

SUNDAY WORLD

Paddy

Twitter: @paddytmurray

paddy.murray@sundayworld.com

MURRAY



GRINCH: No Orient Kings for Trump

A right old Ding Dong and people Merrily AND High



CHANGES: Carols



SAFE BET: Dinner

I LOVE Christmas, I really do.

From Saturday morning next, I'll be counting down the days until Santa comes next year.

And do you know what? I'm glad that, generally speaking, people have left Christmas alone.

Okay. The Americans are a little bit over-cautious calling it The Holidays - for fear of offending God knows who. More than likely the people who wake up every morning and spend the day waiting to be offended by someone or something.

And while there's a bit of that here, I'm really glad to report that on my last visit to James's Hospital, I found TWO cribs, one in what I will continue to call the new chapel and the other in Burkitt's ward, that wonderful, wonderful centre of excellence where I had my Bone Marrow Transplant.

Anyway, Christmas is still Christmas for now and Santa will still arrive on Thursday night and we'll still sing our carols and we'll rip open our presents and eat turkey and ham, even if we don't like it all that much.

Permit

But I have this terrible fear that it will all change in the coming years. Will they sing Jingle Bells? I don't think do.

For a start, I don't think the Health and Safety people, let alone the Road Safety Authority, would permit the use of 'one horse open sleighs'.

And I am absolutely certain the IFA would not permit people to go o'er the fields in them.

And they'd have to take a look at Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer. Once they started the laughing and calling him names, someone would step in and, hopefully, put an end to it. Bullying can't be tolerated, we will be told.

You know the chap that Good King Wenceslas saw gatherin winter fuel? Well, in the future, he'd report him to the guards and the poor chap would be in custody charged with nicking briquettes.

There might very well be a lot of tra-la-la-la-ing as we all went off to Deck the Halls, but I can see someone from the PC brigade rearing up when we get to the second verse.

SAINT NICKED: Santa Claus could be in the dock soon enough!



POLICE DEPARTMENT
ID NO 243325 DATE 25 DECEMBER

I'M HAUNTED BY GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE AND PC BRIGADE SCROOGES

"Don we now our gay apparel." "Excuse me?" they will say. "Should that not be Don we now our gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and straight apparel?"

Partridges in Pear Trees? Someone will call Joe Duffy to inform him that partridges tend to rummage on the ground. They're not great at getting up trees.

And, anyway, what with the Brown Thomas Christmas Shop opening in mid-August, they would have to

change the name to The 130 Days of Christmas.

We Three Kings of Orient are... being held by immigration thanks to Donald Trump.

The Merry Gentlemen would be told to sober up.

The Ding Dong (as in 'a right old') would not be Merrily on High, but would be in Temple Bar as the pubs closed and the people were merry AND high.

And if Santa Claus is Comin' to Town he will probably be arrested and charged with being a peeping Tom - "he sees you when you're sleeping" indeed.

It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas has generally worn out its welcome by September.

The Health and Safety Authority would advise against chestnuts roasting on an open fire.

And we would of course have Dad-

dy Kissing Santa Claus Underneath the Mistletoe.

White Christmas? Multiracial Christmas of course.

We Wish You A Merry Christmas could quite easily result in charges of harassment. "Now bring us some figgy pudding" followed by "we won't go until we get some" can only be described as a shakedown.

Anyway, thank God (well, He played a vital role in the whole thing) we can still have our traditional Christmas.

I can't wait for Christmas day and Charlotte's face when she sees what Santa brought and Mass in Mount Argus with its Nativity play and then meeting friends and family and dinner; traditional in every way with crackers at the end and then, stuffed to the gills, slouching back on the sofa to watch a movie.

And do you know what? Yeah, the world's not a particularly nice place a lot of the time. But at Christmas, I really, really think most people make a bit of an effort to be nice.

Homeless

Like Michael. A few years ago, a lad in his twenties used to beg outside the shop where I bought a coffee in the mornings. He was an addict.

One of my work colleagues saw me, every day, giving this lad some change. I didn't know at the time, but my colleague worked one night a week with the homeless.

"Talk to him," he advised me. "It's worth as much as money. Sure, give him your change, but talk to him."

So I did. Every day. His name was Michael. And Michael had that slur addicts often have. But we had a little chat every day.

One day, not long before Christmas, Michael asked me a question: "What aftershave do you use Paddy?" I smiled. And I told him. "Do you like it?" I asked him.

"No no," Michael said. "It's not that. I want to get you a bottle for Christmas."

He never did.

Michael's dead now I believe. But even in the depths of his poverty, homelessness and addiction, he knew it was Christmas and wanted to do something nice.

And that's the real magic of it. Being nice. Happy Christmas.

EMILY BLUNT



'I stopped working because of my baby. I'm not sure when I'll go back again'



REAL HEROES / PADDY MURRAY ON ONE CRAZY NIGHT IN A&E

'Hospital staff deal with drunks and druggies when they should be doing what they do best - saving lives'

ST JAMES'S HOSPITAL DUBLIN	
Patients treated in A&E each year	46,474
Number treated, on average, per day	127
Staff working in the hospital	3,500
Staff working in the A&E department	170
Total patients treated each year	450,000



CHALLENGE: Staff in A&E departments work incredibly hard to save lives in difficult conditions

FROM WHERE I was, it looked like trouble right from the outset.

They were both drunk and she had a sore arm, which she held by her side. He wasn't fighting with her at the start, just loud, a bit rough. They moved from view.

Within half-an-hour they were back in sight, he pushing her, shoving her, she shouting and roaring. And the security men trying to keep them apart.

It's Saturday afternoon outside A&E in St James's Hospital.

A normal Saturday afternoon. I arrived in A&E on Friday afternoon, my sixth visit in seven years.

Wheeled

Naturally, I ended up on a trolley.

So let's talk about trolleys. OK. They're not the most comfortable places to spend a few hours. And it would be lovely if you could arrive into A&E and be wheeled straight to a bed.

That's a dream world. The thing is, if you have nurses, doctors and medical professionals around, you essentially have something 90 per cent of the world doesn't have. Medical care. So who's on the trolleys? Well, sick people. Me. I was sick.

There are people who have had heart

WORKERS MUST COPE WITH UTTER CHAOS

PADDY MURRAY has been admitted to hospital through A&E five times. In the past 10 years he has been a patient in St James's Hospital in Dublin on, he thinks, 16 occasions. It could be more.

His most recent stay was just a week ago.

This time, after passing through the busy A&E Department, he was placed in an observation ward, due to a dangerously high heart rate.

His room was directly opposite the entrance to the A&E Department. And this is his story.



NON-STOP: Ambulances pulling up to A&E

attacks, strokes, falls - that kind of thing.

Oh. And regulars. They have people who pop in every now and then. And people with toothaches and sore fingers.

People, in other words, who shouldn't be there, who should be at a GP or a GP out-of-hours service. Anyway, I'm in a room looking across to the entrance to A&E. Yes, I got a bed. Kind of had to with a heart rate of 199 a minute!

Next up it's three addicts, staggering in, stubbing cigarettes out as they go. Regulars, most likely. They get regulars here of all types - drunk, drugged, lonely, sad.

As they go in, a family emerges. An



'Next up it's three addicts rubbing out cigarettes. They are regulars'

Paddy Murray



TOUGH: Medical staff perform under extreme stress and (left) Paddy Murray

NEWS IN BRIEF

TAX BREAK FOR COLLEGE

UCC PRESIDENT Dr Michael Murphy has said tax breaks are needed on the construction of student accommodation to attract more overseas students.

Dr Murphy made the remarks to Taoiseach Enda Kenny last week at the opening of UCC's Beaufort Building. "We need a little help, which will provide substantial benefits. We have to build accommodation, in our case 800 beds," he said.

elderly man, two grown-ups, probably his children. They are comforting each other. God knows who belonging to them is in A&E or why. But they're worried, praying.

A man with a heavily-bandaged arm runs out. He runs right past my window and out the Rialto Gate. Running from? No, to the shops. He returns with a cigarette packet in his hand and a fag drooping from his mouth.

A garda car arrives and two gardai go in to A&E. They spend half-an-hour there, checking on someone, taking a statement, I don't know. But they are the first of many gardai to arrive.

Bleeding

All the time, ambulances arrive and leave, the same men, the same crews bringing patient after patient.

Some of the patients are old, comatose or asleep and wheeled in quietly. Some are clearly injured, bleeding, some come with a partner or friend beside them.

Next, a car speeds in and is parked carelessly, illegally, and a woman in her fifties rushes in with a girl in her late teens. A mother and daughter whose husband/father was brought in earlier? So it seems. Their faces tell that story.

A girl with a bloodied face walks past, a friend with her arm around her. The bleeding girl is crying.

A middle-aged woman walks out from A&E, her head bowed, a man comforting her as she weeps.

On it goes. A few walking wounded leave bandaged or with limbs in plaster. All night, the blue flashing lights ar-

rive and leave. Occasionally, a drunken shout breaks the silence.

As dawn breaks a young man with a bandaged hand stands smoking and talking to another young man who is holding his ribs. The attacked or the attackers?

More ambulances arrive. Right now, five fill the emergency bay as evening falls.

Out of one, comes an old lady in pyjamas, helped and comforted by one of the ambulance crew. He brings her inside.

All the way through, for the past 24 hours, it has been relentless.

I can only speculate as I watch on. But in they go, from cut heads to heart attacks, from addicts to lonely old ladies, from lads who tore a ligament in a match to lads who got into a scrap and girls who fell over pissed...

Inside, the extraordinary team has worked and worked without stopping to help them all, whether their problems were self-inflicted or otherwise.

They do it brilliantly. I know because, like thousands of others, I'm alive and I wouldn't be were it not for them.

It is, as the man said, what we pay our taxes for.

Ambulances. Hospitals. Doctors. Nurses. Social workers. Physiotherapists. Psychologists. Medicines. Chaplains. Ancillary staff. Security. Catering. Cleaners. Electricians. Painters. Builders. Managers. Secretaries. Office staff. IT experts.

All day. Every day.

This isn't Big Brother. This isn't I'm A Celebrity. This isn't Don't Tell the Bride.

Because, unlike what you see night after night on the television, this is reality.