine, life is very full-on with extra-curricular activities etc.

While my husband is good at helping out at home when he can, a lot of the housework has fallen on my lap. I really started to find it overwhelming towards the end of last year. I just could not seem to get on top of things. A friend told me that I was mad to be trying to do it all and that I should get a cleaner in to help.

I spoke to my husband and he was supportive of this decision. We decided that we would split the cost between us. I now have a lovely lady coming in once a week and it has been nothing short of life-changing. Even to get the bathrooms and the kitchen surfaces and floor done, it has been such a help. I feel like I can actually breathe in my own home for the first time in ages.

However, my mother-in-law got wind of this and, of course, the snarky comments started. "Well, isn't it fine for some?" "We had no cleaners back in our



GET IN TOUCH

Do you have a problem you would like to share with someone who may be able to help? If so, you can write to Miriam, Irish Country Living, Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12, or send an email to miriam@farmersjournal.ie

day". That may have been the case, but she wasn't working outside the home. I'm not taking away from the important work she did inside the home and on the farm as well, but honestly you'd swear I was this Lady Muck sitting at home drinking tea and reading a magazine while the cleaner hovers the floor around my feet.

Hardly a visit goes by to our house now without some sort of comment passed about the cleaner. My husband tells me to take no notice, but it's fine for him. I feel like the criticism is completely aimed in my direction.

I've bitten my tongue to date, but I'm going to snap at her one of these days. Do you think that I am overreacting?

Frustrated farmer's wife

Dear Frustrated farmer's wife, Thank you for your email. First of all, I think it is great that you realised that it's simply not possible to "do it all" and that yourself and your husband have agreed to make this investment for yourselves and for your home. I can even feel the relief in your words as I read. So, you know that you have made the right decision for yourself and for your family, and you can feel very confident in that.



As for your mother-in-law? Look, perhaps there is a little bit of bitterness or jealousy at the root of these comments

As for your mother-in-law? Look, perhaps there is a little bit of bitterness or jealousy at the root of these comments. More than likely, this sort of help was probably not an option for her when her own children were small. Of course, she should not be guilt-tripping you over it. But it might take the sting out of it if you think about where this is really coming from. Like most things in life, it's not really about you, but about the other person.

That does not mean that it's not annoying. How to deal with it? Sometimes I find that a tongue-in-cheek response can do the job, ie responding to the next sharp comment with an answer like, "Ah sure you know me, I'm a regular lady of leisure", and laugh it off. Try not to let it get to you. It's not worth the time or the energy.

Alternatively, seeing as it is your husband's mother, after all, you could ask him to have a word and make it clear that it was just as much his decision as yours and that there is little point in going on about it any longer.

Hopefully she will get the message or, who knows, she might even follow your lead and get some help at home herself! Take care. **EL**

AGRIWORD 1196

BY FINÉAGAS

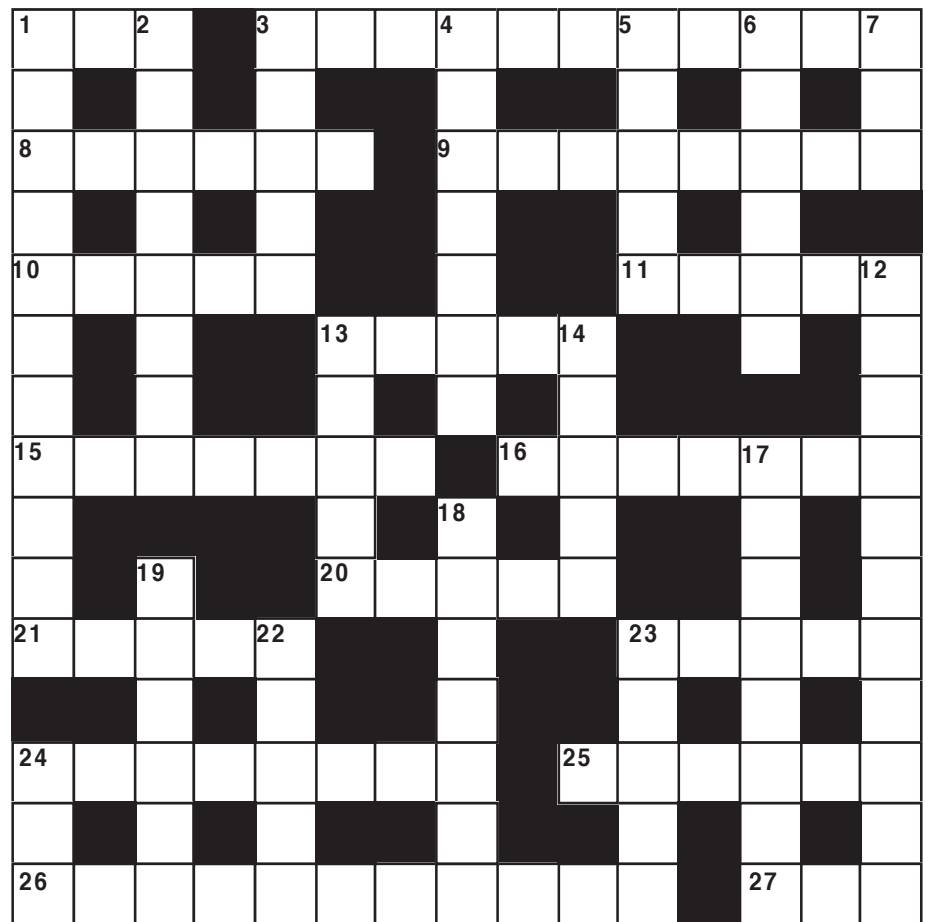
Some clues are cryptic, some more straightforward and some have an agricultural theme

ACROSS

- 1 Item of headgear (3)
- 3 & 11a This comic medieval story by Tolkien suggests former soccer player Johnny cures pig meat on his holding (6,5,2,3)
- 8 Limit the amount of food one may buy (6)
- 9 Form the opinion that this upset Uncle Doc (8)
- 10 Winding apparatus (5)
- 11 See 3 across.
- 13 Birds use them to fly (5)
- 15 Fruit with sweet rind and acid pulp, whose name means 'golden orange' (7)
- 16 Narrow crack - in rock, for example (7)
- 20 Town in Kerry where one will find some safe nitrogen (5)
- 21 A man on his wedding day (5)
- 23 British golfer Nick won the British Open and US Masters each three times (5)
- 24 How harmful it is to see the beastly mother growing older! (8)
- 25 Japan's largest island (6)
- 26 This distressing episode might happen to you if you pack an attic differently (5,6)
- 27 Adult males (3)

DOWN

- 1 Industrious (4-7)
- 2 Light metal, atomic number 22 (8)
- 3 Bubbles on the top of a liquid (5)
- 4 Engine, device (7)
- 5 Type of lizard (5)
- 6 Soundly appreciates a joke (6)
- 7 Take legal action (3)
- 12 A limitless budget - to invest in incineration? (5,2,4)
- 13 Quay (5)
- 14 Holy person (5)
- 17 He personifies the USA (5,3)
- 18 A perceptive view (7)
- 19 Historic burial structure - for confused old men! (6)
- 22 Conjury (5)
- 23 Dress made of strong stone (5)
- 24 A quick swim (3)



>>Answers

AGRIWORD 1194

ACROSS 1 Sir 3 Misinformed 8 Elvers 9 Attacked 10 Molly Bloom 11 Rodeo 15 Lorelei 16 Chicken 20 Taken 21 Reach 23 Wagon 24 Oriental 25 In toto 26 Fortunately 27 Gel
DOWN 1 Steamroller 2 Revolver 3 Marry 4 Ivanhoe 5 On air 6 Mikado 7 Did 12 Opinion poll 13 Bleat 14 Mahon 17 King kong 18 Skillet 19 Rapier 22 Hindu 23 Windy 24 Off

Our next agriword winner will be announced at the start of April. All entries received up until then will be entered into the draw for a €250 voucher.

Solutions: We will publish the solutions two weeks after crossword publication to facilitate a closing date for entries. Entries for each issue will be closed off after one week and those entries will be included in our quarterly draw. Closing date for agriword 1196 is Friday 17 February 2023.

Don't forget to put the agriword number on your envelope.

Please send completed puzzles to Agriword, Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Contact no: _____

Farm enterprise: _____

Tick here if you agree to being contacted by email with news and offers from *Irish Farmers Journal*.

Tick here if you agree to being contacted by phone with news and offers from *Irish Farmers Journal*.

Getting in Touch

The Irish Country Living Personal Pages

MUNSTER

WEST CORK FARMERS DAUGHTER, early 50's N/S, N/D, own house, professional job. WLTM a gentleman, widowed or separated for friendship and maybe relationship. Photo and mobile number please. **BOX NO. M0301**

CORK LADY WIDOW, early 70's, good, humoured and chatty. Enjoys walking, art, dancing, and going to race meetings. Kind, caring, genuine with good sense of humour. Enjoys meals out and travelling. WLTM gentleman late 60's to 70's with similar interests. **BOX NO. M0304**

CORK LADY, single, 60's out of long term relationship, no children, very genuine, kind and caring, very elegant, average height, not from a farming background. Dog Lover, I like the simple things in life. Going out on days out, for drives and meals out. Not into holidays abroad or weekends away **BOX NO. M0305**

PROFESSIONAL LADY 57 and active, would like to meet gentleman of similar age, GSOH essential, active, to tackle the bucket list eg. Walking holidays, the Glencaveagh gardens, Tresco Abby. Single please. **BOX NO. M0225**

BANTRY DIVORCED Female, 49, seeks friendship / relationship. Genuine, honest, down to earth, romantic female. N/S N/D/. Looking for a respectable male with a GSOH to date, socialise and to enjoy life. I'm looking for someone with no ties to spend quality time doing fun things, country music, dances, cinema, bowling, pool, darts, bingo. Love romantic walks etc. I'm living in Bantry, a small coastal west Cork town. I'm not from a farming background. Preferably someone who also divorced and where its not all work and no play. Looking for a meaningful long-term friendship / relationship. **BOX NO. M0216**

MALE 67, Single seeks female for friendship / relationship. Wexford. Own house. Enjoys meals and country music, walks on beach. Keeps calves, horses, dogs. Genuine, honest & sincere. **BOX NO. M0215**

MID CORK Man I am a shy, retired farmer. Single. Living near Cork City. I have a keen interest in geography, local history and the countryside. I have done considerable research on the old parishes and townland diversions and soil types throughout much of Co. Cork. I like traditional music, country music and hurling among other things. I WLTM a considerate, down to earth, fairly academically minded single lady in her late fifties or sixties. I would like to travel to the British Isles. **BOX NO. M0217**

SINGLE LADY LATE 50's, good natured, easy-going. Enjoys music, dancing, nature & weekends away. WLTM gentleman of good character & similar interests. **BOX NO. M106**

MALE, 58, SINGLE from Munster. WLTM a single female 50-65 years for a relationship. I can travel. **BOX NO. M108**

KIND RELIABLE LADY Mid 40's, WLTM someone genuine. Likes country music, outdoors, swimming & walking. All genuine replies answered. **BOX NO. M112**

DAIRY FARMER CORK 42, single, no ties, genuine, kind, caring, GSOH. N/S, N/D. Likes country life, dancing, country music festivals, nights in, nights out, reading, walking, weekends away & holidays. WLTM a girl with similar interests 25-45 from Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford, Kilkenny. Genuine replies please **BOX NO. M107**

GENUINE TIPPERARY FARMER, 52, single, no ties, N/S, N/D with GSOH, kind, caring and considerate person. Interests include GAA, current affairs, debating and dancing. WLTM a lady with a love of the outdoors and positive outlook on life, in the mid-west region for friendship & hopefully more. Confidentiality assured and expected. Phone number appreciated. **BOX NO. M109**

MUNSTER MAN, early 50's, good natured, easy going, no ties. WLTM a glamorous lady, late 30's to mid 50's. My interests include walking my dog, G.A.A, country music, going out to dinner, weekends away and holidays. All Replies answered and treated in strict confidence. Photo and phone number appreciated with your replay. **BOX NO. M0231**

MUNSTER LADY, would love to meet a nice, single farmer, late 60's to early 70's. I'm from a farming background. I love animals, walks, current affairs, etc. No place to go now, everything has changed on the social scene. **BOX NO. M0212**

ORGANIC FARMER, single, 40 plus, 5ft 10", enjoys country life, cycling, walking, weekends away, meeting people. WLTM lady 35-45, for friendship or maybe more from Tipperary and Clare. Surrounding areas. **BOX NO. M0215**

REGAL LADY, early seventies, GSOH, enjoys the finer things in life. Passionate about music, art, theatre, books of substance and gardening. Loves nights away, travelling at home or abroad. Seeks to meet gentleman with similar interests, to enhance each other's future lives. **BOX NO. M0211**

LONELY KERRY LADY, very genuine, early seventies, attractive, slim fit lady, loves walking, dancing, the beach and travel. WLTM tall, genuine, caring, gentleman for company and maybe friendship genuine replies only. Phone number appreciated, confidentiality given and expected. **BOX NO. M0214**

KERRY MAN. Single man looking for a farmer's daughter near Killarney with no children. I love walking, country music and farming. I am semi-retired, love GAA. NS / SD. **BOX NO. M0207**

MUNSTER LADY 53 years old. Educated, caring, confident, GSOH, kind, independent and supportive seeks gentleman. **BOX NO. M0202**

WIDOW, 51, Slim & Blonde. N/S N/D. Good natured, kind, GSOH. Interests include motorsports, walking my dogs and eating out. WLTM kind, genuine, tall man 50 - 60 for serious long term relationship - East / North Cork area. **BOX NO. C0201**

MID-WEST GENTLEMAN - Mid 50's. GSOH. 6ft tall. Active lifestyle, N/S, S/D. Enjoys walking, sport, reading, nights out. Would like to hear from ladies mid 40's to mid-50 in counties Limerick, Clare, Galway, Tipperary or Cork. Can travel for long term relationship. **BOX NO. M0203**

SINGLE CORK GIRL, Caring, fun, professional women (late thirties) looking to meet a sincere, kind and intelligent Munster man (aged 35-45) for a potential relationship. I enjoy country life, walking, reading, swimming and travelling. N/S, S/D No ties. Confidentiality assured. **BOX NO. M0210**

MID CORK GENT, 70 years young. N/S, S/D. G.S.O.H, easy going. Good listener, with general interests, sport, current affairs etc. Likes include all music especially C&W, dining out, and weekends away but not alone! Would like to meet a nice lady to share the rest of the journey with. **BOX NO. M0219**

TIPP LADY living in a rural setting from a farming background. Professional, well-read, warm natured, dignified with a keen sense of humour. Eagerly wishing to meet that someone special. Love of animals, country-living please! Not shy of the wellies! Seeks a down-to-earth guy, late 40's-early 50's, RC or COI for possible relationship. **BOX NO. M0220**

WIDOWED FUN LOVING LADY, looking for a fun loving, intelligent, gentleman. Country life, avid gardener, travel home and abroad. Cooking dining in and out, many other interests. Age group 62 to 75. "Carpe Diem" **BOX NO. M0221**

NORTH MUNSTER WIDOW, mid 60's, retired professional, good sense of humour. N/S, S/D, own car, house and farm. Would like to meet a nice gentleman of similar age for friendship and company or maybe more. Likes music, dancing meals out and weekends away occasionally. Loves flowers and gardening. All replies treated with strict confidentiality. **BOX NO. M0222**

SINGLE WEXFORD MAN. Late 40's, GSOH. Considerate Person. Interests include GAA, Dancing, Walking and the outdoor living. WLTM a lady with similar interests for nights out and friendship. Come from farming background. **BOX NO. M0308**

GENUINE LIMERICK MAN 56, single, no ties. NS, ND, GSOH. Fit and active. Interests include sport, music, walking and eating out. WLTM attractive single lady, no ties, NS,ND with similar interests for long term relationship. Phone number and photo appreciated. Confidentiality assured and expected. **BOX NO. M0309**

CONNACHT

CONNACHT MAN FROM MAYO, seeking to meet single female, from Mayo or Connacht area. 25-45, a lady who has a good personality and enjoys dancing and walking. Outdoor activities country music, GAA, socialising and cycling. **BOX NO. C0303**

BE MY GALWAY GIRL XMAS GIFT Seeks a genuine girl who has compatible qualities, to enhance his life. Likes a cheerful, energetic, respectful girl. A single, mature, professional guy with lots to offer. Many interests including sports, nature and travel etc. Confidentiality assured. All genuine replies answered. **BOX NO. C0224**

GALWAY MAN easy going. I am 56 years old. Animal lover. Likes sports and keeping fit. Like to hear from other similar age and looks unimportant **BOX NO. C0200**

MAYO FARMER, min 50's, roman catholic with no ties. Likes walking, swimming in the sea, social dancing, eat in and out. Genuine replies please. **BOX NO. C0209**

LEINSTER

CARLOW MAN 5'11 in 40's. NS ND. Interesting hobbies sports, walking, music etc. Dog person. Looking for a lady 30's onwards that shares similar interests. **BOX NO. L0306**

KILDARE RARE Breed - Pretty, kind, shy, blue-eyed blond, 5'7, late 30s from a farming background with no ties. I'm social, well travelled, independent and free time is spent volunteering at home & abroad but I also enjoy country life and quiet nights in. I'm looking for a quiet, kind, honest country man for relationship, late 30s to late 40s, GSOH, ideally big enough to roll out a round bale or pull a calf! **BOX NO. L0307**

GAY MALE-early 50's -tall and slim -of gentle, timid nature seeks my opposite. I am non masculine. Hold the view that opposites attract. Looking for a strong minded confident single man for a lasting loving long term relationship. Similar age only please. Midlands. Love to travel, dine out. General interests, all replies answered. **BOX NO. L0233**

SOUTH EAST EMPTY NESTER, to the person who sent me a Christmas card with no contact details in it, thank you I'd love to meet for coffee. But you will have to do better than that. Also any other over 50's single but not in relationships interested in meet ups, get in touch. **BOX NO. L0302**

LEINSTER LADY, 31 years old. Never married. Enjoys dining out, long walks and going to the cinema. Would like to meet a man in his late twenties or early thirties for a lasting relationship. **BOX NO. L0230**

DUBLIN CALLING. Female wishes to meet other females in Dublin Region for nightclubbing and socialising. 50s Age Group. **BOX NO. L0197**

HANDSOME GUY 6ft, 61 trim, fitness fanatic, Donegal background. WLTM attractive, broad minded, active woman 60-70 for good company and fun. Picture appreciated. **BOX NO. L0232**

MIDLANDS MAN early 30's single no ties. In full time employment comes from a farming background. Interests include all sports, meals out, socialising, cinema, holidays and country music. WLTM Lady 25-35 with some of the same interests for friendship/relationship. **BOX NO. L0218**

MIDLANDS GENT, 70 years plus, N/S, S/D, with many interests, kind with GSOH. WLTM an attractive, kind hearted, fun, lady, for chats and a holiday companion. Please reply with contact details, confidentiality given and expected. **BOX NO. L0213**

LEINSTER AREA, single professional girl from farming background. Early 40's with interests in outdoor activities, travel, concerts and socialising. WLTM gentleman between 40 and 50 with similar interests and a good sense of humour. **BOX NO. L0204**

LAOIS CALLING, man in his mid-sixties, 5'11" tall farmer, WLTM an attractive lady, late fifties or early sixties from the midlands or surrounding counties, for friendship leading to a good relationship. Seeking to meet a good-hearted lady who is kind caring, and romantic with GSOH. My interests include dancing country music, GAA, nights out and cosy nights in. WLTM the occasional weekend away or travel abroad. **BOX NO. L0205**

FOREVER, IN 70'S and semi-retired, active and outgoing who likes C/W and traditional music. I am a caring king and considerate person who likes dancing and socialising. NS, SD. From a farming background with varied interests. WLTM a middle-aged attractive widow or separated person who is caring and affectionate. All replies answered, treated in strict confidence and privacy assured. **BOX NO. L0206**

MUSICAL MEATH As a 57yr old divorced lady who like tennis, swimming, reading and travel. I still feel optimistic about meeting a soulmate. I'd love to share the company of a considerate, honest, reliable and emotionally available divorced or widowed gentleman, 57-66, over a cup of coffee. If you'd like a friendship & hopefully more then I look forward to hearing from you. **BOX NO. L0310**

SEPARATED LADY EARLY 60'S. Farming background. GSOH. Interests include walking, cycling, hiking, arts, crafts, music, gardening, baking, and socializing. SD. I adore animals. I like Sunday drives and traveling. I am a Jack of all trades, but a master of none. Would like to meet a tall man from SE area with similar interests and age for friendship and someone who can make me laugh. **BOX NO. L0311**

LEINSTER MAN, single with no ties. Mid 50s, part time farmer with a variety of interests including sports, all kinds of music, concerts, cinema, holidays, travel, ect. I like the countryside, nature and animals. I am honest and loyal. I would like to meet a lady to share the good things of life with. New Year, new start. **BOX NO. L0312**

ULSTER

CAVAN MAN 60's. WLTM lady 50 to 60 age group. Likes sport, music and dancing. Photo and phone number. All letters answered. **BOX NO. U0226**

1960'S VINTAGE- some miles on the clock but still in great running order. Wife is waiting, looking for a farmer or someone who loves working and growing on the land. I Enjoy the countryside, animals, love growing vegetables and cut flowers. Politically liberal and enjoy nature, music, board games, dancing and some city pursuits. I have GSOH , am easy in company and laughter has to bubble easily. I am looking for a kind and generous spirit and will this in return **BOX NUMBER U0208**

CAVAN MALE, 50, kind, happy, farmer, with a G.S.O.H, N/S, N/D. No ties, with a positive attitude to life. I work hard and love going to live bands, enjoys current affairs, weekends away. Eating out and cosy nights by the fire. WLTM kind hearted lady, possibly from a country background, for the long term. Looking forward to making great memories in 2023. All replies answered. **BOX NO. U0223**

Getting In Touch, Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12

For any queries call us on Fridays 10am to 4pm - 01 4199 555 or email gettingintouch@farmersjournal.ie

RESPONSE PACKAGES AVAILABLE

BRONZE SINGLE REPLY	€15	SINGLE REPLY - RAPID RESPONSE
SILVER THREE MONTHS	€125	UNLIMITED REPLY - RAPID RESPONSE - 1 WEEK FREE ADVERT
GOLD SIX MONTHS	€225	UNLIMITED REPLY - RAPID RESPONSE - 4 WEEK FREE ADVERT
PLATINUM TWELVE MONTHS	€400	UNLIMITED REPLY - RAPID RESPONSE - 8 WEEK FREE ADVERT

REGISTER

To send a reply, or place an ad you must register with your contact details: Name, Address & Contact Number.

You can send replies and ads to the Getting in Touch team by post to Getting In Touch, Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12

REPLYING TO AN AD

To reply, please send your reply, details of the box number you're replying to, your contact details (to register) and payment to the Getting In Touch Team by post.

COST: A single reply to one advert costs €15, alternatively we have additional response packages listed at the top of the page, to register for one of these options please contact a member of the team.

GET IN TOUCH: Your reply will then be forwarded to the individual who placed the original advert. The Irish Farmers Journal does not take any responsibility for the advertiser to respond to the replies he/she receives from the advertisement.

By responding to an ad, you are consenting to your personal details to be sent to the person who has placed an ad in the Irish Farmers Journal.

PLACING AN AD:

Send your ad along with your contact details (to register) and payment to the team by post.

COST: €25 for four weeks. We apply a box number to your advert.

RESPONSE: We will forward any responses to you directly by post.

Your letter will be treated confidentially and will be disposed of one month after the ads are finished running in the paper.

Please see our advertising terms & conditions on farmersjournal.ie.

Responses to your advertisement come directly to The Irish Farmers Journal.

We then forward on the responses to you.

FORMS OF PAYMENT

Card (Please call the office (01) 4199550, 10am-4pm Friday,

Postal order or cheque only. We cannot accept cash.

All payments must be made out to the "Irish Farmers Journal".

Dating dos and don'ts for over-50s

>> Backchat
Survey on asthma experience

This is the week of gigantic red hearts in every shop, special offers on red roses and enticements to book that “very special” meal. If you are single on the 14th - or, indeed, the 15th, 16th or 17th - maybe it's time to be proactive and place that ad in Getting in Touch, or do a profile on a dating app.

Before you start, you might find the following useful (particularly if you're a man over 50). This advice is based on extensive research (ie, a group of single, over-50 women drinking wine in my house one night). We all had a GSOH (good sense of humour) on the night!

Let's start with the basics: honesty really is the best policy.

If you say you are 5'10" and are actually 5'6", how do you think our first meet-up is going to be? I'll probably walk right past you. Regular gym-goer? Paying the membership is not actually the same as going. Non-smoker? If we meet, will I be gagging at the smell of stale smoke?

Then there's the photo. If a picture paints a thousand words, some of you have written a novel. Some of the more popular shots are in the bathroom mirror (with terrible lighting) and the camera hiding half



Margaret Leahy

A former organic sheep and vegetable farmer in Co Mayo, Margaret Leahy is now living and “growing her own” in Connemara. She works in social enterprise, runs Irish artisan food tours for solo travellers and can be found on Twitter @gardenngather

your face, or you and the lads (all half pissed) wearing GAA shirts at least one size too small.

If you're in your sixties, please don't post photos of you in your thirties and - for the sake of all humanity - please don't post one wearing just your Speedo! Do yourself a favour and have someone take a recent, nice, normal photo of you. Best foot forward and all that.

“Single, no baggage,” is a line that crops up a lot. Let's be honest. If you've gone through 50+ years of life and have “no baggage”, you must have lived the life of a hermit. We all have baggage of some sort. In fact, many of us have enough for a check-in bag and a carry on!

What are your interests? Try to list things you are at least vaguely familiar with. Don't say ‘gardening’ if your only activity is mowing the lawn. “Love to travel” - does a week in Lanzarote really equate to a love of travel?

Now, I've answered your ad in Getting in Touch or swiped right. What's next?

Some have thought, in an opening text, it was appropriate to ask what dress size the woman wears. Seriously? One even asked if the lady in question ‘had a good bit of condi-

tion on.’ At this stage, I wish I could use emojis in a newspaper column!

These days, some first meetings are on Zoom. I'm quite astonished to hear how many felt it was ok to show up on-screen without shaving, and/or sitting in an armchair in work clothes and no socks! Yes - no socks. A bit of effort, lads.

Most first meetings seem to be for a cuppa. Make the effort and show up in clean clothes (and socks) at the very least, and please be on time. That goes for both parties. It is very unfair to arrange to meet someone and then be late. All parties find this meeting daunting, so at least respect each other enough to show up on time.

It's always good to start with a compliment - but keep it genuine. As to who pays, if it's just a coffee and scone I think it's fair not to split it. I'm howling at the man who showed up with a package of custard creams in his bag as he said the “scones were a rip-off.” To add insult to injury, there was a big sticker on the packet of biscuits that said ‘Two for the price of one,’ and he only brought one pack.

So, if you WLTM (would like to meet) someone, send in the ad, start swiping right, follow this advice and, you never know - 2023 could just be your year. **CL**



Researchers at Technological University Dublin are seeking participants for a survey about the experiences of those affected by asthma in Ireland.

The survey, entitled “The Economic Burden of Climate-Related Asthma in Ireland”, is open to anyone affected by asthma. It aims to hear of people's experiences of living with the condition, including the challenges they face and the effectiveness of the current treatment options available. The results of the survey will be used to raise awareness about asthma, which affects approximately one in ten people in Ireland. The survey will also help to assess the economic costs of asthma on patients as well as the state.

The results of the survey will be included as part of a wider study being conducted within the “Climate Change and the Republic of Ireland: Societal Implications and Solutions” project under the supervision of Dr Anushree Priyadarshini and Paul Hynds of Technological University Dublin. The questionnaire is voluntary and anonymous but it is closing on Feb 11, 2023 so act fast to participate.

If you would like to take part in the survey see www.surveymonkey.com/r/asthma-eire

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