

There's something about Mary

Despite a start to farming at the age of 17, Mary Troy has a head on her shoulders, sense on her side and is tackling things bit by bit

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EDITORIAL



Amii McKeever

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The United Nations (UN) asked members to proclaim 8 March as the UN Day for Women's Rights and World Peace in 1977. The origins of International Women's Day (IWD) however go back to the early days of the last century. It had links to suffrage, equal rights (including the right to hold public office) and employment discrimination. In the 70s it was reborn as a day of activism in pursuit of equal pay, equal economic opportunity, equal legal rights, reproductive rights, subsidised child care and the prevention of violence against women. Now that we are in the 21st century it might seem that this is a day of feel-good promotion of women, as opposed to calls for radical reforms, but for women many of the issues mentioned previously still remain.

While I am against the concept of compiling lists of names, as invariably someone will be left out, there has to be a first. Margot Slattery re-affirmed this to me when I spoke to her about her new role and the challenges she has faced being a gay woman in Ireland (page 18). Condoleeza Rice once said: "People who end up as 'first' don't actually set out to be first. They set out to do something they love." The women 'firsts' highlighted on page nine set a train in motion, doing what they do best and many have since followed in their path with increased confidence that their beliefs are possible. This gives women power.

I read an article in last weekend's *Sunday Times* about the rape conviction of Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein. This article gave a quote from Oscar Wilde: "Everything in the world is about sex except sex. Sex is about power." This reminded me of my conversation with Monica Gorman a few weeks back about power dynamics and how women without power are in a difficult position. Unfortunately, lack of power and subsequent abuse happens in many walks of life. This abuse, which can be sexual, physical or emotional, can happen to both men and women in their own homes, their places of work or in their other activities.

Weinstein told one of the women he victimised, when she spurned his advances: "This is how the industry works." This threat shows how culturally embedded this form of abuse was in the movie industry. It was seen as 'normal' so others turned a blind eye. This is not unique to the movie industry with many people unwilling to speak out for fear of damage to their careers. We might all look to the theme of this year's IWD which is 'Each for Equal' and the call for everyone to actively choose to challenge stereotypes, fight bias, broaden perceptions, improve situations and celebrate women's achievements.

Speaking of losing power, our legal page this week (page 12) examines the potential impact of not having a power of attorney in place. I was surprised to learn that spouses do not automatically have this power conferred on them. This means that if a farmer becomes incapacitated (it could be due to a stroke, a car crash or a mental breakdown) a "committee", not necessarily the next-of-kin, could gain control of the farm. In a family situation, where a sister, brother or a combination of in-laws could be working on the farm, and/or where kids have conflicting desires as to the future of the farm, the family can lose control of the decision-making process. And if the couple are separated or estranged, well that's a whole other can of worms. Don't lose the power to decide. **CL**



10 HOW DAIRY YOU?

Two first-year students from St Brogan's College in Bandon, Co Cork are setting out to change the way adolescents perceive the Irish dairy industry

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

To celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March, *Irish Country Living* has a number of female-led features. Use the day to empower yourself or celebrate a lady in your life by entering the Women & Ag Awards. Read more on page 11.



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Mary is now coming into her fifth year of dairying.
by Donal O'Leary



There's something ABOUT MARY

Mary Troy took over the farm at just 17 and started a dairy enterprise at the age of 20. However, despite starting young, she has a head on her shoulders, sense on her side and is tackling things bit by bit, writes **Anne O'Donoghue**

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For their 21st, many girls are happy to receive money, jewellery, possibly a new phone or even for the lucky few, a first car. For Mary Troy, the stand-out present for her on that memorable birthday was none other than a set of calving cameras, gifted to her by an aunt.

Flicking through the screens on her phone, Mary displays the different angles in the shed. Calving is well and truly underway in her dairy herd when *Irish Country Living* visits the farm in Co Waterford, just a stone's throw from the Cork border – but firmly of the Déise variety.

Just turned 25, Mary is now coming into her fifth year of dairying, milking 80 Holstein-Friesian cows. Her journey to this point has been peppered in equal measures with poignancy and determination. Some doubted her, but more importantly, Mary never doubted herself.

“Even up to about two or three years ago, people were doubting me,” remarks Mary. “People would come in here and say, ‘I didn’t think you’d do it, I didn’t think you’d get to where you are’. But I was never going to let the farm go, ever. Dad worked too hard to get to where he was. He put his heart and soul into it here. I wasn’t going to let that go.”

TAKING THE REINS

From a young age, Mary knew she wanted to milk cows. Her father Con was in dairy until she was seven, and self-confessed, she was always “stuck to him”.

“All I ever wanted to do was milk cows, farm with him and milk cows. Sure I was with him all the time anyway – I wasn’t going to do anything else,” says Mary simply.

“I love calf rearing. Even when I was a small girl that’s what I used to do with Dad. Dad would walk into the pen of calves and he’d go, ‘Mar, whose mother is that?’ Off the top of my head I’d go, ‘345’, or whatever it was.”

Con lost his dairy herd to TB. After that he came out of milk altogether and started finishing cattle, which he did until he sadly passed away of lung cancer when Mary was in her Leaving Cert year.

“When Dad died he was 64, so he was only kind of tipping along until I got my school stuff done and then we were going to do it together. I was only 17 when he died.



Mary says she has great support from those around her. \ Donal O'Leary

"Everyone, even lads that come in here now, they'd be like, 'Are you the small girl that used to be tipping around with him?' or 'You were at the races' or 'You were in the mart'. We used to kill each other too, don't get me wrong, but that's the way it is. Mam would tell you, I'd often come storming down here after fighting, but we were so close," smiles Mary.

The eldest of three daughters, Mary took up the mantle on the farm. Her mother Olive and two younger sisters weren't that into the farming side of things.

The first year following her father's passing, she continued with the existing system on farm and when she finished school, she went to Kildalton Agricultural College to study equine. Con was big into horses.

Mary then went on to do her Green Cert and she began to experiment a bit more with stock at home. One of her lecturers helped her pick out bulls for maiden Limousine heifers, but still the goal was always to go milking.

Three weeks after finishing her Green Cert and 13 years after her father finished up in the parlour, Mary started milking in her own right at the age of 20, supplying Glanbia.

"That was the aim, that I was going to milk. I kept pushing, Mam is from Dublin and the hardest thing was trying to convince her that it was going to be OK. She was worried about money and everything else," recalls Mary.

"I have two younger sisters, they're both studying nursing now, finishing this year, but she had to get the three of us through college. I was so determined I was going milking cows and I was going to make it work."

ME, MYSELF AND MILKING

Back in the here and now, Mary shows us around the yard before she starts into evening milking. There was a lot to do in getting the farm back up and dairying. Loans had to be taken out to cover the cost of the parlour, cows and tractor. The parlour was the shell of her father's, but the whole thing was redone. There's now 10 units, with room at the back for four more if she



wants to expand.

"My parlour is basic, it's just to get me up and milking and get money in the bank. The buildings are run down, they're Dad's buildings. I'll get to them in time, they're functioning."

This is very typical of Mary's mindset. She's of the view that the best way to do things is bit by bit. Stay at 80 cows, pay off the loans, then start getting everything else in line, before considering expanding.

"I'm only 25, there's plenty time, I'm happy just to tip along and get there slowly. There's no point running, because then we'll crash, so we'll just get there slowly."

Initially, Mary started in May 2015 with 15 cows. She bought more cows and in-calf heifers that October. They all calved the following spring 2016 and she also purchased more heifers ready to calve at the same time, or so she thought.

"That was my longest calving, that was six months calving, because I started on my own lot and the crowd I bought the heifers off said, 'They'll calve in the next three or four weeks'. The end of June they finished calving.

"I'll never forget it, 29 January to 29 June. It was annoying because it was in dribs and drabs. Anyway, we got over that too. So I'm after bringing back my calving over four years to 12 or 13 weeks. I went from 44 at the end of 2015 to 65 the following year and then 80."

Mary speaks about challenges honestly and admits she's not afraid to

Mary says there was a lot to do when she was getting the farm back up and dairying. \ Donal O'Leary



It wasn't the thing to do to give your farm to your daughter, but we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for me milking. There are three daughters here and no son, it'd be gone



After completing her Green Cert, Mary decided to convert the farm back to dairy. \ Donal O'Leary

ask for help. Even though she's quite open, she doesn't dwell on things. "Push forward, keep going, plough on. I thrive off all that."

In a way, Mary has gone it alone, but she is at pains to point out the support she has received from people. Neighbours, vets, contractors and lecturers have all mucked in to help her.

"I'm a one-woman show, but there are so many people around me that have gotten me here. I wouldn't have done it without the support around me. Two of my neighbours up the road, friends of Dad's, they have the experience. I'd ring them and I'd be like, 'I really don't know what to do'.

"One of them would come down and be like, 'Right, look, we'll do this'. Then when I watch him doing it and I'm like, 'What if we do it that way?'. It's like the old and new together. They have the experience and I can bring new knowledge to them then. Their help has been absolutely invaluable to me."

FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS

In the beginning, Mary put her life on hold to milk. Now however, she uses a relief milker, who she'll begin to call on again from April/May time. Since last year, she started sending her calves to a contract rearer. This clears up time to see her friends and enjoy

herself a little.

Mary's friends are well used to her lifestyle. In her small part of the world, overlooking Ardmore beach, being a woman milking isn't unusual. Her best friend just down the road is milking with her own father.

"It wasn't the thing to do to give your farm to your daughter, but we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for me milking. There are three daughters here and no son, it'd be gone. It's great that people are after opening up to the idea that women actually can do it and they can take over.

"It's great to have other girls farming, there's a group of us now on Instagram and we have a chat. It's just being able to put things in and other girls understanding what's going on. It's grand and fine to talk to lads, but you know other girls will understand some of the struggles we might have. You mightn't be strong enough to do something, then you might need some help or a tractor."

Undoubtedly, Mary is a woman blazing her own trail in farming, but it's a path inspired by an important man all the same.

"Looking back, I'm proud. I'd love if Dad was here, obviously."

Irish Country Living thinks her father is proud.

"I'm sure he is," replies Mary. **CL**



Frances Doyle, programme co-ordinator South East Cork Area Development; Elaine O'Sullivan of Panama and Pearl; Ellen Martin of Wedding Belles; Martina Leahy of Styled by Martina; Miriam Montague, co-ordinator; Karen Casey of Mobile Device Management; and Isabelle O'Driscoll of UCC.

Showcasing an entrepreneurial spirit

Just recently, months – and in some cases, years – of hard work came to a successful conclusion when 20 rural women showcased their new businesses in Páirc Uí Chaoimh. **Mairead Lavery** writes

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There was a great buzz of chat in one of the big conference rooms in Páirc Uí Chaoimh last Monday as over 120 like-minded women gathered to celebrate and showcase 20 new businesses. These businesses had gotten off the ground with the support of the Women's Rural Entrepreneurial Network programme, better known as WREN.

The newly minted entrepreneurs were just a sample of the 77 rural women who had completed the WREN programme, which was funded by the EU Social Fund to set

up their own business.

Suzanne Kearney is assistant CEO of South East Cork Area Development company (SECAD) which, along with Limerick-based Ballyhoura Development CLG, came together to address the lack of female entrepreneurship in rural areas. "It's well documented how few women make it into senior management roles

or run their own businesses in rural areas. By coming together we created a regional focus on the issue and secured €300,000 of EU Social Fund money to do the work."

In all, 77 rural women from Cork, Clare and Limerick took part in the programme. Their new businesses range from book publishing to bakeries, pottery, wedding supplies, millenary, floristry, technical support, holistic supports, nutrition, poultry equipment and sales. And lots more.

"We ran the programme four times over the two and a half years with anything up to 19 women on each



Co-ordinator at Ballyhoura Development Eileen O'Keeffe; assistant CEO of SECAD Suzanne Kearney; co-ordinator of SECAD Frances Doyle; Ciara Sorley of Ballyhoura Development and Minister of State for Equality, Immigration and Integration David Staunton.

course. Most of those women are still in touch with us and their businesses are doing well. Each one is different so some are managing their business while still in full-time employment. Some have gone part time so as to have some income security until the business takes off. Others have gone in at the deep end and are working full time in their new business."

Solicitor Clare Jones developed Lough Gur Pottery while on the course. "I had serious imposter syndrome at the start, so hearing other women voice the same concerns was really supportive. Goal setting, time management, confidence building and public speaking were important parts of the course. When the course finished I had developed a business plan and a website. I had my branding in place and I'd bought a bigger kiln."

WOMEN SHOULD STOP SAYING: 'I'M JUST A...'

Frances Doyle works with SECAD and is one of two co-ordinators of the programme. Her advice to budding female entrepreneurs is simple. "Don't wait until you can tick all the boxes. It will never happen if you do."

She says women need to stop saying: "No, I'm just a... housewife, rearing the children." The other descriptor she wants women to stop using is: "No, I'm only... working at home/part time."

"These are confidence killers and women need to stop describing their life this way. Rearing children – it's hugely important work and should be recognised as such.

"But we find that a lack of self-confidence is the biggest barrier facing women who want to establish their own business. Therefore building that confidence is a major part of the course."

Eileen O'Keeffe is co-ordinator for the Ballyhoura side of the programme and she agrees with Frances. "Women are still under-represented in senior management and leadership roles. Skills are being wasted because women are stereotyped."

ON SALE NOW

Fiona Liston of Meadowsweet Flowers, Croom, Co Limerick, completed the WREN programme.



Hobbies combine to make a business

Fiona Liston is a flower farmer and florist from Croom, Co Limerick. The family were in dairying but now produce organic beef. When the children were reared, Fiona decided to go to art college in Limerick where she studied painting and fine art. She followed this with a FE-TAC course in horticulture at the organic centre in Drumcollogher.

"Initially, I had no plan to start a business. I loved gardening and after the horticulture course I had the skills to increase my output and that got me thinking. I went on to do a floristry course which was part-funded by the National Organic Training Skillnet programme."

Then everything Fiona had studied came together when she was selected to participate in the 2019 WREN programme. "I was confident in my floristry and gardening skills, the programme sharpened my business skills. It forced me to set goals, plan a strategy and network with other women who were

on the same path. We all faced the same struggles and their support was wonderful."

Now with Meadowsweet Flowers up and running, Fiona is delighted with how things have worked out. "I specialise in styling for weddings and I have regular contracts to supply some restaurants in Adare with floral arrangements every week. I also do bespoke events."

Fiona's floral style is for a natural look inspired by nature. From April to October and even into November 60% of the foliage and flowers used by Fiona are grown on her farm.

Even at this time of year she can produce home-grown viburnum, heliobores, heathers, scented Daphne and pittosporum, not to mention snowdrops and daffodils.

"I always loved gardening and painting and now by combining both and with the support of WREN it's a business I really enjoy."

shows an age range of 25-67, with an average age of 42. Half of the sample were in caring roles either for family or relatives who were ill.

CALL OUT FOR PERCIPIENTS

During the programme the participants took modules in personal development, business training, mentoring and in developing a business plan. In the process, they clocked up 20 academic credits from Cork Institute of Technology. They were advised to build on this with lifelong learning.

Both Ballyhoura and SECAD are calling for participants in the next programme which begins in April. This time around it is planned to complete a level 1 programme as before and to add a level 2 programme. This will offer more advanced business training along with networking skills and personal development.

They will also have an online platform which will offer more flexibility in delivering content to participants.

If you have a good business idea and want to test its limits then the WREN programme could be just what you need. Contact Frances at www.secad.ie or Eileen at www.ballyhouradevelopment.com for more.

CL

Six tips for new businesses

- 1 Stay connected – it's essential for businesses.
- 2 Get a mentor.
- 3 Meet up with other entrepreneurs. LinkedIn will help.
- 4 Continue your education.
- 5 Use the many supports that are there to help new businesses.
- 6 If it's not working out, talk to someone. Be brave and review your plan.

Source: Paul Healy of Rubicon Consultants who delivered part of the WREN programme

"Many of our participants had been caring for family. Other were in full-time employment. They were all looking for a flexible way of making an income, one that fits around family life."

Initial research on 32 participants



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‘You could only do that course if you were absolutely doing it for yourself’

Niamh Stagg's time spent as a young girl observing European agricultural systems has shaped her life to date. In conversation with **Gillian Richardson**

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I'm a secondary school teacher, teaching Leaving Certificate agricultural science and Junior Certificate science in Maynooth. My husband Henry is a forester, and we have a couple of acres outside of Clane, Co Kildare, where we're currently lambing a few pedigree Beltex and figuring out creative names beginning with the letter F, like Frankie Dettori for the tiny single ram lamb born recently.

We also have an array of geriatric hens. We usually have pigs too, but even though African Swine Fever is very far away, we didn't want to risk it. We used to have two Angus heifers and two goats but neither suited us. The goats were much smarter than us – even with the best fencing, they could often be found tap-dancing on top of my car. The final straw was when they started hammering the trees – the forester said they had to go.

We have two girls, one in secondary school and the other in primary. They love being out with the animals. It's a common interest amongst the four of us now.

TRAVELLING

I had a bit of an unorthodox start, I spent most of my childhood growing up abroad moving around with my dad's job. My dad worked for the Department of Foreign Affairs. When I was nine we left Dublin, we spent time in Denmark, Luxembourg and then Greece. The common denominator was science and I got interested in agriculture in the different countries and got to see how different it is in Denmark to say Greece. For example, in Greece they don't have the same emphasis on the dairy industry as Ireland does, their main production system would be olive oil. In Denmark there would be a huge focus on the pig industry.

COLLEGE

When I came back home to Ireland it was ag science that I wanted to do. So I put it down. I got into ag in University College Dublin (UCD) and I picked animal and crop production. Myself and Henry met while studying in UCD. We started sheep-rearing as a hobby – very small, as small as can be. As time went on, we've grown it.

After I finished, I was going to



Niamh often shows her sheep at local shows.



Niamh Stagg studied animal and crop production in UCD.



Niamh causes absolute consternation in school when she brings animals in.



Niamh's daughter wanted a Jacob as her Confirmation present, so that's what she got.

“My dad worked for the Department of Foreign Affairs. When I was nine we left Dublin, we spent time in Denmark, Luxembourg and then Greece”

study genetics but that didn't work out. I then decided I was absolutely useless at using the computer, so I did a postgraduate in IT. I had no interest in IT jobs but to cut a long story short I ended up working for a bank in the IT section. I decided I would only stay there for two years, but 14 years later I was still there. I didn't mind the job, I enjoyed it, I was writing code but I wished the subject matter was a bit more interesting, instead of being financial I wanted something ag related. With coding, there wasn't much social interaction and I missed that.

TEACHING

Eventually, as my own children were growing up I found that I enjoyed explaining things to them. Kids are always asking “why” questions. I decided to give teaching a go and I did a Hibernia online course. I was still in the bank and I was studying while our youngest was still a toddler.

They said on the first day of the course, you could only do that course if you were absolutely doing it for yourself, you had to want to do it. I finished working in the bank on New Year's Eve and I was in a school on 6 January.

It was very different from being in college and because it was online, you had to be at home to do the lectures and assignments. I think that's where having done my job in the bank stood to me because you're more efficient, your time is more valuable than when you're an actual full-time student.

You get things done and you don't procrastinate half as much as you do when you're younger. When I was on teaching practice it was definitely the ag that I loved and I liked science too.

You have every variety of students, from those who definitely know more than me on certain areas of the curriculum to students who wouldn't know one end of an animal

to the other. It's best when you bring in different breeds of hens, like ones with feathered feet and non-feathered feet, which matches up to a Leaving Certificate question and they can actually see the difference, that it does actually mean feathered feet versus non-feathered feet.

Or bringing in lambs and seeing the different breeds and types there are – you can't beat it. I bring in my own animals and cause absolute consternation in the school.

A couple of years back we bought 25-day-old chicks that were flown in to Belfast from Scotland. Henry works up in Monaghan so I dispatched him to collect them. We expected that they wouldn't all survive the travel, hence why we bought so many, but they were hardy and all survived bar one. That one unfortunately died because the power went out and when Henry went to fix it he tripped on the box and squashed it. **CL**

Laying the groundwork for more to follow

With International Women's Day taking place on 8 March, **Amii McKeever** looks at some of the women that were first in their fields, be that farming fields or on the sports field

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Mother Teresa once said: "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." International Women's day got us in *Irish Country Living* thinking about the pioneering women that were the first to break through glass ceilings in Ireland. The lists were endless so we focused on what we feature in the paper every week from farm advocacy to sport and entertainment. And here they are. **CL**

Elaine Farrell of IFA and Rowena Dwyer of Enterprise Ireland.



ADVOCACY

Having served in several positions over her over 25-year tenure in the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA), Elaine Farrell is considered to be one of the most well-connected senior staff members in the organisation's professional staff structure. She was the first woman to be hired into the IFA executive structure in the 1990s. Responsibilities include liaising with Oireachtas members, retail and co-ordinating Brexit activities for the organisation. A second string to her first's bow – she was also the first female president of the Agricultural Science Association (ASA). Her term of office was 2008-2009.

COUNTRY SOUND

Philomena Begley from Galbally, Co Tyrone, was the first Irish woman to perform on the famous Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tennessee. She achieved that accolade in 1978 when she was invited by the legendary Porter Wagoner to sing on the Opry, the most famous show in country music. Philomena, who is still performing regular shows around the country and overseas, resides with her husband Tom Quinn at the family home and farm in Pomeroy, Co Tyrone.

YOUTH

A "first" and still an "only", Catherine Buckley, then just 29, was elected unopposed as the first female president in the history of Macra na Feirme back in 2007. The Cork accountant has yet to have another woman follow in her footsteps, although as the National Council of the organisation is balanced with a 50:50 gender ratio, there are several women in the ranks well capable of taking up the mantle in the future to represent the 10,000 rural members of the organisation.

Rachael Blackmore and Spyglass Hill. \ carolinenorris.ie



HORSE WORLD

Jump jockey Rachael Blackmore's success at the highest level of horse racing is unprecedented. It is still rare for a female to turn professional – even Nina Carberry and Katie Walsh didn't take this decision. She was the first woman to win the Conditional Riders title in 2016-17 which is for less-experienced professional jump jockeys starting out on their careers. She was also the first female jockey to win a Grade 1 hurdle race at the Cheltenham Festival thanks to her success on Minella Indo in the Albert Bartlett Novices' Hurdle in 2019.

EDUCATION

In 1998, the current vice president of global nutrition sciences with PepsiCo Dr Marianne O'Shea was the first winner of the Teagasc Walsh Scholarships Gold medal (formally known as the Walsh Fellowships). This programme is an integral element of Teagasc's research and knowledge transfer (KT) strategy providing students with the opportunity to conduct research relevant to the agri food industry while studying for a higher degree.



Dr Marianne O'Shea.

Marianne investigated the biological effects of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) in cow's milk and she credits the Teagasc programme with providing her with the fundamental technical skills needed for a career in industry. And quite the career it is.

HEALTH

Although stepping back in time, *Irish Country Living* puts a lot of emphasis on health – both physical and mental. It is therefore appropriate to call out Dr Eleonora Fleury who was the first female medical graduate of the Royal University of Ireland (formally taken over by the National University of Ireland and Queen's University Belfast in 1908) where she graduated in 1890 with first-class honours. At this time a high number of the graduates from the University were females as Trinity College Dublin didn't accept female students until 1904. On the mental health side, Dr Fleury specialised in psychiatry and was the first woman member of what is now known as the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

LEGAL

Although Averil Deverell and Francis Christian Kyle made history by becoming the first two women to take their call to the Bar in 1921, it was 1963 before Eileen Kennedy, a solicitor from Co Monaghan, became the first appointed female district court judge in Ireland. This was such a novelty that reportedly court rooms were packed out for days with people coming to witness a lady judge presiding. In 1967, Kennedy was appointed by the then-Minister for Education Donogh O'Malley to chair a committee examining the reformatory and industrial school systems. Her report came to be known as *The Kennedy Report*. The recommendations which included matters relating to the Magdalene Laundries were unfortunately not acted upon.

LEADERSHIP

In 1999, Gráinne Dwyer was the first woman in Ireland to be awarded a Nuffield Scholarship.

This travel scholarship, which supports individuals with leadership potential in the agricultural industry is won through a process of interview. Her study topic looked at the role of women in agriculture.

She travelled to Norway, France, New Zealand and Australia to research her subject. Grainne is now communications and events manager with Animal Health Ireland (AHI) and dairy farming with her husband Jim in Co Laois.



At the Agricultural Science Association Dairy Tour on the farm of Gráinne and Jim Dwyer were Gráinne Dwyer; prof John Roche principal scientist at Dairy NZ; Pat O'Keeffe, former Irish Farmers Journal deputy editor and Jim Dwyer.



Maggie Farrelly refereeing at Croke Park in Dublin. \ Brendan Moran/Sportsfile

SPORT

Gaelic football referee Maggie Farrelly started off refereeing local Cavan underage matches but was asked to join the Ulster Referee Academy in 2011, the only woman of 16 referees. Her list of firsts in the game include being the first woman to officiate a men's game at Croke Park as a sideline official in 2014. She was also the first woman to referee a men's intercounty match in 2015 when Fermanagh played Antrim in the minor championship and the big one – she referred her first senior men's intercounty game, a McKenna Cup tie between Fermanagh and St Mary's in 2016.

How dairy you?

Two first-year students from St Brogan's College in Bandon, Co Cork, are setting out to change the way adolescents perceive the Irish dairy industry, writes **Janine Kennedy**

jkennedy@farmersjournal.ie

What were you doing at age 13? All I seem to be able to remember is never having “cool enough” clothes and trying to understand French immersion social studies (the Canadian junior high school system isn't all it's cracked up to be). I'm fairly certain I wouldn't have been able to complete months worth of research, with all relevant citations, in mere weeks. I wouldn't have been mature enough to understand the importance of nutrition within my age group. And I certainly couldn't have put together an entire project to present at the BT Young Scientist Exhibition.

This, however, is precisely what St Brogan's College students Kate O'Leary and Caoimhe Walsh (with the guidance of home economics teacher Karen Corbett) accomplished just weeks ago – all at the tender age of 13.

Living and attending school in Bandon, Co Cork, the girls are both daughters of dairy farmers and are passionate about agriculture. It was this passion that led them to their BT Young Scientist topic in nutrition. They noticed many of their peers weren't eating a variety of healthy foods and, specifically, that many of them refused dairy products. Some wouldn't eat dairy for environmental reasons while others believed dairy consumption would cause things like weight gain and bad skin.

“Our project was an investigation into the nutritional knowledge and consumption of calcium in female adolescents in the age range of 14 to 16,” says Caoimhe. “This is such a vital period of growth and development and [young girls] really need to get enough calcium in their diets. If they don't, they can get osteoporosis and other deficiencies in later life. We found out that most girls aren't getting enough calcium in their diets so we tried to increase this through experimental methods.”



Kate O'Leary and Caoimhe Walsh are first-year students at St Brogan's College, Bandon, Co Cork, and are both daughters to dairy farmers. \ Donal O'Leary

The latest consumer research from Bord Bia tells us that milk consumption at evening meals among children has fallen 11% since 2011; while Kate and Caoimhe's preliminary research showed that 48% of those surveyed felt dairy consumption was only somewhat important or not important. Seeing these results and how these opinions were largely driven by misinformation, Caoimhe, Kate and Karen organised, with permission from St Brogan's principal, a dairy awareness day at their school.

“We hosted a How Dairy You? awareness day where we gave out samples, we also made a website and designed a leaflet and then we saw a drastic change in results,” Caoimhe explains.

“We contacted companies and asked them to provide us with samples or information that we could use for our dairy awareness day,” Kate says. “We only expected one or two companies to come back to us, but we actually ended up getting six or seven.”

These companies included Carbery, Dairygold, Murphy's Ice Cream, Fruchee, Bandon Co-op, Irish Yogurts Clonakilty and the National Dairy Council. As part of their research, Kate and Caoimhe also included interviews with representatives of Agri-Aware, product development scientists at Future Nutrition and a senior CORU

registered dietician.

Their teacher Karen coached them in developing their overall project and oversaw the research. She was extremely impressed with the girls' strong work ethic.

“There were 21 projects in the girls' category,” she explains. “So within their category, there was first, second and third place. [Caoimhe and Kate] got highly commended, along with one other project. The girls got highly commended because of the amount of research they put into their project. It's such a prestigious competition; and they're only 13.”

THE RESULTS

During their How Dairy You? day, Caoimhe and Kate handed out information leaflets about calcium intake and shared the website they had developed. Then, they handed out samples they had received from the participating businesses.

To their delight, the awareness campaign was a complete success – the students enjoyed the products they tried and, taking a look at the data collected after the event, many completely changed their attitude toward dairy and dairy products as a result.

“Seventy-six and a half per cent of those surveyed originally believed that consuming dairy products could have negative effects on physical health,”

Karen says.

“Then, afterwards that changed to 76% believing it didn't cause any [negative health effects], so it was almost a complete swap after the campaign,” Caoimhe finished.

INFLUENCERS AND DIETS

Social media is a huge part of the lives of adolescents and, unfortunately, many are on the receiving end of pseudoscience and misinformation. Anyone can be an Instagram influencer – you don't need a degree in nutrition to gain a large, online following. But many young, impressionable women follow these influencers, who often give the impression that anyone can look slim and beautiful, like them, if they give up carbohydrates or dairy products.

Irish Country Living spoke with Louise Reynolds, who is a registered dietician and the communications manager at the Irish Nutrition and Dietetics Institute, about the girls' BT Young Scientist project. She feels that social media can be a serious problem for adolescent girls.

“Very often, you'll find younger people are attracted to [online] influencers who have the desired body shape,” she says.

“Their message is usually, ‘If you do this, you'll look like me’, and that's actually nonsense because everyone has their own different genetic make



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I SEE A LOT OF TEENAGE GIRLS SKIPPING BREAKFAST, GOING VEGAN AND TRYING TO REDUCE THEIR FAT INTAKE, AND THEY'RE ACTUALLY JUST CUTTING OUT ALL OF THESE REALLY IMPORTANT NUTRIENTS THAT COME FROM MEAT AND DAIRY

up. These people may be exercising all day long or have eating disorders.

"A number of influencers have eventually come out to say that their interest in nutrition started because they have an eating disorder. They may have a skewed attitude toward food and nutrition.

"If young people don't have someone constantly reminding them of this, they may think they're not good enough unless they're doing what [those influencers] say on their Instagram feed."

Caoimhe and Kate agree that Instagram and other social media streams play a huge role in the way adolescents perceive food and nutrition, but they also think that social media has huge potential to get the correct message across.

"One of the main things we got back from our questionnaire and research was around social media advertising," says Caoimhe. "Students feel that more positive advertising on social media would make a big difference (to how they perceive dairy)."

Twenty-one per cent of those surveyed after the How Dairy You? awareness day said that advertising on social media streams would improve the marketing strategies of Irish dairy companies, while 32.5% said that creating teen-focused product ranges would also help. Karen believes that simply opening up this topic at St Brogan's is a step in the right direction for improving teenage diets.

"I see a lot of teenage girls skipping breakfast, going vegan and trying to reduce their fat intake, and they're actually just cutting out all of these really important nutrients that come from meat and dairy," she says.

"From my point of view, I feel it's really important to educate them so they understand it's important to have a balanced diet and they can't cut out these nutrients in their diet – because it does have detrimental effects for their future."

AWARENESS, NOT CONVERSION

Although Kate says they didn't convert any vegans with their How Dairy You? campaign, they did bring more awareness to vegan students about the importance of calcium and how they can incorporate more calcium into their diets.

"We found out that you can get calcium from kale and from cereals,



Caoimhe Walsh and Kate O'Leary with their home economics teacher Karen Corbett. \ Donal O'Leary

but you'd have to eat like nine bags of kale and six whole fish to get the right amounts in your diet," she laughs.

"No one would be eating that on a daily basis. Veganism is a big trend these days. [People] think they can take supplements, but that's just giving you the calcium, not the full range of benefits you get from milk, which is the most efficient way to get calcium into your diet."

Vegan or not, the How Dairy You? model was extremely successful on a local level. The girls not only increased the understanding of calcium intake and dairy among their peers; they eradicated many of the misconceptions commonly associated with dairy consumption.

In May, they will present their BT Young Scientist project at the University of Limerick and they hope to continue to build awareness around the topic as they continue their studies.

On leaving, I asked Caoimhe and Kate if they had any advice for students in their age group who are interested in taking part in next year's BT Young Scientist Exhibition.

"You're going to have to have a really good idea and you'll have to put a lot of work into it," Caoimhe notes.

"The more work you put in the better, and if you're really passionate about something it'll just come easily to you; if you really like what you're doing it won't be that hard.

"People will say, sometimes, 'Oh that [project] could be hard', but once the judges actually come around they're actually really friendly and it's easier than you think it's going to be."

CL

IRISH COUNTRY LIVING

WOMEN AGRICULTURE AWARDS 2020

Agri-Business Innovation award 2018 winner:

LINDA SYRON

When Linda Syron opened Mollie Moos Pet Farm and Playground, she didn't realise what it would grow into, writes **Janine Kennedy**

jakennedy@farmersjournal.ie

Linda Syron named her Co Westmeath pet farm and playground after her youngest daughter. Family is extremely important to her, and when she started Mollie Moos she says it was a way for her to help provide for her family while keeping things going within the family business.

"The farm had reached capacity, so I decided to open a pet farm as a means of educating and to, above all, provide for my family," she said in her 2018 acceptance speech.

She opened her business in 2014 after much research; having recognised a gap in the market for family-friendly on-farm activities. She had previously been working part time as a beautician, raising her five children with her husband, Gerry, and was working with Gerry on their beef and sheep farm.

Linda's eldest daughter, Adrienne, nominated her for the Agri-Business Innovation award, so the win came as a major shock. Being a family-focused individual, it was important to Linda to have her family involved in the business.

"It's lovely to be able to work with your family," she said to our reporter in 2018. "Seeing them grow and become independent. The are often telling me what to do; not the other way around." CL

Applications

Applications are now open for our 2020 Women and Agriculture Awards, supported by FBD Insurance. Learn more about the two awards categories for this year – Innovation in Agriculture and Innovation On-Farm – on our website, where you can download the application forms.

We accept applications by post or email at womenandagriculture@farmersjournal.ie

Linda Syron on Mollie Moos pet farm. \ Philip Doyle





Losing the power to decide

Without an enduring power of attorney, if the farmer is incapacitated, the court – not the spouse – may decide it is best for the person to get full-time care and the farm sold to pay for it

An RTÉ Investigates programme called *Trouble Makers*, recently aired on RTÉ 1. The programme caught a lot of people unawares and highlighted how a family can lose control of decision making in relation to an incapacitated loved one if the correct legal provisions are not in place.

MEDICAL DECISIONS

The programme depicted various families who, when they voiced concerns, were either subjected to restricted visiting hours or were refused access to visit their loved ones who were in long-term care. One would have automatically assumed that a next of kin would be entitled to visit their loved ones, however that is not the case. One contributor who questioned the medication her father was on, found out that the family had effectively no say in decisions relating to her father's care. The term "next of kin" is used all the time in health care services. In reality, the next of kin have no legal effect unless they are appointed as "attorney" under an "Enduring Power of Attorney". In the absence of such an appointment, the clinician or health-care professional has the authority to make treatment decisions under medical council guidelines.

Of course, a person is entitled to make their own decisions about their own care. However, if they are unable to do so due to diminished mental capacity (can be due to an illness or disability) a person can be appointed to make decisions on their behalf either under "wardship" or "an Enduring power of attorney".

WARDS OF COURT

The main purpose of wardship is to look after the welfare and to protect the property of a person where this is considered necessary. The Office of Wards of Court based in Dublin is responsible for administering this process. The legal costs of a wardship are in most cases paid out of the ward's property.

There are two types of wardship. One covers adults who may require the court's protection because of mental incapacity. The second con-



cerns persons under 18 years of age who require the court's protection.

A family member, through their solicitor, usually makes the request to bring a person into wardship. However, the request does not have to be made by a family member. The person's own solicitor, his or her doctor or the hospital authorities if he/she is a patient in a hospital may make the application.

The "committee" is the person appointed by the Court to act on behalf of the ward. The committee is usually, but not always, the person who made the wardship application ie a family member. In some cases, where there is no suitable relative who is prepared to act, where there is disagreement among the ward's relatives as to how his or her affairs should be managed, or where a conflict of interest arises the court may appoint the General Solicitor for Minors and Wards of Court (a public official in the service of the State) to act as committee.

Once a person is taken into wardship, a member of staff of the office known as a "case officer" will be assigned to look after his or her affairs. The committee, or his/her solicitor will correspond with the case officer in relation to the management of the ward's affairs.

The committee is required to account to the office for all funds received and payments made by him or her in relation to the ward. Where it is necessary to meet nursing home

expenses or other debts of the ward, the court may permit the committee either to sell or to let the property. If a ward needs medical treatment, eg surgery, the approval of the court should be obtained.

ENDURING POWER OF ATTORNEY

If, prior to becoming mentally incapacitated, a person has made alternative arrangements, by completing a document called an Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA), it should not be necessary to bring wardship proceedings.

This enables the person creating the EPA to appoint a person of their choosing – such as a spouse or child – to act on their behalf in the event of them losing mental capacity. Unlike wardship, there is not the same level of oversight as to how the attorney conducts the persons affairs. Also, it is much quicker for an attorney to be appointed under an EPA than a committee being appointed under wardship.

The EPA does not take effect until a person loses mental capacity eg if they developed Alzheimer's or were in a coma etc. It is then registered in the High Court. The EPA can be as broad or as narrow as the person wants it to be eg it can be so broad as to enable the attorney to decide who can and cannot visit the incapacitated person or it can be limited to just business decisions.

It is important for business people such as farmers to have an EPA, otherwise the business could effectively be shut down overnight in the

event of an accident where the person would not have the ability to conduct their own business affairs. A solicitor would generally draw up an EPA at the same time as doing a will. The person creating the EPA will have to get their doctor to sign a form confirming that they are of sound mind at the time of creating the EPA. At least two people other than the attorney appointed must also be notified of the creation of an EPA, such as children so that they have an opportunity to object if there is anything of concern.

Under wardship, the priority is to provide for the incapacitated person. For example, the court may decide it is in the best interests of the person to get round-the-clock care in a nursing home and thus the farm should be sold to pay for that care. Whereas under an EPA, the spouse as attorney who knows the person very well might decide that they would prefer to stay in their own home and also that they would hate to see the farm being sold. So, if you want to avoid the courts having a say in your business affairs, it is advisable to get an EPA drawn up without delay. **CL**

Disclaimer: The information in this article is intended as a general guide only. While every care is taken to ensure accuracy of information contained in this article, Aisling Meehan, Agricultural Solicitors does not accept responsibility for errors or omissions howsoever arising. Email info@agrisolicitors.ie

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In reality, the next of kin have no legal effect unless they are appointed as 'attorney'”

IRISH COUNTRY LIVING

WOMEN & AGRICULTURE AWARDS 2020

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It was so fantastic to win. I was completely and utterly **BLOWN AWAY**. It was amazing to see what all of these women were doing on their farms and all across the country

MARIA FLYNN runs Ballymakenny Farm Produce with her husband David. They grow purple potatoes. She was the winner in the Innovation On Farm category in the 2018 Women & Ag Awards.

I love who we are and what we're doing. I now have the **CONFIDENCE** to do **WHATEVER IT TAKES**

MARGARET FARRELLY owner and managing director of Clonarn Clover, the company behind the O'Egg brand, was the winner of the Innovation On Farm award at the Women & Agriculture Awards in 2016.

Category 1: Innovation On Farm awards

We're looking for a woman who has successfully implemented **technical** or **managerial innovations** on the family farm. This may have been done by one or more of the following:

- Employing new technology wherever possible to improve farm family profitability
- Ensuring that the challenges of climate on farm are being met
- Seizing every opportunity to improve innovation on the farm
- Using excellent management practices to make farm work more efficient
- Improving work-life balance with the introduction of new work practices
- Employing scientific knowledge to make the best decisions for the farm
- Building up farm production with unique ideas
- Developing an impressive and profitable on-farm business, such as a bakery, allotments or contracting company, anything that falls under the heading of a food, tourism or agri-related business

One winner and one runner-up prize will be awarded in this category.

Category 2: Innovation in Agriculture and Food

The winner of this award will be a woman who has looked at the agriculture and food sector and seen a novel **idea, initiative** or **campaign come alive**. She may have done this by one or more of the following:

- Identifying a viable market opportunity and making a success of it
- Acting as an employee/volunteer in an existing organisation to bring about change in the sector
- Embracing innovation to add real value to the agriculture sector in Ireland
- Working with the existing challenges of climate change, farm safety, unconscious bias and changing food habits of Ireland's population
- Working with existing farm organisations to ensure that development and initiatives for farm families are ongoing and relevant
- Being a driver of change in the agriculture sector in Ireland through a farm or an agribusiness
- Increasing family income by utilising unique elements of agriculture as well as her own skills
- Recognise a need for industry change and bringing the role of women in agriculture to the fore

One winner and one runner-up prize will be awarded in this category.

HOW TO ENTER:

Download an application form from www.irishcountryliving.ie and email to womenandag@farmersjournal.ie or post to Women & Agriculture Awards, Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12. D12 YXW5. Alternatively, call 01 4199 578 for an application form. Entries open from **Thursday 20 February**. Terms and conditions will be in next week's paper.

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS: Friday 13 March 2020

Wok about



Eggs are an extremely versatile ingredient to have in the kitchen. **Neven Maguire** has two recipes for you to reap their rewards

I am often asked what is the one ingredient I couldn't live without and for me it has to be eggs. I eat them regularly. I love them poached, scrambled, whatever. They are so versatile.

Today I have two savoury dishes, the first one with penne pasta. I am using broad beans, but you could use frozen peas, or green beans. Broccoli also works well. The smoky bacon gives so much flavour to this recipe. It is a very quick sauce using some mascarpone cheese and you enrich it with the egg yolks. This is a great comfort dish and, if vegetarian, just leave out the bacon. I like to serve with a salad. I don't waste anything and with the eggs whites I would

make a nice meringue. Add in a little toasted coconut or vanilla extract.

For the Thai vegetable and egg noodle you make up a dressing with the garlic and lemongrass and the coriander and blend it a little. A Nutribullet is great for doing this. Thai Gold do a very good coconut milk. This recipe is packed with vegetables – mushrooms, chestnuts, broccoli, scallions, carrots, peppers. There are lots of lovely flavours and textures and then you have the kick for the lemongrass and the chilli. There is a lovely noodle that you can get in Asian markets called a Zero Two. You just pour boiling water over them.

Happy cooking,
Neven

>> Recipes

PENNE & BROAD BEAN GRATIN WITH BACON

Serves four

200g rindless smoked streaky bacon rashers
350g (12oz) penne pasta
750g (13/4lb) frozen broad beans
250g (9oz) carton mascarpone cheese
4 egg yolks
2 tbsp snipped fresh chives
2 tbsp shredded fresh basil
25g (1oz) freshly grated Parmesan
75g (3oz) freshly grated pecorino
lightly dressed Italian salad leaves, to serve (optional)

1 Preheat the grill to medium. Arrange the bacon on the grill rack and cook for 3-4 minutes until crisp and golden, turning once. Drain on kitchen paper and snip into small pieces.

2 Plunge the penne in a large pan of boiling salted water and cook for 8-10 minutes or according to packet instructions until 'al dente'. Drain

and refresh under cold running water.

3 Place the broad beans in a pan of boiling salted water and cook for 2-3 minutes or until just tender. Drain and refresh under cold running water, then slip the beans out of their skins. Fold the broad beans into the cooked penne and tip into a shallow ovenproof dish.

4 Beat together the mascarpone cheese, egg yolks, chives and basil in a bowl with the parmesan and most of the pecorino, reserving a handful to sprinkle on top. Spoon over the broad beans and penne until completely covered. Then scatter over the reserved pecorino.

5 Place under the grill and cook for about 5 minutes until bubbling and lightly golden. Serve straight from the dish at the table on to warmed serving plates with the Italian salad, if liked.

ORIENTAL NOODLE IN OMELETTE WRAP

Serves two

Oriental noodle in omelette wrap.

Photography: Philip Doyle.

Food styling: Sharon Hearne-Smith

1 garlic clove, roughly chopped
1 lemongrass stalk, trimmed and roughly chopped
small bunch fresh coriander (roots intact if possible)
small handful fresh mint leaves
pinch dried crushed chillies
2 tbsp rapeseed oil
250ml (8 1/2 fl oz) carton coconut cream
2 small carrots, thinly sliced on the diagonal
1 small red pepper, halved, seeded and thinly sliced
75g (3oz) small broccoli florets
50g (2oz) chestnut mushrooms, sliced
4 scallions, shredded
100g (4oz) packet instant express noodles
4 eggs
pinch of salt
2 tbsp rapeseed oil
2 scallions, thinly sliced

1 Heat a large pan or wok. Place the garlic in a mini food processor with the lemongrass, mint, crushed chillies, 1 tbsp oil and most of the coriander, reserv-

ing some to garnish. Blitz to a fine paste. Add to the heated wok and stir-fry for 1-2 minutes until fragrant.
2 Pour the coconut cream into the pan with 300ml of water and bring to a simmer, then add the carrots, red pepper, broccoli florets and mushrooms. Cook for 4-5 minutes until all of the vegetables are tender, stirring occasionally. Add another 100ml of water to the sauce if you think it needs it.
3 Add the noodles to the pan with the scallions and toss until well combined, then continue to cook for another 1-2 minutes until completely heated through.
4 Meanwhile, heat a wok. Crack the eggs into a small bowl and whisk until lightly beaten, season with salt.

5 Add 1 tbsp oil to the heated wok and swirl around the sides. Pour in half the egg mixture and gently swirl around the surface of the wok. Cook for a minute

or two until golden brown underneath, but still slightly soft and runny on the top. Pile in half the noodle mixture and flip over the ends and sides to enclose

the filling, then turn out on to a warmed plate and scatter over the scallions and reserved coriander. Repeat with the remaining ingredients and serve at once. **CL**

Ingredient Profile

WHAT'S IN SEASON?

Wild garlic season has officially begun. Chefs and food lovers throughout the country have started picking the tasty green leaves – also known as ramsons – in earnest. You'll find wild garlic carpeting entire forest floors at this time of year.

Their tender green leaves are a great substitute for scallions or chives, and they would pair well with either of Neven's recipes this week. The pretty white flowers are also edible and are very tasty in salads.

If you're out foraging for

wild garlic this spring, make sure you don't mistake it for lily of the valley, which is toxic and has a similar look. The best way to ensure what you're picking is wild garlic is to smell the plant – it has a very pungent, garlicky smell.



Wild garlic.

Mother Nature rules the roost



Calving continues apace and rainfall makes farming difficult on the O'Leary farm. **Katherine O'Leary** is mindful of the extreme difficulties faced by farmers in other areas

kkoleary@gmail.com



Wet, wet, wet again. My husband Tim says: "Good morning" and immediately corrects himself to "Morning!" We are sick of the rain and with storms Ciara, Dennis and now Jorge battering Ireland; a "good" morning is a long way off. Before I get into a roundup of things on the farm I am very mindful of the difficulties that other farmers are experiencing across the country.

The footage of the Shannon area sends the clear message that farming lives are defined by the weather. There is a management issue for the authorities that has to be addressed. It is always the familiar piece of news that strikes a chord. One farmer was preparing to keep the water out of his calf house.

I cannot imagine how I would feel in that situation. Our calves are under cosy shelters with infrared lamps on deep dry straw beds. Outside the pens, the wide passage is moisture-free and limed every few days to keep it dry and clean. A surge of water would be a real nightmare for the health of the calves apart from the mess of a flood. My thoughts are with this farmer.

A man speaking on the radio, Paddy, has two houses. Both are flooded and uninhabitable for the last four years due to water damage. He is renting and

the local authority is covering the cost. We've been hearing about the difficulties in the Shannon region for years.

Surely it is time to do what needs to be done to help farmers and others to live normal lives, going to school, going to the shops and going to work. Can the Shannon not be dredged? Where is the expert knowledge? Why do the decision makers wait for conditions to escalate out of all proportion before jobs are tackled? Farming in a whole area is now restricted to the summer months. Suggestions of relocating are very difficult for people who have land and livelihoods in these areas. Now, falling between governments is an added headache for people trying to action flood protection measures.

CORK SIDE

Here in Cork, it is wet but not flooded. I do understand the difference. Tim says that the farm is the wettest he's ever seen it in 40 years of farming. Our son Colm disputes this observation citing spring 2018. Tim insists that this is different.

The three inches cannot be grazed at the moment. There are many conversations this spring about managing the grazing across the farm. The men talk about their sleep being disturbed. When a farmer wakes and hears the beating rain against the window

pane, the first thought is of the field.

The sounds of curling wind and almost horizontal rain are fiercely unnerving. Colm says: "I start to wonder what the cows are doing." We know that cows can rotovate a field in wet weather, delaying the regrowth of grass. It is not easy to keep a level head. The tendency to worry about it is hard to suppress. Some people listen to the

sounds of wind and rain to relax. They are obviously not farmers.

Yet, we are managing to graze grass. Despite daily rain, the spur lanes, used to access the grass as cows move deeper into a field, are greening up after grazing. Both farms are growing about 12kg dry matter per hectare per day. Both men agree that it's hard to see the growth rate pushing up to 48kg by 31 March. This is

where it will need to be to feed the cows.

At the moment, cows are on 6kg-7kg of ration/day to match the grass. Both lots of cows went out to graze as they calved from 29th of January. Sixty per cent of the cows are now calved. Calving is going really well and cows are fit and healthy with no milk fever or retained placentas. This indicates good and appropriate mineral supplementation.

Calf survival rate has been excellent too but we can't really assess that until all the cows have calved. Calf health is really good. It is from now on that we need to be vigilant about hygiene and the control of infection by continued use of disinfection baths and operating closed groups of calves with dedicated feeders. Remaining on top of our game is critical as sheds fill up. So far, so good. **CL**

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The basics of happiness

This month, **Dr Mark Rowe** explores the topic of happiness which will be followed next month with a more detailed look at the elements of his ‘prescription for happiness’

International Day of Happiness is celebrated each year on 20 March as a new paradigm to achieve the United Nations global goals for the happiness, wellbeing and freedom of all life on earth. This article will explore the topic of happiness more generally, while next month I’ll look in more detail at the elements of my “prescription for happiness”.

Just think for a minute. How many people in your network do you know that are really thriving and living lives that are happy, purposeful and fulfilling? If it’s three in 10 or more, then the chances are you’re lucky enough to be in the company of a particularly positive group of people.

Research shows on average only about 20% of people are flourishing or living life at, or close to, their optimal potential, while the rest of us are plodding along in the middle somewhere or even worse, languishing at the bottom.

In today’s world where many people are exposed to negative stress and needless negativity, I believe cultivating purpose, and a sense of fulfilment to be key ingredients for real contentment and overall wellbeing. The starting point rather than the end point for creating a life of success and vitality.

STRONG V WRONG

This is backed up by a wealth of scientific research from the field of positive psychology, a relatively new field of psychology that looks at what’s going well rather than what’s not, what’s strong rather than what’s wrong.

Happiness is a word that I believe is often misunderstood. It is not about denying reality, sticking your head in the sand or pretending that things are other than as they are. It’s not about a



Happiness is a word that I believe is often misunderstood. It is not about denying reality, sticking your head in the sand or pretending that things are other than as they are

far-flung destination of perfection.

Similarly, it’s not about denying negative emotions or repressing emotions of fear or anxiety. To experience negative emotion is part and parcel of life, of being human. I have a term I use called “emotional agility” – being able to recognise and accept all of your emotions, the positive and the negative. Being able to make the most of good times and having the resilience to deal with tough times.

You see we are not hard-wired for happiness; we are hard-wired for survival. In a world full of danger and threat, the primitive brain is concerned with staying alive, with happiness an optional extra. But in today’s world, where there is so much distraction, and so much needless negativity, I believe happiness, fulfilment and contentment are not optional extras but essential to your wellbeing.

Of course the word “happiness” includes moment-to-moment experiences of happiness as well as reflected happiness (looking back on your life to date). Perhaps my best definition of happiness is having something to be grateful for, someone to love, something useful to do and something to look forward to.

As humans, the evidence suggests we seem happiest when we have purpose and meaning, robust relationships, and a sense of engagement and accomplishment in our lives.

A major cause of unhappiness

nowadays is the social envy generated by the proliferation of perfectionism on social media. But lasting happiness does not really come from material things.

As little as 10% of your potential happiness comes from the toys you own or the watch you wear. This is because of a psychological principle known as hedonic adaptation whereby you simply adapt and get used to your circumstances.

On the plus side, this helps recovery from adversity and is a factor in resilience. On the down side, it means that more material comforts (once you have a roof over your head, three square meals a day etc) will not necessarily lead to any sustainable increase in your level of happiness. After a while you return to your happiness set point.

Regardless of whether the watch you wear costs €20 or €200, it tells the same time. No matter how many pairs of shoes you have, you can only wear one pair at a time. No matter what type of house you live in, the impact of loneliness can be the same.

FORTY PER CENT SOLUTION

About 50% of your potential happiness is thought to be inherited and only 10% is down to your life circumstances (because of the hedonic adaptation effect).

While you can’t change your genetics (though the exciting new area of epigenetics is showing how your life-

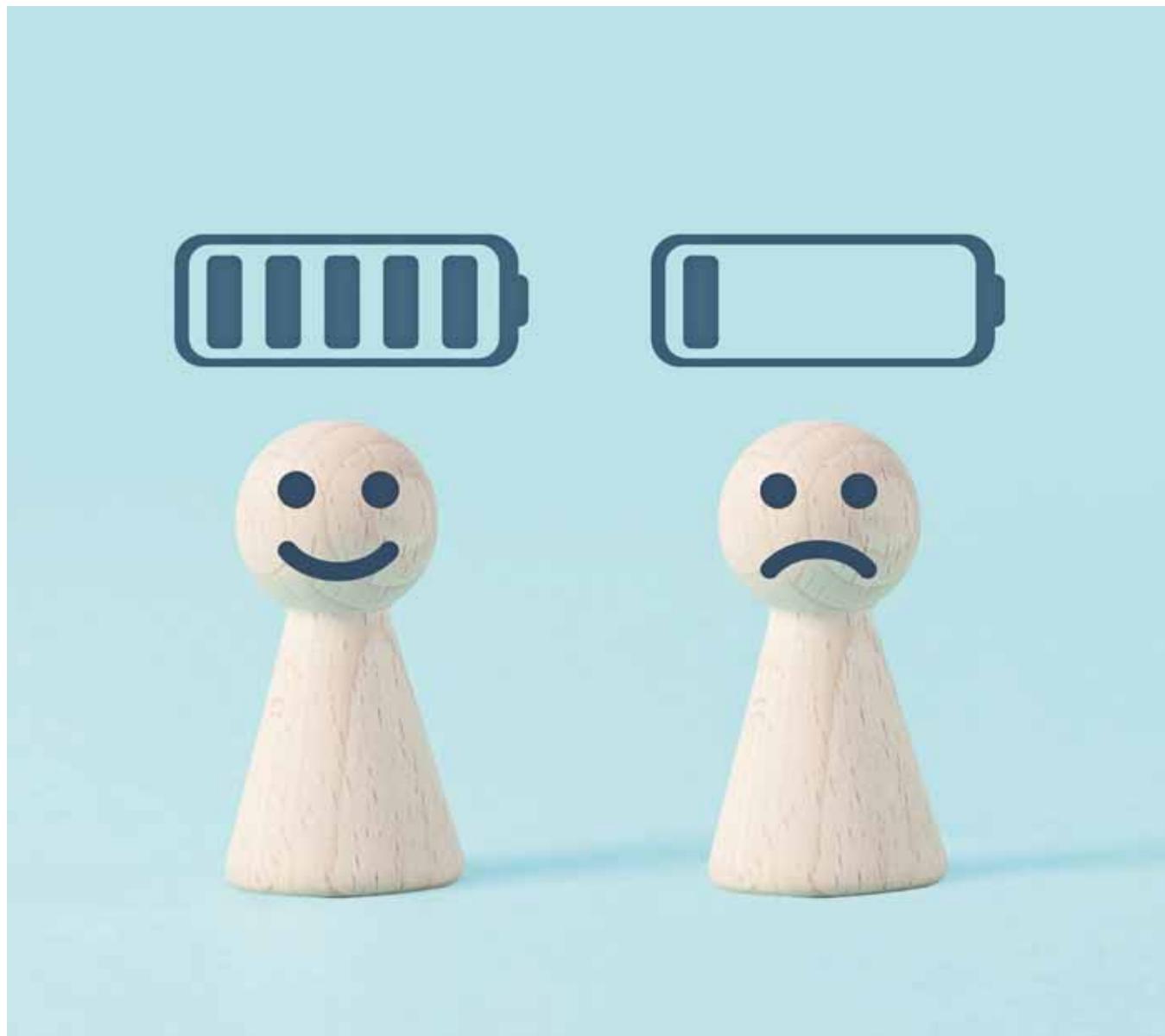
style can positively impact how your genes express themselves), and while it can be difficult and often impractical to change your life circumstances, there is still 40% of your potential happiness that is up for grabs. I call this the “40% solution”.

These are some simple and inexpensive habits which not only feel good in the moment but can have a big impact over time on your overall sense of wellbeing. Supporting you in becoming more successful by whatever way you want to define success – whether it’s by the quality of your relationships, career accomplishments, creativity, energy or your health.

Choosing to enhance your self-care and cultivate inner contentment and happiness is a fundamental commitment to become aware of the potential for everyday happiness that lies inside you. Giving you more balance, harmony and fulfilment; a platform for success and a life of real vitality.

Furthermore, emotional positivity is contagious through your social networks, spreading in a ripple effect through your family, organisation, workplace and community. Enabling you to be better – not just to yourself but indeed everyone that matters. A real win-win-win.

Next month we will have a closer look at this 40% solution by examining some of the elements of my “prescription for happiness”. To your health (and happiness!). **CL**



WORDS OF LIFE

Jesus saith, I am the way, the truth, and the life, noman cometh unto the father, but by me.

John ch. 14 v 6

Dr Mark Rowe, GP, author and life strategist. Follow Dr Mark Rowe on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram – @drmarkrowe

Coronavirus

With cases of coronavirus confirmed in Ireland this week, **Margaret Hawkins** has guidelines on how to detect it and measures to be taken should you fall ill with it

margarethawkinsmh@gmail.com

With the new respiratory illness coronavirus (COVID-19) now in Ireland, the HSE is issuing advice on a regular basis. This should be heeded in order to stop the spread of the virus as much as possible. Remember that it can take up to 14 days for the symptoms of coronavirus to appear and those symptoms include:

- A cough.
- Shortness of breath.
- Breathing difficulties.
- Fever (high temperature).

The coronavirus can also cause more severe illness including:

- Pneumonia.
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome.
- Kidney failure.

You will only need to be tested for coronavirus if you have symptoms and have in the last 14 days been:

- In close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus.
- To a country or region with a spread of coronavirus.
- In a healthcare centre or hospital

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Coronavirus is spread in sneeze or cough droplets. You could get the virus if you:

- Come into close contact with someone who has the virus and is coughing or sneezing.
- Touch surfaces that someone who has the virus has coughed or sneezed on.
- Simple household disinfectants can kill the virus on surfaces. Clean the surface first and then use a disinfectant.

To protect yourself:

- Wash your hands properly and

where patients with coronavirus were being treated.

If your doctor thinks that you need a test for coronavirus, they will tell you where the test will be done and when to expect your results.

Anyone who knows they have been in close contact with a confirmed case in the last 14 days and has symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, fever) should:

- Isolate themselves from other people. This means going into a different, well-ventilated room, with a phone.
- Phone their GP, or emergency department – if this is not possible, phone 112 or 999.
- In a medical emergency (if you have severe symptoms) phone 112 or 999.

Close contact means either:

- Face-to-face contact.
- Spending more than 15 minutes within two metres of an infected person.
- Living in the same house as an infected person.

regularly with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough and sneeze.
- Put used tissues into a bin and wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Follow the travel advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs if travelling to a country or region with a spread of coronavirus.

TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment for coronavirus but many of the symptoms of the virus can be treated. If you get the virus, your healthcare professional will advise treatment based on your symptoms. Antibiotics do not work against coronavirus or any viruses. They only work against bacterial infections.

There is currently no vaccine to treat or protect against coronavirus. While figures are as yet unclear it is believed, currently, that 1-2% of those who got the virus have died, with those over 80 years of age and ill among the most affected. It is likely you are more at risk if you catch coronavirus and:

- Are 65 years of age and over.
- Have a long-term medical condition, for example heart disease.

See the HSE website for regular advice updates



SURGICAL FACE MASKS

Don't use a surgical face mask if you feel well and do not have symptoms – there's no evidence that using masks is of any benefit if you are not sick.

You should use a face mask if you:

- Have or may have coronavirus.
- Are in close contact with someone who has or may have coronavirus.
- Are a healthcare worker in close contact with people who may have or have coronavirus.

LENT

Young priests, veiled women and Latin mass

Hannah Quinn-Mulligan takes a step back in time with a visit to St Kevin's Church in Dublin

hqmulligan
@farmersjournal.ie



I'm considering whether religion requires that belief in magic to be faithful when my thoughts are disturbed by a familiar sound – someone's phone is ringing. The ting of their ringtone cracks through the solemnity of the singing

He is best known for his six wives, but he was also awarded the title *Fidei Defensor* – Defender of the Faith – by the Pope (a title the English royal family still hold) before Anne Boleyn caught his eye.

In Henry's court you were expected to attend mass at least once a day and if your eye strayed from the host as it was raised you could find yourself accused of heresy.

Part of Henry and Europe's Protestant Reformation was the stripping of notions of Catholic pageantry and the magic of converting water into wine and bread into flesh.

I'm considering whether religion requires that belief in magic to be faithful when my thoughts are disturbed by a familiar sound – someone's phone is ringing. The *ting* of their ringtone cracks through the solemnity of the singing. The old woman with the crutch sitting in front of me reaches slowly into her bag and brings out the offending iPhone. I think she must be confused as she taps the screen with a crooked finger and returns the call.

"I'm in mass, I'll call after."

She hangs up and drops the iPhone deftly in her handbag. This was not the behaviour I was expecting from a woman in a black veil. On the other side of the church a toddler has escaped the clutches of her parents and is sprinting ecstatically towards the altar. Her mother collars her just before she reaches the steps and with a face of thunder carries her giggling toddler back to her pew.

The human element has crept into the soberness of the service. The mass ends and unlike most sermons now, the congregation waits respectfully for the priests to exit before filing out.

I light a candle for my family and consider that I really enjoyed my visit to St Kevin's but I can't help thinking that what I witnessed was a slice of the Church's history, with serious questions remaining about her future. **CL**

Most of the congregation are already seated or kneeling when I arrive in St Kevin's. Cold and cavernous with a sumptuous Gothic exterior, I'm expecting a very traditional experience from one of the few Catholic churches in Ireland where mass is still said in Latin.

What strikes me immediately is that a large number of women are wearing veils, a practice my grandmother would have observed before Second Vatican Council (Vatican II). A quick web search tells me the small lace veil is called a mantilla. Married women wear a black veil, while young or unmarried women wear a white one – historically the colour of virginity if we think back to a wedding dress.

The Vatican II was an important step for the Catholic Church in the 1960s. One of the most important outcomes was that mass could be celebrated in a country's mother tongue with the priest facing the congregation.

For my great aunt, who is a nun, Vatican II meant that she was allowed to use her own name, going from her convent name Sister Aidan to Sister Bridget, and allowed her to travel home to visit her family without the watchful accompaniment of another nun.

Back in St Kevin's, three priests, resplendent in purple celebrate the mass with at least six altar boys and two more younger priests in attendance. I realise with a start that the handsome man I'd considered earlier as "a bit old to be an altar boy" is actually the youngest priest I've ever seen. I look at all the priests closely, only one looks aged over 60.

I consider again that this would have been normal for my grandparents. Young men celebrating mass and women wearing veils with colour codes for their relationship status.

Mass is said with the priests' backs to the congregation. At first this makes me angry, it feels like I'm being ignored. I'm bubbling with criticism and I have to force myself to stop. I close my eyes, clasp my hands, inhale a deep breath of incense and let my mind tune into the rhythmic sway of singing behind me. For the first time in a long time, I let myself pray.

The congregation rises to get their ashes and I let an elderly lady with a crutch out before me, but largely the congregation is quite young, with a number of families clearly wearing their Sunday best.

I'm staring at the host (the body of Christ) as the priest raises it and it makes me think of King Henry VIII.

AGRI CAREERS

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THE DOUBLE GLASS CEILING

Margot Slattery worked her way through 20 jobs to get to the top of Sodexo Ireland. **Amii McKeever** sat down with her to talk about diversity and inclusion in a company of 475,000 employees

amckeeper@farmersjournal.ie

Prior to taking up her role as Sodexo's Global chief diversity officer, Margot Slattery oversaw the company's operations in Ireland, where it delivers on-site catering and full service management to its varied client base from business, to healthcare, as its country president (CEO).

Sodexo Ireland is part of the French-owned Sodexo Group, the world's largest multi-services company. Glanbia globally employs 6,900 people and Kerry Group 25,500. Sodexo has 4,000 staff in Ireland alone and 475,000 globally, such is the scale of the business.

PROGRESSION FROM THE GROUND UP

Margot grew up on a farm in Limerick, trained and worked as a chef internationally before joining Sodexo in 1991.

"I was on a trajectory in the food world and, to some degree, I came back into a more junior role when I joined Sodexo, in order to get into management. I was looking at that next phase of my career and I wanted to go beyond the kitchen and have a wider remit.

"I started on one of the sites doing all the leg work, supporting the management teams, counting stock, working the nights and the weekends. After a number of years, I then took on my own 'site'. I ran that as a manager and went to a bigger site and then to an even bigger site, changing job every two years, progressing to an area management role, to a district manager role, to account director, to divisional director and all the way up to managing director."

The organisation today is worth €21bn and operates in 72 countries. It has three key businesses; on-site services – supporting anything from a military site to a school or hospital. The second part is personal homecare services (PHS) of which Comfort Keepers is the Irish arm. Benefits and rewards is the third faction which is an employee incentivisation business that does not operate in Ireland.

CHANGING DIETS ARE AN OPPORTUNITY TO INNOVATE

Food is a major part of the Sodexo



Margot Slattery speaking at the The Business & Finance CMO 100 listing evening where she was guest of honour.

“I was told that I wouldn't inherit the farm because I was a girl. Gender was a blocker so I had a double glass ceiling as I was also gay”

business and they do see the traditional (Irish) meal changing as a result of people now being much more travelled.

"I am a total carnivore," she jokes, "but now I eat more veg, beans and I am exploring foods more. Am I closed to eating a vegetarian meal? No I am not. The world is very open, but agriculture shouldn't panic as there is a world for that product. We were one of the first companies to sign up for Bord Bia Origin Green. Sodexo uses all Irish products, where available in the market, which we have been doing for 15 years."

Margot's advice to new food producers is to think about who your customer is. "Who makes the decision on procurement? Most food is chosen by women. This is the opportunity for innovation."

PUTTING DIVERSITY IN THE FARMING PICTURE

Margot started her new role of global chief diversity officer last September. The company has faced challenges in some companies that they acquired (around race) but Margot is clear that this was not the genesis of their diversity and inclusion (D&I) strategy.

"We were growing and this (D&I) was a natural evolution. Our people are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT+), disabled, different races, different ethnicity, different origins,

different generations and all of these are factors in attracting and retaining the best talent.

"Most organisations and most leaders are conscious that this is something that they need to be doing. However, the reality is that in Ireland and other countries, the numbers have not moved."

Margot is conscious of the difference between talking the talk and delivery, pointing out that diversity is one thing and inclusion is another, with belonging also vital.

"You can put people with a 50:50 gender or ethnicity in any picture, but that does not mean that they feel included. We all know what it is like not to belong, not to be picked for a team. The dream world is for everyone to belong.

"The women in my family have been amazing farmers. In my experience the women were the ones that were keeping things together. But there are challenges to include females in farming. Just look at inheritance.

"I was told that I wouldn't inherit the farm because I was a girl. Gender was a blocker so I had a double glass ceiling as I was also gay. Being from a small farming community, being a gay woman in work was easier than being a gay woman at home. It was work that turned the key for me. In farm-

ing, being LGBT+ is an area that needs more work.

"There is a need to be very inclusive of men as a lot of men are very lonely and bear a lot of things inside. Parents can have expectations that you will bring along the next generation and, if you are gay, parents can think that dream is dead. There is a need to have more and more people come out and be role models as there is no room for taboos when it comes to mental health. [Some] gay people have left farming and have lost the opportunity and that is a shame.

"Being comfortable, in your family, your job and feeling safe and secure allows you to be that advocate. Growing up, I would have been very fearful as the environment was very machismo. Now kids are coming out and they educate their parents and it is much more accepting.

"I don't meet anyone and ask 'Are you straight?' but I have to bring that up in conversations almost every day. I am wearing a wedding ring and people ask me what my husband does and I have to say 'Well no I am gay, my wife is...'"

Margot says that although the gay community shouldn't have to do this, there has to be a first and a second.

"I have to do it as if I deny it, I am making it harder for the next generation." **CL**

Fully funded master's with Bord Bia and DCU

Bord Bia and the DCU Business School have teamed up to offer an 18-month fully funded scholarship master's programme. The MSc innovation and insights programme will promote consumer-focused innovation and new product development within Ireland's food industry.

The scholarship programme will combine academic learning and an industry placement with leading Irish and international food and drink organisations. The academic component of the programme will focus on innovation strategy, design thinking, consumer insights, global brand strategy and consumer research.

"Notwithstanding record-breaking exports of €13bn in 2019, the continued growth of the sector hinges on our ability to effectively identify and deploy insight-led strategies in the promotion of Irish food, drink and horticulture," Bord Bia's organisation

and industry talent director Michael Murphy said. "The MSc in insights and innovation complements our existing suite of programmes which focus on marketing, sustainability and international business and will enable us to expand the industry's strategic capabilities as we work towards our growth targets."

The programme is currently seeking applications from individuals with a passion for innovation and an ambition to develop a career within the Irish food, drink and horticulture industry. Supported by Bord Bia and industry, successful participants will receive a full scholarship and a tax-free bursary of €20,000 per annum.

Individuals interested in applying can find more information at business.dcu.ie/bordbia. The closing date for applications is 15 May 2020 and programmes will start in September 2020. **CL**

– Odile Evans

Stobart Air recruiting for pilot training programme

Are you looking for a career in the skies? Then Stobart Air might have the job for you, **Odile Evans** writes

Stobart Air is recruiting for its 2020 captain training programme. It is seeking first officers (FOs) who will go on to be trained as captains, in order to meet the growing demand for pilots on the Stobart Air network.

The captain training programme consists of four phases including guided self-study, facilitated ground school, online flight assessments and training in an ATR flight simulator. First officers can expect to fly approximately 2,000 flight hours and transition towards command in the programme, the final exam to graduate as captain.

"As a hub for domestic and international travel, airports in Ireland are servicing many of the world's largest airlines, operating the most popular routes across Ireland, the UK and globally. This creates a demand for skilled pilots and it's imperative that we have a network of trained professionals to support this demand and take up the jobs that will be created in Ireland's aviation industry," said director of flight operations at Stobart Air Donal Young.



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ground staff, engineering and operations personnel and guests.

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The airline operates under the Aer Lingus regional brand as part of a franchise agreement with Ireland's national carrier, Aer Lingus and operates Flybe routes from London Southend, the Isle of Man, Belfast and Edinburgh. **CL**

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UCD bring home the bacon in agri food debate

The fifth annual Great Agri-food Debate took place in Queen's University Belfast, marking the first time the event has been held in Northern Ireland. Peter McCann reports

pmccann@farmersjournal.ie

University College Dublin (UCD) were the overall winners of the Great Agri-Food Debate in Belfast last week.

The two-day event was held at Queen's University Belfast and the final debate of this year's competition was between UCD and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT).

The motion for the last round was "Global free trade, not subsidies, will deliver a sustainable future for European agriculture".

The UCD team, captained by Una Sinnott,

opposed the motion and based their argument on the merits of financially supporting farmers to produce food in an environmentally sustainable way.

Sinnott also argued that subsidies are critical for maintaining the family farm model of European and Irish agriculture, which underpins rural society.

"Global free trade is the worst thing that can happen to your hometown, the worst thing that can happen to our animal welfare standards, the worst thing that can happen to our environmental standards and



Back row, L-R: Owen Cashman, Simon Lanigan, Una Sinnott, Nina Prichard (McDonald's), Niall Browne (Dawn Meats), Tommy Meade. Front row, L-R: Roisin Scully, Ciara Byers, Stephen Claxton, Dathal Kent.

biodiversity," she said.

The UCD team acknowledged that farm support schemes have had design flaws in the past, and continue to have problems at present, but they argued that this was not a reason for scrapping subsidies altogether.

COUNTER ARGUMENT

The WIT team were the proposers of the motion. Their captain Danielle Mulligan led a strong team, with a well-presented argument.

"If you need a subsidy to make something sustainable, it certainly isn't sus-

tainable," Mulligan said.

Their main argument was that subsidies prop up "failed businesses" and restrict access to land for more economically efficient farmers.

They pointed to New Zealand, where farm subsidies were removed in the 1980s, and its farmers are now seen as the most market-focused in the world. UCD countered the New Zealand argument by pointing to environmental pressures that are now coming on its dairy industry, as well as the impact on farm incomes when international markets fail.

The UCD team also made clear that they were not against free trade agreements, but rather they opposed liberal trade where there is no protection and income support for European farmers.

QUICK THINKING

Throughout the debate, speakers had to contend with interventions and points of correction from their opponents.

One example was when WIT interjected during UCD student Simon Lani-

The teams

UCD: Una Sinnott (capt), Owen Cashman, Tommy Meade, Simon Lanigan, Stephen Claxton, Ciara Byers.
WIT: Danielle Mulligan (capt), Adam Farrelly, Nicole Keohane-McCarthy, Roisin O'Donnell, Ronan O'Keefe, Martin Beausang.

gan's speech to argue that his example of the environmental schemes GLAS was not a subsidy, but rather a grant.

Lanigan was undeterred and calmly continued making the case for using farm payments to uphold environmental standards.

In her concluding remarks, UCD team captain Una Sinnott impressively revisited the point.

"Global free trade implies that no benefit is given to the domestic producer of a good. A grant is a benefit to a domestic producer; therefore, a grant could not exist in a world of global free trade," she said.

The competition is in its fifth year and is a joint initiative between Dawn Meats and McDonald's. The stance taken by the teams are the positions they have been assigned by random draw and do not necessarily reflect their point of view.

The judging panel consisted of Nina Prichard from McDonald's; German ambassador to Ireland HE Mrs Deike Potzel; Food Safety Authority of Ireland CEO Pamela Byrne; Dawn Meats and Dunbia CEO Niall Browne. The final was chaired by Bord Bia CEO Tara McCarthy.

Martin Beausang from Waterford IT was awarded the best speaker prize. **CL**

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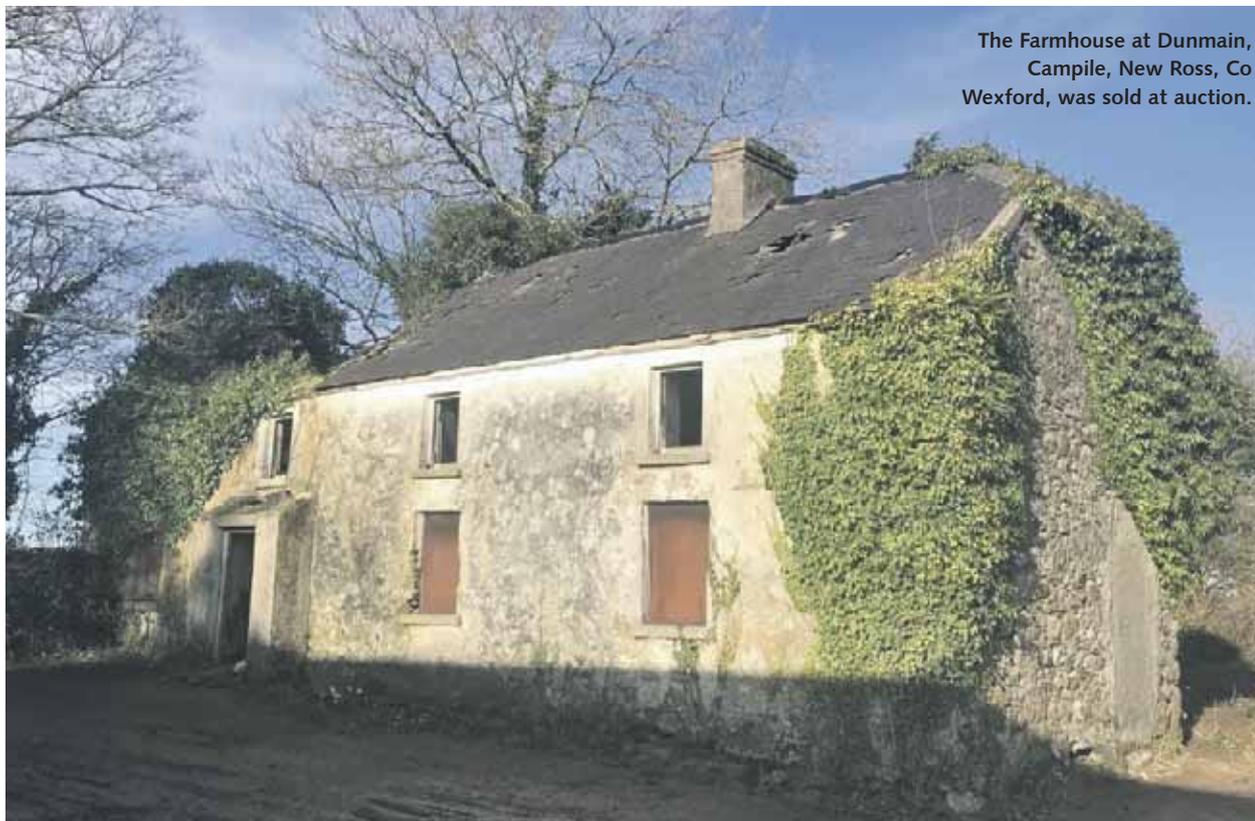
Closing Date Monday 9th March

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PROPERTY

PROPERTY NEWS | RESULTS | AUCTIONS | SALES | LAND

Odile Evans oevans@farmersjournal.ie



The Farmhouse at Dunmain, Campile, New Ross, Co Wexford, was sold at auction.

Wexford auctions continue to exceed guide prices

Quinn Property held two auctions of land in Wexford at the end of February, both selling in excess of their guide prices. **Odile Evans** writes

Wexford had a busy year for land auctions in 2019 and the trend is continuing so far this year. Two auctions of land last week achieved in excess of €11,000/ac.

THE BALLAGH

The first was a 23.7ac parcel of land that was sold at auction on Wednesday 26 February for more than the guide price. The lands at Ballyknocken, The Ballagh, Co Wexford were guided at €10,000/ac and sold for €12,658/ac. The property is located along the R741 Wexford to Gorey road, 2km from The Ballagh Village.

Some 30 people attended the auction. Bidding opened at €200,000 and quickly reached €275,000 with the help of three bidders. The property was then placed on the market. Upon reaching €300,000 there were no further bids and the hammer fell.

Auctioneer David Quinn said that the purchaser is a local farmer who was seeking to expand his operations.



The land at Ballyknocken, The Ballagh, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford.

DUNMAIN

The second property was a 63ac farm at Dunmain, near Campile in Wexford that was sold at auction on 28 February. Guided at over €630,000, it was offered in two lots and included a derelict farmhouse and outbuildings. It sold at auction for €700,000. The holding has extensive frontage onto a local road and is laid out in three divisions, all of which are in tillage.

Some 40 to 50 people were in attendance at the auction. Bidding on the first lot, some 17ac including the farmhouse, opened at €150,000. Two bidders brought it to €210,000.

Meanwhile lot two, some 46ac, opened at €300,000 and two bidders brought it to €340,000.

Lot three, the entire, opened at €600,000. On the first round it was bid to €640,000 before consultation with the vendor. A new bidder came into

the fray and the three bidders then brought it to €695,000. After further consultations with the vendor it was declared on the market and there was one further bid before the hammer fell at €700,000 (€11,111/ac). The buyer is understood to be a New Ross-based businessman.

COMMENT

"Both prices would be strong but fair. The Ballagh made a little bit more per acre but it was a smaller portion of land so it would have better affordability," said auctioneer David Quinn. "The market is remaining strong in Wexford. We had two to three serious cash customers at both auctions so demand is there. It has been a bright start to the year with the first few auctions. The Wexford land market was above average last year and is maintaining that trend so far this year." **CL**

Waterford farm to go under the hammer

Harty Auctioneers is holding an auction on 2 April of almost 70 acres of land, **Odile Evans** reports

A farm of 68.5ac will go up for auction on 2 April in Waterford. Two separate properties, from the same estate will be sold at the auction in The Park Hotel, Dungarvan, Co Waterford starting at 2.30pm.

The first part is a 54ac property at Kilminion, Stradbally. This land has been rented as tillage ground for a number of years. However, it is now in permanent pasture. The property is in one block and is just off the coast road. It is laid out in five divisions.



The 14.5ac has road frontage along the N25 and is in two fields in permanent pasture. Five acres of this lot are zoned for residential development



There is some road frontage on the coast road but most of it is on a secondary road. The guide price for the land is €540,000 to €594,000 or €10,000/ac to €11,000/ac.

The second lot is approximately three miles away. It encompasses 14.5ac in Leamybrien which is a well-known little village on the road between Waterford and Cork. The land is on the left hand side of the road if you are heading towards Dungarvan. The 14.5ac has road frontage along the N25 and is in two fields in permanent pasture. Some five acres of this lot are zoned for residential development. This property is guided at €181,250 to €217,500 or €12,000/ac to €15,000/ac.

The agent for the sale is Harty & Co. Auctioneers, Valuers and Estate Agents, Dungarvan. **CL**



Fifty-four acres at Kilminion, Stradbally, Co Waterford, is being sold by Harty Auctioneers.



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P: 058 44 200 M: 087 257 1737
W: gleesonproperty.com Licence: 003462

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2nd April, 2020 at The Park Hotel, Dungarvan



- Prime roadside lands, situated just off Coast Road
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- Suitable for all agricultural purposes.
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Sol: J.P. Gordon, J.P. Gordon & Co., Solicitors, Dungarvan having Carriage of Sale.

Dungarvan, Co. Waterford Tel: 058 41377
E-Mail: info@hartyauctioneers.com



LIC NO: 001888



OLIVIA NEEDHAM B.Sc Val Surv SCSi

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Residential farm at Barnaderg, Drummin, Westport Co Mayo F28 XR83
I am delighted to offer this immaculate hill farm in one accessible block of land.



The property is being sold in one lot;

- Three bedroom detached bungalow turn key condition.
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- Price guide €695,000

Full particulars from sole selling agent Olivia Needham MSCSI, MRICS

Auctioneer & Valuer Castlebar Street, Westport, Co Mayo
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Coonan
PROPERTY

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Solicitor: Mr. Dermot P. Coyne of Dermot P. Coyne Solicitors,
1 Main Street, Lucan, (01) 628 1000

Public Auction on Thursday the 26th of March at 3pm in the Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth, Co. Kildare (unless previously sold).

Viewing: By appointment

Maynooth T: 01 6286128. Celbridge T: 01 6288400. Naas T: 045 832020.

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PSRA Number: 003764



Auctioneer | Estate Agent | Valuer

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Dernadarriff and Cornaheive
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Lot 1 is c.20 acre of bare agricultural land with a derelict dwelling. Excellent road frontage, electricity and water adjacent.

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Co. Meath KILLYON, HILL OF DOWN



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KILLYON, HILL OF DOWN, CO. MEATH 109 ACRES

Prime non-residential farm of superb quality and all in grass. The lands are laid out in three fields and are watered by the River Deel. Located off the R161 & L4016 Ballivor Rd, 5Km Ballivor, 11Km Kinnegad and 15Km Trim. Inspection and further details from Aidan Heffernan 086 2551396/Niall Mulligan 086 8208501.
Solicitors: Regan McEntee & Partners, Trim 046 9431202

PSRA No. 001508



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- 10 Bay Slatted Shed including slat mats with 9 creep areas to rear of pens.
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Please contact the Sole Selling Agent for more details.

Solicitor with carriage of sale: Ms Veronica Goldrick at P O Connors Solicitors, Swinford, Co Mayo.



LIC NO: 2563

PROPERTY

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One storey cottage, large range of farm buildings
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JOINT AGENTS
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John Flynn Auctioneers Charleville 063-81871 087-2547721

Irish Land Sales
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Tel: 061-513750 | 086-8574718

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FOR SALE BY PUBLIC AUCTION

Prime parcel of farmland c. 50 acres with derelict farmhouse at
Coolcappagh, Ardagh, Co Limerick
Entitlements €5,567
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Dunraven Arms Hotel, Adare, Co Limerick

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MEN'S SHEDS WEEKLY NEWS

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From London to Ballaghaderreen

Cyclists getting ready on day one of the Frank Kelly Cycle.

Following the passing of their local postman from Motor Neurone Disease, one Ballaghaderreen shedder made it his mission to raise awareness and funds for the disease, with a little help from fellow shed members

For Pat Towey, cycling long distances has been somewhat second nature to him. In 2009, he cycled from Birmingham to Killybegs. At the same time he was receiving cancer treatment, but he powered ahead with the help and approval of his doctors. The cycle, the Ballaghaderreen shedder says, was done in aid of the Irish Homeless in London.

In September 2019, Pat and other members from his shed took on another challenging cycle – this time from London to Ballaghaderreen, in aid of Motor Neurone Disease (MND). The reason for taking on such a mammoth task was to remember the local Ballaghaderreen postman, Frank Kelly, who died of MND.

A group of 13 people – including some of the Ballaghaderreen shedders – set themselves the goal of raising £30,000. But news soon spread about the “Frank Kelly Cycle” and the group of 13 grew to 30.

Starting outside the Claddagh Ring Pub in London, the team set off on a 600km cycle over five days. Beginning their cycle with a 100km trip from

“We came across a serious flood at one point, and needed to be lifted with a JCB front-end loader because there was no way of getting through the floods



The Frank Kelly Cyclists being put through their paces.

London to Banbury in brutal weather conditions, Pat says it was past Banbury through Shifnal in Shropshire where the group ran into some trouble.

“The weather at the time was atrocious. We came across a serious flood at one point, and needed to be lifted with a JCB front-end loader because there was no way of getting through the floods.” That was only the team’s first day.

On the second day of the cycle, a 4,500ft climb in Wolverhampton stood between the group and their goal, and once again against terrible weather conditions the cycle continued, a testament to their commitment. As soon as the cycle moved to Liverpool, they were met with cool, crisp air. A much-welcomed change in weather.

The group then made their way across the Irish Sea, where they received a wonderful reception on Irish shores in Croke Park, and then made their way down through the Irish countryside to Tyrellspass. At last, the finish line was in touch as the men cycled through Shannon to Ballaghaderreen.

At the end of the cycle, the group had raised a massive £250,000, the aches and pains after 10 hours in the saddle was worth it, says Pat.

That was not the end of the journey however, with the cycle gaining recognition at the recent Western People Sports Awards. The Frank Kelly Cycle received the recognition it truly deserves, being awarded the Community Award accolade, which now serves as a reminder of what true community spirit looks like. **CL**

SHED OF THE WEEK

VALE OF AVOCA MEN'S SHED



Vale of Avoca Men's Shed came to fruition three years ago when some community members felt that there was a need to cater for retired people and to give them an outlet, explains shed chair Victor O'Shaughnessy.

The shed is situated at the back of the old community hall.

“We are lucky to have use of the premises for free,” says Victor. “We have somewhere for people to do something.” Now the shed has a healthy 17 members. The members have a range of useful skills and there is a good catchment area.

The shed is based on “the principles of old Ireland”, like when you called to a house, sat down, had a cup of tea and a good chat. Values are also very important to the shed, including the importance of honesty, openness, accountability, transparency, equality and inclusion.

“It's important for us to be there for each other,” Victor explains. He said that although the shed has a “great future”, he wishes more people were interested in getting involved.

He looks forward to meeting up every week and enjoys the craic and banter but insists “we do a good bit of work as well”. Shed members have great pride in themselves and “nothing will be done that's not done right”. The members have a great passion and they embrace everything wholeheartedly.

The members have done a number of courses from cooking and first aid, to manual handling and wood turning. Victor shares that these give great satisfaction, which is partly down to the fantastic tutors they had with brilliant knowledge.

The shed members like nothing more than sitting down by the fire and having a chat and a cup of tea – notice a trend here?

The shed meets twice a week, on Tuesday and Thursday from 10am to 1pm and are always open to new members. For more information contact Victor on 087-944 8821.



The purple plum is one of the first trees to react to the wake-up call of spring, and one of the most pretty, writes
Gerry Daly

gerrydaly@theirishgarden.ie

As soon as the first few warm days arrive in late January or early February, this tree opens its flower buds and over a period of about three weeks puts on a most wonderfully uplifting show of flowers. It flowers a little earlier in the milder coastal areas and about a week or two later inland. The tree, once it is mature, literally covers itself with flowers.

The flowers are smallish as cherries go, but they are of a very pretty flat cup shape with the petals nicely separated. In full sunshine, the flowers open out fully and close a little if it is cold but not completely. The flowers are carried on bare branches – fine dark-coloured twigs that set off the pale colours of the flowers to perfection. The twiggy nature of the tree accounts for the good cover of flowers all over the tree, each flimsy twig carrying a spray of flowers.

The purple plum is often thought of as being a cherry tree. Cherries and plums are related, of course, and although the purple plum is closer to the plum tribe than to the cherries, in flower it looks much like a cherry. Its other common name is cherry plum and its Latin name is *Prunus cerasifera*. The first part of the name is the general name for all cherries and plums but the last part means ‘cherry-maker’ because of the small sized plum-like but cherry-sized fruits it makes.

The most commonly grown forms are the purple-leaved varieties, which is the reason for the most usual common name of ‘purple plum’. The more accurate common name would be purple-leaved cherry plum. There are several varieties with purple leaves, some darker than others. The most common is *Prunus cerasifera* ‘Pissardii’, which has purple leaves and pale pink flowers. Darker in leaf colour and



Pretty purple plum

flower colour is the lovely ‘Nigra’.

There is also the ordinary green-type species which has green leaves and white flowers. Although it is a good tree and very suitable for gardens because of its relatively small size, it has a rather unfortunate resemblance to the wild blackthorn and it is not considered anything special as a result. Indeed, many plants of the green form survive in gardens only because the grafted purple top died and the green rootstock took over. Sometimes trees with both pink and white flowers can be seen for this reason.

Purple plum is an excellent tree for gardens because of its relatively small size – making about eight metres tall.

It is easily fitted into most available spaces and can be used to make a good backdrop. It looks natural and retains much of its “wild” character, even the purple forms. However, in a rural area the purple forms would look too artificial if it is seen from the public roadway. The green form would be ideal however, precisely because of its resemblance with the wild blackthorn, although the latter is much smaller with smaller flowers.

There is no reason not to use the purple forms on the inside of a country garden where its purple-red colour can be used as a backdrop for strong reds, yellows and oranges in summer. The appearance of the purple form



It is easily fitted into most available spaces and can be used to make a good backdrop



Pruning hydrangeas

Many gardens have hydrangeas and the bushes usually grow too large. There are two ways to go about pruning hydrangeas and both work well. The easiest way is to simply allow the bushes to grow too large and then cut them right back to ground level every eight or ten years, when they have grown wide and floppy.

Or by pruning each year, the size of the bush can be kept under control and the flowers can be had each year. One system might suit one kind of garden or one part of the garden, such as a garden with semi-wild areas but would not suit bushes that are mixed into borders and expected to give some colour in late summer.

By thinning out the number of shoots each spring, taking out about one in five or six, right back to ground level or near it, the plant is kept young and small. The long shoots can be shortened but most shoots are cut back only to a pair of fat buds not far from the top of the shoot. Pruning should be done now.

is quite like that of copper beech and it can be used as a good substitute where the beech itself would be too large. In fact, people often mistake this tree for copper beech.

The cherry plum will grow in any soil, except very wet ground. It manages to thrive in heavy ground and light ground alike and does not need very fertile ground. In fact, overly rich soil tends to make the tree grow too rapidly and not flower as well as it might. It is totally hardy and can be planted even in cold districts. A problem that frequently arises with purple plum is attacks by bullfinches and if they attack, the damage can be to have all of the flowerbuds stripped out. **CL**

>> This week

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

Buds are already starting to swell on fruit trees and bushes, so they should be planted within the next few weeks. Prune apple and pear trees and blackcurrant bushes. Plant garlic and shallot sets, if the ground is dry enough to cultivate. Sow seeds of early varieties of cabbage, cauliflower, carrots, lettuce and onions in a tunnel or glasshouse to get a start on the season.

LAWNS

Early mowing is a great start to a lawn, but not if the ground is still sodden after the wet time. One cut now and another in three or four weeks will leave the lawn area looking neat and tidy before growth starts. Apply lawn mosskiller if there is heavy moss growth which is widespread after a very wet winter and early spring. Sweep paved areas to clean them up.

TREES, SHRUBS AND ROSES

Bush roses are already showing good growth and repeat-flowering climbers, should be pruned in the next two weeks, if not already done. Rose bushes can be planted at any time. Most roses sold now have been potted up – they cost a bit more but get off to a better start. Trees can be planted in good weather in the next few weeks.

GREENHOUSE AND INDOOR PLANTS

Greenhouse peach trees should have the first flowers gently pollinated with a small soft paintbrush or by vigorously tapping on the support wires. A nice sunny day is best. It is not necessary to get every flower pollinated, about 5% will give a good crop. Sow seeds of tomatoes for greenhouse growing, also peppers and chillies.

FLOWERS

Perennial flowers are showing good growth in many cases and lifting and dividing of herbaceous flowers can resume. This is the best time to move perennial flowers in gardens. Begonia and gloxinia tubers can be started in a greenhouse, or on a windowsill indoors. Seeds of geraniums, lobelia, busy lizzie and bedding begonias can be sown in a heated propagator.

'Crackpot' congress rule changes



Denis Hurley looks at the rule changes ratified at the GAA's annual congress and the foolishness of how these rules will be introduced

In my opinion, Parks & Recreation remains one of the best sitcoms of recent times.

Set in the fictional town of Pawnee, Indiana, the show centred around a local government department, where the idealistic deputy director Leslie Knope (Amy Poehler) clashed with the intransigent director Ron Swanson (Nick Offerman), who was a libertarian and was subtly trying to bring an end to all organised government.

More than once, Leslie called a town meeting to allow people to give their views on a particular issue only for the picture to be less clearer after the meeting was over. Ron concisely dismissed such gatherings as 'crackpot conventions'.

Now, we would never be so cruel as to dismiss the GAA's annual congress in such terms. However, a part of me can't help but think that the old saying about the problem with democracy meaning everyone gets a vote is never truer than when dealing with the association.

Years either ending a decade or in the middle of one mean a busier Congress, as motions can be brought forward relating to playing rules by the GAA public. Outside of these intervals, only Central Council can make rule-changes. Theoretically, you can bring an idea to your club, who then bring it to county convention and, if it passes there, it goes to the floor at Congress on a year such as this.

The first motion passed on Friday night at Croke Park was to allow the sideline official (fourth official, or eighth official if umpires are counted first) to point out instances of foul play to the referee and its logic was underlined by the huge margin with which it passed.

Raheens from Kildare brought a motion, proposing to prohibit a player who has received a kickout from playing it immediately back to the goalkeeper. We'll be honest, it wasn't something we had considered to be a huge problem,



Larry McCarthy, president elect of the GAA. The Corkman represents the New York county board and is the first person based outside the country to be elected as president. \ Philip Fitzpatrick/Sportsfile

especially since kickouts were moved to the 20m line at the start of the year, but obviously it was a motion brought in good faith.

IMPLEMENTATION

A majority of the delegates felt the same, as it was passed by 62 percent to 38. All well and good, but a change like that is something we would suggest would come in on January 1, 2021. However, the way things go in the GAA is that when a rule-change is passed, it comes into force a month later.

One exception may be that the league finals would be played

under 'old' rules, but the championship will operate differently. In fact, you could play a club game in the last week of March and merrily pass each kickout back to the keeper, but then find yourself penalised for the same a week later.

The motion also only specifies that kick-outs taken by keepers can't be returned – so theoretically a full-back or corner-back could take the kick-out to the goalkeeper and then receive the return pass.

Ultimately, it's something that should have been trialled rather

than being debated by a group of people who probably won't be directly affected.

The perennial chestnut about sideline cuts being worth two points in hurling, and that of a black card for the small-ball code, were heavily defeated. Credit must be given, though, for the decision to remove the 'Croke Park round' from the All-Ireland football Super 8, with proper neutral venues to be chosen going forward. A near-empty big stadium is a big atmosphere-killer, whereas a packed provincial ground can create a real electricity.

Six Nations in a state of flux

This sidebar was intended to be a look ahead to Ireland's Six Nations Championship clash with Italy next weekend, but obviously concerns around the coronavirus have put paid to that.

Naturally, there will be those who decry such a decision as being overly protective, but it's the kind of thing where the people making the call can't win. If the game did go ahead and something negative resulted, the bellyaching would be just as loud. Nineteen years ago, foot-and-mouth disease didn't take hold here because people were sensible about keeping it at bay. The Cheltenham Festival had to go by the wayside, but sometimes big sacrifices are needed.

From a pragmatic point of view, the postponement is probably something that will work to the advantage of Andy Farrell and the Ireland team, who certainly have a lot to work on before the trip to Paris to face grand slam chasing France.

The French take on Scotland next Sunday and so it will be a quick turnaround for them ahead of what could be the grand slam clincher – a first since 2010 if it were to materialise – but Ireland will be well rested and keen to respond after such a poor showing at Twickenham.

A prohibition on metal bands on hurleys up to and including U12 is sensible, while the failure of the proposal to return minor to under 18 was never likely to pass – the toothpaste is out of the tube and isn't going back in.

It is a long two days for delegates, who, to be fair, don't always get the credit they deserve for volunteering their time, and by the end they must be drained. Thirteen of the last 20 motions were either withdrawn, superseded by an earlier decision or referred on to some other committee. If we were cynical, we'd suggest that a controversial motion might have a better chance of passing if it were well down the list – inconsequential stuff is heartily debated at 11am, but at 3.30pm everyone just wants to go home.

The best of luck to Larry McCarthy, who will take over as president at next year's Congress – representing New York, the Cork native is the first person based outside the country to be elected as president, but, unsurprisingly, he will be resident in Ireland for his term. **CL**

THE IRISH HORSE

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COMMENT

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Honouring our stars

Having down the years attended some 40 *The Irish Field* awards functions I have to say that last week's gala event at the K Club was the best yet. The quality of recipients surpassed anything I had previously experienced.

As one award winner after another came forward it was noted that at the very highest level of international competition they had excelled to a degree that required not only exceptional natural skill but also a great deal of commitment. Olympic qualifications, European Championships, top 10 world rankings were all mentioned as achievements across show jumping, dressage and eventing.

SHOW JUMPING STARS

It was Eddie Macken who first took the senior show jumping trophy back in 1974. A very worthy successor this time round was Offaly's Darragh Kenny who possesses the same kind of pure natural talent and cool determination that Eddie had.

His stellar performances in top flight five star events have now boosted him into the elite ranks of the world top 10. Individual European Pony Champion Max Wachman took the junior show jumping trophy.

DRESSAGE INSPIRATION

Proving once again that Irish riders are becoming an ever growing force in the ranks of international dressage, Kildare's Judy Reynolds has battled her way to within just 50 points of a place in the world's top 10.

As a team rider her scintillating test at the European Championships at Rotterdam on Vancouver K helped the Irish squad attain Ireland's first ever Olympic dressage team qualification. Judy fully deserved this, her seventh win.

EVENTING PROWESS

Carrying hopes of Ireland's first Olympic eventing medal, Galway's Cathal Daniels again starred in 2019 with the Irish bred mare Rioghan Rua. He took individual silver at the European Championships in Germany and is now ranked 11th in the world.

The Fagan family of Mullingar Equestrian Centre were out in force to see young Chloe take the Junior eventing Trophy. There could be no stronger argument for support of the Irish Sport Horse sector than these superb award winners.

MARGIE'S MAGIC

A stalwart in Irish horse sport reporting, Margie McLoone was honoured at last week's awards for her lifelong contribution to equestrianism. Down the years, accompanied by her sister Anne she could be seen at ringside or in the press rooms of just about every phase of the sport. Be it point-to-point, eventing, showing, hunter trials or show jumping, Margie would be there quietly gathering the facts and results. But Margie not only reported on the horses and their riders. She has had a deep and abiding interest in their welfare as well – horses are her friends and her recording of their achievements is always clothed in a beautiful love of them and a respect for those that care for them.



'When I looked back and saw my mark I just couldn't stop the tears, I just couldn't believe it!' – Kate Dwyer after her win with Snowdon Faberge in the CDI5* Grand Prix Special at CHI AL Shaqab in Doha, Qatar. \ Stefano Grasso

Dwyer makes dressage history in Doha

Meath-based dressage rider Kate Dwyer made history last Saturday at Doha in Qatar, by becoming the first Irish rider to win a Grand Prix Special at five-star level.

Last to go in the competition at the Al Shaqab arena, Dwyer and the 14-year-old gelding Snowdon Faberge, who Dwyer owns along with her mum Maureen, produced an outstanding performance to record a personal best score of 70.043% and take the winner's prize of almost €6,000.

A delighted Dwyer said: "I am so, so

pleased with Fabio [Snowdon Faberge] today. The feeling he gave me in the ring was amazing. The whole test felt much more confident and I really feel we showed a lovely harmony which is so important in dressage. I am delighted with his performance and I know this is only the tip of the iceberg of what he can give me." Dwyer and Snowdon Faberge had finished 10th in Friday's Grand Prix at the same venue, while Ireland's Dane Rawlins finished in 12th place.

Also on Saturday, Rawlins recorded

another excellent result when taking ninth place with Espoire in the Grand Prix Freestyle To Music. The pair came close to breaking their personal best performance when scoring 70.925%, with victory going to Sweden's Patrik Kittel and Delaunay Old on a score of 79.290%.

Kildare's Heike Holstein and the Irish-bred mare Sambuca added to a brilliant run of Irish results on the world stage by taking sixth place in Sunday's four-star Freestyle To Music Grand Prix at Lier in Belgium.

Prize fund Boost for Dublin Show Hunter classes

The show hunter classes at the Dublin Horse Show will see a 53% increase in prize funds across the three weight categories, bringing the total prize fund to an unprecedented €49,000. The show hunter classes, and the tradition and spectacle surrounding them, are an annual focus point of the show and the RDS is determined to maintain and develop this sector of equestrianism for future generations.

These ridden classes, which are open to Irish-bred horses only, offer breeders, producers and riders a unique platform to produce, showcase and market their quality horses. The weight classes should be of particular interest to young horse producers, who can utilize them as a training and production medium, without putting undue performance pressure on their horses in their formative years. The increase in prize fund will extend across the age groups and the classes are open to riders of all disciplines, not just show horse producers.

Ireland second in Florida Nations Cup

The Irish show jumping team of Darragh Kenny, Paul O'Shea, David Blake and Billy Twomey took the runner-up spot in the \$150,000 four-star Nations Cup at the Winter Equestrian Festival in Wellington, Florida for the third year in-a-row.

America took victory on just four faults ahead of Ireland in second on 13, while Australia took third place on 22 faults.

Ireland's focus now turns to their first points-scoring outing in Europe's Division I of the Longines FEI Nations Cup series which come at La Baule in France on 15 May.

That will be quickly followed by Ireland's second opportunity to collect points the following weekend at St Gallen in Switzerland, before the third round of action at Rotterdam in The Netherlands in June.

Each team has four point-scoring opportunities, with Ireland's last chance to gain points coming on home soil in the Aga Khan at the Dublin Horse Show.

Demise of the country stallion keeper

Raheenmore Stud's Richard Woodroffe talks about his time standing stallions and pivoting to an alternative business

I'd decided when Orbis and Colourfield were gone that was the end of standing stallions at Raheenmore Stud. The whole stallion business was moving in a different direction and it was a stroke of luck that I kept stallions for as long as I could.

My love was more for machinery than horses, which is why I'm driving round the field at the moment in a tractor with a hedge-cutter!

I spent 43 years looking after mares and foals. You started out moving mares before you went to school every morning they had to be looked after. Back then, some mares got very little handling. They were often only caught twice, first to bring them to the nominations and then to the stallion. We'd be out cornering them, running through the thistles in our shorts, it was like the Wild West, you'd want an army to catch them!

Yet, most people got the mare covered once and that was it, she went in foal. They knew their mares so well. The covering season ended by the middle of July. If you look at the stud cards, you'll see my grandfather, another Richard, stopped travelling his stallions throughout Wicklow by 12 July.

When I first started working with stallions, there was no such thing as prostaglandin [PG] injections or scanners. When we first brought stallions to Dublin, covering had finished. In later years,

you'd have people wondering if they could bring a mare into the RDS to be covered!

I started running the stud myself when my father Matthew, known as Willie, shoved the record books across the table around Christmas time in 1988.

He was more of a horseman. He'd look at a foal standing in a cattle pen in Baltinglass, Mountrath or Carnew sales and see the potential.

GRASSHOPPER

As three-year-olds, they were sent on the train to Harcourt Street and led up O'Connell Street to go to Betty Parker's yard in Baldoyle. They were hunted with the Fingal Harriers, jumped the following summer and usually sold at Dublin. They didn't all get sold, some would fail the vet or it was a bad year for sales but Betty would have good contacts, like Max Hauri in Switzerland.

Betty was a friend of my father going way back. She had Copper Coin, sold to Colonel Dudgeon in Burton Hall. His name was changed to Grasshopper, he was sold to America and was on three Olympic eventing teams and two Pan Am teams.

My father bred him, he was by a thoroughbred horse named Tutor, next door in Tom Sullivan's and out of a line of cobs Dad used for harness racing.

He had an attraction to driving because he lost a leg in a threshing mill accident when he was only 15 and that



Richard Woodroffe at the RDS. \ Susan Finnerty

became his sport. That bit of a sportsman came from his father, in spite of us all being members of the Church of Ireland, he was one of the founding members of Wicklow GAA!

My father always had a competitive streak and won the All Ireland at the 1952 Ploughing Championships in the early days of tractor ploughing.

He'd spend Sundays ringside, watching show classes, show jumping, you name it, at shows like Galloping Green and Laurel Lodge.

The first mare I remember was another one he'd bred and sold in Dublin,

through Jack White, to Italy as a broodmare. She was this really quiet chesnut Irish Draught. When you won the class in the main arena, you'd stand beside this red and white sign to identify the ones for sale. I remember the shock of realising Achill Belle wasn't coming home, she was like a pet.

CROKER CUP CHAMPIONS

Prince Riza was the first stallion here, then Hierapolis and New Account for one season before Dad got another offer he couldn't refuse for him to go to Libya.

Prince Riza was a Department of Agriculture

stallion and Dick Jennings (Department of Agriculture stallion and mare inspector) came here once a year, we'd fond memories of him. We never had any problem with Dick, he knew the horse was well looked after.

Blue Laser won the Croker Cup in 1978, it certainly was a big thing at the time. I showed him and my sister Alison showed Colourfield when he won in 1992.

Colourfield was one of the last stallions Bord na gCapall bought for leasing out to stallion owners – Euphemism [who went to Tim Carey] was in the same batch. Some people gave out about their

[Colourfield] progeny, that they were hardy but the event horse; they're not easy!

Another horse was Gypsy Duke, he came here too through Dermot Forde and went to Sam Burgess. We also had an unregistered Irish Draught, a bare 16 hands, by Lahinch out of a Laughton mare. He was a phenomenal hunter both here and cross-channel and a complete outcross so it was a terrible loss pedigree wise when his owner gelded him.

LAST STALLION

Betty and I went to look at Orbis. As he was already approved he wasn't eligible for a subsidy available to stallion owners at that time but I reckoned he was good value. The poor devil went down on the ice during the bad winter of 2010 and that was the end of stallions here.

My father definitely kept stallions for the love of it, whereas to me, I was doing the figures, counting my time and deciding if it was viable. I kept it going for a long number of years, partly out of stubbornness!

I wouldn't have it said 'the young fellow got rid of the stallions'.

'Colour' and Orbis were here to the end of their days and were well taken care of.

MOVING ON

I never claimed to be a horseman. For me, it was more the challenge of getting mares in foal, although a reputation for managing difficult mares could be a millstone around your neck too!

We tended to work the old-fashioned way with the teaser, I didn't believe in owners getting a bigger vets bill than the stud fee.

AI [artificial insemination] takes a lot of investment and Wicklow was never a good area for mares. The Irish Sea is to the east, Dublin to the north, Wexford people are always very loyal to their own stallions and west of the Wicklow mountains, it's far easier for mare owners to drive to Carlow and Kilkenny.

Haylage was the way forward. I'd started the haylage business while I still had stallions and

Act now to protect your horse against equine influenza

we'll have 200 acres this year. My father sold loose hay and it was a work of art to build loads on a flat backed trailer. Three of them would set off in a convoy to deliver to dairies in Rathfarnham that still used horses for delivery rounds.

The small square bale is a great alternative for the one or two horse owner.

Word has certainly gotten around and we have lots of happy regular customers.

There's a photo of my grandfather on the Raheenmore website, sitting on his steam engine, most things have moved on for the better but I have no regrets about no longer keeping stallions.

Richard Woodroffe was in conversation with Susan Finnerty

An outbreak of Equine influenza (EI) in early 2019 almost brought the Irish equine industry to a halt. A year on, it is a timely reminder to consider this virus, the effects it can have as well as the critical aspects surrounding control, in particular, the appropriate use of vaccination.

EI is a highly contagious virus and is rapidly transmitted from horse to horse and by indirect

contact, via feed buckets, tack and human clothes. EI can have serious implications for your horse's health, including a high temperature, nasal discharge and a harsh cough. Recovery can mean long periods of rest and secondary complications can be costly to treat. Vaccination is the best way to protect your horse and others around it from the negative effects of EI. Vac-

cination is an effective and safe means of protecting your horse, and, compared to treatment, is inexpensive.

Despite the benefits of vaccination, estimates suggest that only 41% of the total equine population in Ireland is vaccinated. Consequently, almost two thirds of horses are unprotected. This would have been a significant contributing factor in last

year's outbreak. Unvaccinated horses pose a serious risk to the vaccinated population as they become ill and spread the virus. This challenges the immunity in vaccinated horses putting it under added pressure.

Vaccination generally provides protection for up to 12 months after the initial course so regular vaccination is necessary to ensure your horse remains

protected. Boosters for EI should be given annually. Be aware that some national and international associations require vaccination every six months to participate in competitions. Check the rules locally and make sure you are up-to-date with your vaccinations. Vaccination boosters also offer the ideal opportunity for you to ask your vet to give your horse a general health check.

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HORSE SPORT IRELAND

NOTES

- Horse Sport Ireland will be holding Irish Sport Horse and Irish Draught Horse stallion selections at Cavan Equestrian Centre on the 10th and 11th March 2020. For all information visit <https://www.horsesportireland.ie/breeding/stallion-selections/>
- New FEI Online Entry System for Jumping. As a Jumping Athlete, manage your CSI Jumping invitations on the FEI Sport Manager App. Balmoral International Show, held between the 13th – 15th May 2020, will be the first Irish International Show Jumping Show that will use this system. For more information visit www.horsesportireland.ie/new-fei-entry-system-for-jumping-app
- Visit breeding.horsesportireland.ie for pedigree, progeny and performance information on horses in the Irish Horse Register.
- 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.

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DON'T PUSH YOUR LUCK

EQUINE FLU PROTECT AGAINST IT NOW

Equine influenza remains a serious risk. If you vaccinated your horse against flu during the outbreak last year, it's essential to maintain protection by having a booster vaccination this year. Vaccination is important not just for the health of your horse, but for the benefit of the equine population as a whole.

CONTACT YOUR VET NOW, DON'T PUSH YOUR LUCK

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LIVING LIFE



RESTORING OLD TRADITIONS

COUNTRY SOUND » 32

Edited by **Anne O'Donoghue** aodonoghue@farmersjournal.ie

MUSIC | THEATRE | BOOKS | MOVIES | TV | FOOD | TRAVEL | DANCING DIARY

The sound of the drum is often lost to the other instruments in a band but its importance should never be underestimated. Drums bring the beat and rhythm, but when the drummers are the whole band, you can't but gain a new appreciation for them.

The Hit Machine Drummers started off in September 2013, the same month troupe leader, Kevin Curran's daughter was born. But for the Canada-born, Drumcondra-based Irish dancer, this wasn't his first drum show.

"I had a show before. I just knew I needed to revolutionise the whole thing, to re-invent it. That's been a theme of ours; to keep coming up with new ideas, new costumes and to go bigger.

"I have been dancing in shows since the late 90s. I've done plenty of other jobs as well but show business has always been my draw."

For Kevin and the rest of the troupe, music is a full-time gig. Kevin is a dancer and musician as well as running the Hit Machine Drummers.

"We do an awful lot of shows as just The Hit Machine but we also have a brass band called Brass Monkeys and we're doing a new show called *Static LED* with LED suits and loads of lovely light trickery."

STYLE

The band would have a tribal feel to the music they play. They call their music style "Celtic drumming", but borrow elements from other drumming styles too.

"We'd be big fans of samba drumming from Brazil and Taiko drumming from Japan. West African percussion as well is absolutely phenomenal. That [West African percussion] has influenced more music than you would realise, because it's really the root of music."

The Hit Machine Drummers play all their own music, typically written by Kevin himself.

"When we have big events coming up, we all get together and might work on some new stuff or something specific to that event. When we're bringing in new pieces it would be important to get everyone together and get the piece locked down and drilled until it's second nature."

You will usually only see men dressed in kilts in great numbers when the Scottish are in town for the rugby, a stag party or if you get the opportunity to experience the Hit Machine Drummers live.

"We love the kilts, they look



The Hit Machine Drummers have played numerous venues across the globe, but their favourite by a long stretch has been Croke Park.

DRUM ROLL PLEASE

The Hit Machine Drummers create drama and excitement everywhere they go, and that is just with their clothing choices, writes **Gillian Richardson**

grichardson@farmersjournal.ie

great and they feel good. It's a powerful Celtic image.

"We actually started off with cloth vests but we upgraded them to leather. We wear them and the kilt pretty much all the time apart from at the Ireland matches, where we wear the green jersey. We don't dare pick sides in Croke Park."

MEMBERS

In the band, there are approximately 20 members. Kevin shares that the band have an open-door policy for those who have other projects going on.

"They'll go off and tour with a band or if they have a project they're working on and when they're unavailable, we've other guys that we would use.

"Everyone has their strengths that they bring to it. I drum and dance in it, there's a couple of the guys who can do the same. There's some who are just fantastic at leading and doing crowd interactions and we've other guys who are just amazing at throwing a head around and getting the drum in the air."

The Hit Machine Drummers have had a number of members throughout the years who have gone on to support acts that you may very well be familiar with.

"We've had some amazing drummers that have gone on to do amazing things, like Micheál Quinn is now Dermot Kennedy's drummer, there's Tom Coll, he's the drummer for Fontaines DC and also Diarmuid Brennan, he's the drummer with The Murder Capital."

VENUES

The Hit Machine Drummers have played in front of huge crowds at GAA and rugby matches, but what is the most amazing venue to play in? Without pausing to thinking about it, Kevin reveals his answer: "Croke Park by far, it's the best one. It was absolutely phenomenal being out on the pitch for the GAA finals. It's just an amazing experience. It's electric, you have almost 90,000 people around you screaming. There's no atmosphere like it in the world, that's definitely the best."

The drummers also play weddings if you're looking for something a bit different to the typical cover band.

"Weddings are lovely because everyone is there with their friends and family. It's a nice relaxed atmosphere, everyone's up for a party. It's really wonderful and we to be a part of that magic."

CL

Vicky Phelan will share her personal story of resilience and power with Maia Dunphy in Dun Laoghaire on 6 March. \ Philip Doyle



CHEER on the girls in green as the Republic of Ireland soccer team play Greece in the UEFA Women's European Qualifiers in Tallaght Stadium on 5 March. This will be the first senior international of the year. Vera Pauw and her team currently sit second in group one with a game in hand behind group leaders Germany. The team are hoping for a win on home soil in front of their fans. Adult tickets cost €10 each, while kids, students and OAP tickets cost €4 each and are available on Ticketmaster. For more information see www.fai.ie.

ENJOY the Finding a Voice four-day concert series based in Clonmel, Co Tipperary, from 5 to 8 March. This series focuses exclusively on music by women composers through the ages. The concerts will be broad-ranging in terms of the music being performed and the goal is to give the audiences the opportunity to enjoy and experience a wide variety of styles, eras and sounds over the course of the series. Performers will include the RTÉ ConTempo Quartet, the Irish Baroque Orchestra, Irish pianist Isabelle O'Connell and harpist Anne Marie O'Farrell. Tickets range from €5 to €18. For more information see www.findingavoice.ie.

ATTEND the Roscommon Drama Festival from 6 to 14 March as it attracts the best amateur drama groups to Roscommon town. The festival has been running for 14 years and is affiliated to the Amateur Drama Council of Ireland. This year, it will bring

THIS WEEK'S TOP 5

together nine groups form the island of Ireland to compete for the coveted title of All-Ireland Drama Champions. The Roscommon Drama Festival is one of 36 festivals in Ireland which are regarded as the preliminary festivals leading to the All-Ireland finals. For more information see www.roscommondramafestival.com.

APPRECIATE Vicky Phelan's personal story as she sits down in conversation with writer and broadcaster Maia Dunphy in the DLR LexIcon Library, Dun Laoghaire, at 8.30pm on 6 March. Few don't know Vicky's public story, where she went public on her court action against the HSE in 2018, breaking the cervical cancer scandal. At 6.30pm on the same day and venue, Darina Allen will be in conversation with foodie, writer and podcaster Sarah Maria Griffin as they discuss Darina's long career. Tickets for both events costs €20 but individual tickets are available. For tickets and more information see www.mountaintosea.ie.

CHALLENGE yourself to some mountain running in the Maamturk Mountains, Connemara, Co Galway, on 7 March. The Gaelforce Sky Run is a mountain running event which has three distances to suit different levels of mountain running fitness and experience. The event is now in its sixth year and offers a 13km or 22km race on the open mountain. For those of you who may be starting out in the sport there is a 12km trail/mountain race to test you. For booking and more information see www.gaelforceevents.com.

GOING OUT GUIDE

THEATRE

THE HURLER

5-7 March: *The Hurler* is being performed in the Garter Lane Arts Centre in Waterford city. This one-man show is based on the award-winning web series *The Hurler* and sees Gar Champion in person for the very first time in the world premiere of the show. Gar is disgraced after becoming the first hurler to be banned from the game for failing a performance-enhancing drugs test. He takes a job coaching a new hurling team of misfits in Brooklyn to pay back a debt, where he also runs into an old friend. Tickets range from €12.50 to €15. For tickets and more information see www.garterlane.ie.

MANY YOUNG MEN OF TWENTY

5-7 March: The Virginians will perform John B Keane's *Many Young Men of Twenty* in the Ramor Theatre, Cavan. John B deals with the mass exodus of young men and women from Ireland to England, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. These young people experienced a sadness as they left, leaving their parents behind. This play has some light-hearted moments too and includes songs that suggest happier times and people who knew how to laugh. Tickets range from €14 to €16. For tickets and more information see www.ramorthatre.com.

COMEDY

DES BISHOP – MIA MAMMA

5-7 March: Des Bishop returns for a hometown show to the Everyman Theatre, Cork with a show inspired by the star of his life, his mother, who passed away in March 2019. The show is about motherhood and sacrifice, anxiety and grief, the mistakes you make in the mother-son relationship and the difficult road to forgiveness. Lastly, the show is about loss, grief and the disruption that comes with it. Des previously wrote a show about his father being sick in 2010. General admission tickets cost €27. For tickets and more information see www.everymancork.com.



Des Bishop

EXHIBITION

MICK O'DEA EXHIBITION

6 March until 18 April: Mick O'Dea was born in Ennis, Co Clare, in 1958 and studied art across the world. He then lectured at the National College of Art and Design (NCAD) in Dublin for 16 years and participated in a range of artists residencies. An exhibition of his work will be displayed in the Source Arts Centre, Thurles, Co Tipperary. The works range from 2010 to present and are a selection of painting on the War of Independence, including some large-scale newly created pieces and some which have not yet been exhibited. Mick worked with historic photographs to bring the characters to life on the canvas. Admission is free. For more information see www.thesourceartscentre.ie.

FILM

MILITARY WIVES

Out 6 March: This film was inspired by the wide-spread popularity of military wives choirs and stars Kristin Scott Thomas and Sharon Horgan. The story celebrates a group of misfit women who form a choir on a military base with their partners away serving in Afghanistan. The women will help each other overcome their fear for loved ones in combat. Bonds of friendship form as music transforms their lives and they find themselves at the centre of a media sensation and global movement. This film is rated 12A.

DANCING DIARY

CONNACHT

Galway: Ballinasloe, Shearwater Hotel, 15th March, (4.30-7.30pm), Michael Collins, (7.45-10) Andy Feery (10-12) Michael Collins
Mayo: Claremorris, McWilliam Park, 8th March, Johnny Mullen
Sligo: Enniscrone, Diamond Coast Hotel, 6th March, Gerry Guthrie & Jimmy Buckley, 7th March, Gerry Guthrie & Barry & Dominic Kirwan, 8th March, (afternoon) Gerry Guthrie & Sandy Kelly

LEINSTER

Kildare: Celbridge, Celbridge Manor Hotel, 13th March, Robert Mizzell & Liam Mannerling & Maria, 14th March, Limelite & Gerry Guthrie, 15th March (2pm) Philip English
Kilkenny: Slieverue, The Rhu Glenn, 7th March, Declan Nerney
Kilkenny: Pilltown, Pilltown GAA complex, 8th March, Mary Prendergast
Westmeath: Moate, The Well, 5th March, Checkers, 7th March, Paul Kelly, 8th March, Dermot McConnell

MUNSTER

Cork: Mallow, The Hazel Tree, 6th March, Declan Nerney
Cork: Glanmire, Vienna Woods, 11th March, Patrick O'Sullivan

Kerry: Castleisland, Riverisland Hotel, 20th March, Fundraiser for Air Ambulance with Mike Condon
Limerick: Kilmallock, Bulgaden Castle, 11th March, John Hogan
Limerick: Adare, Woodlands House Hotel, 8th March, Jimmy Buckley
Tipperary: Roscrea, Racket Hall, 7th March, John McNicholl

ULSTER

Cavan: Cavan, Hotel Kilmore, 7th March, Cliona Hagan
Derry: Coleraine, Bushtown House, 9th March, Eunice Moran
Donegal: Bundoran, Allingham Arms, 7th March, Patrick Feeney & Eamon Jackson
Down: Newry, Mourne Country, 7th March, Jimmy Buckley
Tyrone: Moy, The Ryandale, 7th March, Ciaran Rosney
Tyrone: Omagh, The Silverbirch, 6th March, Michael English



NEXT WEEK: IN IRISH COUNTRY LIVING

14 MARCH ISSUE

- Catherine Fulvio on family, imposter syndrome and her US TV show
- Riverdance: dancing around the world
- From R&B to country music with American star Darius Rucker
- Gut health from the Home Nurse

IRISH
COUNTRY
LIVING

Restoring old traditions to make new memories

Michael Commins catches up with Seán Keane on the restoration of Carragh Cottage and the sessions being held there nowadays

micommins@eircom.net

A restored thatched cottage in the Galway countryside is now the heartbeat of a proud tradition going back the decades.

The Carragh Cottage Sessions – which made their debut in recent months – are being pioneered by Seán Keane and the family circle from the legendary Keane family of Caherlistrane. The homely gatherings are attracting considerable interest and are probably the most intimate music sessions on the island of Ireland.

“We can take around 20 people and it is amazing how special the connection can be when you bring it all back to the real basics,” says Seán. “We have had around seven shows to

date and we start in the twilight hour. Matt and Orla and other members of the family join us on a regular basis too.

“We have food and refreshments in the parlour before we move out to the open fire in the kitchen. Mobile phones are all turned off and everything else is taken home in memory, just as it was in the time of Rita and Sarah.”

The names of Rita and Sarah always crop up in the musical legacy of the Keane family. “They were my two aunts and had a huge influence on us all. They were collectors of old songs and folklore as was my grandmother Mary who wrote down songs and verses and kept them faithfully down through the years.



Seán Keane and his niece Annmarie pictured at the fire-place in Carragh Cottage.

“I often heard them tell the stories about the Reaneys who used to travel down the west coast in the springtime of the year. There was Alice and her two brothers. They would camp in villages and farms along

the way and help out the local farmers with sowing the crops and all of that work.

“They often camped close to our place here in Carragh in Caherlistrane and they became good friends of Rita and Sarah. They brought with them songs and ballads from up the country, including some from Derry and Tyrone.

“They were gone when I was a child but my father used to tell me about them playing music and Alice singing songs in the house. They had a great fondness for songs with stories and feeling and about places and people. I would call them the Google of their day. They had such a repertoire and it was great that Sarah and Rita saved and rescued a good many

of their songs that would otherwise have been lost forever.”

Sarah died back in 2010, while Rita died 18 months earlier in 2009. “The cottage was uninhabited for around nine years and had fallen into disrepair. When you have a few tough winters and no fire to warm a place, nature begins to take its toll.

“My niece Annmarie, who had a special fondness for the old cottage, and her husband John Lardner decided to restore it. They did tremendous work and secured new thatch and really brought the entire place back to life. It now looks in pristine condition and everyone that comes here loves the place,” reflects Seán.

It is easy to see why Seán

and the Keane family are especially delighted with the success of the Carragh Cottage Sessions. These gatherings are a throwback to when music and life and work on the land were real and intertwined. The sessions also have shades of Patrick Kavanagh’s famous Monaghan poem, *Inniskeen Road: July Evening*.

“We have a group coming down from Laois this Saturday and our next session after that is on St Patrick’s Day. We even have a full group booked in from America in the weeks ahead.

“There have been lots of messages and cards from people saying how much they enjoyed the evening in the cottage, sitting around the fire, and without a care in the world. We open the door and things just fall into place. There is no rush and there is plenty of time. People are with us for around four hours and it’s grand.” **CL**

Further details on the Carragh Cottage Sessions are available on seankeane.com or on the phone, call John B Broderick on 087-650 3696. Seán Keane and his band are doing shows in the Gleneagle Hotel, Killarney, Co Kerry, on March 20 and the Tower Hotel, Waterford, on March 26. Seán is also performing a show with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra in the National Concert Hall on May 20.

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>> Grapevine

HEAD OVER HEELS FOR COLIN

Country singer Colin Kenny has just released his latest self-penned song, *Head Over Heels in Love*. Colin hails from Banagher and is sometimes referred to as The Singing Barber.

He is hoping that his latest cut in the recording stakes will be flavour of the month with country patrons.

Colin made his debut with *Don't Close Your Eyes* and followed this up with two of his own songs, including *I'm A Country Singer*. He is currently working on his debut album called *Long Road Back* which will feature all his own material.

LONDON BOUND

The Brose Walsh Band from Mayo is heading to England for St Patrick’s Day. The band that was founded by the late Brose Walsh back in 1937 holds the record as the longest-running band on the circuit, having performed regular shows every year since then.

Brose died in the mid-1990s and his three sons, James, Tomás and John Noel, continue the tradition. They are playing for the dance in the Conservative Club, Church Road, Hayes, London, on St Patrick’s Night 17 March.

DES SMYTH DIES IN DUBLIN

Des Smyth from Artane, Dublin, who fronted The Collegemen during the showband boom years of the 1960s, died in Dublin last week. He charted in 1965 with a country song, *The Pillow That Whispers*, and it became the number he was most associated with during his life.

Des was a regular on the legendary Maureen Potter Gaels of Laughter shows in The Gaiety Theatre in Dublin. He was also a favourite on the cabaret circuit and made a number of *Late Late Show* appearances with Gay Byre as host.

Fota Wildlife Park: BEHIND THE SCENES

Fota Wildlife Park has plenty of exotic animals but there is important work being done with native Irish species too, writes **Gillian Richardson**

grichardson@farmersjournal.ie



As well as keeping exotic animals, Fota Wildlife Park is working with the National Parks and Wildlife Services to help conserve native species.

Andrea Hayes is well known for her love of animals, but now she has taken this to a new level with *Fota: Into the Wild* on Virgin Media One. And it was because of this love for animals that she decided to pitch the programme to the channel.

"I'm really interested in conservation, ecology and eco-spirituality – the concept of nature being a form of spirituality for people. Animals have so much to teach us. I also think it's really important to educate people on what's happening on a global stage and the massive role that Ireland plays."

Fota Wildlife Park is often associated with cheetahs, giraffes, lemurs and all of the exotic non-native animals as well as the conservation work done by the staff. While all of that is important did you know that Fota is also actively contributing to native Irish animals too?

Fota Wildlife Park worked with the National Parks and Wildlife Services to get farmers involved with natterjack toad conservation. This scheme requires farmers to dig ponds on their farms for the toads.

The natterjack toad is now confined to a small number of coastal sites in Co Kerry around the Dingle Peninsula, but they were previously much more widespread in Kerry. It is one of only three amphibians found in Ireland.

The toads breed in warm, shallow ponds that are relatively free of vegetation but the area around the pond is also important. Grazing around the ponds is vital to keep grass short to

allow adult toads to forage.

Andrea experienced this scheme firsthand when filming the show.

"The big animals are top-drawer, but for me it's the little things like the natterjack toad or the red squirrel that are equally as important stories to tell. So it's not all about the giraffes

or the big ticket animals, I just think that every piece of wildlife here has a really strong part to play."

Head ranger Willie Duffy explains the part he and his colleagues in Fota play in the conservation of the toad. "The strings of eggs

and tadpoles are collected and brought to us. We rear them. When ready they're taken back to the wild to the park rangers and we release them. In the last three or four years there's been about 3,000 toads released.

"For me, as much as

it's all about the exotics, it's also about the native species. We need people on the ground, farmers and homeowners."

In terms of the exotic animals what are they fed? The finest local produce they can source of course.

"We try to get it all as local as possible. We get hay from local farmers and browse (leaves and buds) for the giraffes from trees locally too," Willie explains. The sloth is also a big fan of chomping on potatoes.

Another successful conservation programme Fota is involved in would be with the European bison. The European bison had been extinct in the wild, but through a re-introduction programme it has been brought back into the wild and are now considered "vulnerable" on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Endangered List, which is a step in the right direction.

Fota Wildlife Park has been part of a European breeding programme since the first bison arrived at the park in 1999. Three calves from Fota have been re-introduced into the wild within a national park in Poland. The bison are grazers, and have been reported to have sampled farmers crops when they come down to the low ground in the winter time. **CL**



Andrea feels that animals have a lot to teach us.

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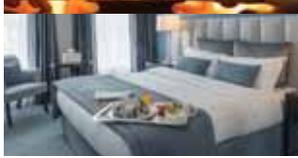
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'My mother-in-law doesn't want me to have a baby shower'

Dear Miriam, I'm pregnant with my first child, which I'm absolutely delighted about. At the moment I'm feeling pretty good and there's a great buzz among my family and friends. Some of my sisters and my brother and his wife have children already, so they're particularly excited for me, and have just started planning my baby shower. My friends, my mother and aunts are all on-board. In truth, I think it's a bit of a laugh and I'm happy enough to have it. It seems to be more of an excuse for them to have a few drinks at my expense, but sure, as I said, it's a bit of craic.

There's only one small snag, my mother-in-law. All-in-all Miriam, she's a lovely woman, I don't want to be giving a bad impression now or anything. We get along very well and she's always been supportive of my husband and I. We'd sit down often and have a chat too.

But, she has me plagued about the baby. She's exceptionally superstitious and the pregnancy wives' tales are in full swing. She's already trying to predict the gender and has me warned off going to funerals, all of which I've brushed away.

However, once she heard about the baby



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

shower, it took the biscuit altogether. She's made it very clear she doesn't think it's a good idea. She's said it's "bad luck" and "tempting faith". To start, I kind of side-stepped around it, but now I'm getting fed up with how against it she is.

Also, and this may sound bad, I don't want her to feel like she can have such an influence over what I do with my baby. It's her only grandchild and I'm so happy for her to be involved, but in the end, I want to parent my own way.

My sisters have basically said: "Tell her where to go." (They may have used stronger language than that). But I don't want to damage our relationship. Where can I go from here Miriam?

I would really appreciate a steer on this, Mother-in-Waiting

Dear Mother-in-Waiting, Thank you very much for your letter and congratulations. This is a very special time in your life and I am sure you will enjoy yourself very much, regardless of these little obstacles. As you said, your mother-in-law means well, but she is crossing the line somewhat. I think there is a very simple way to deal with this, and in a slightly more



All-in-all Miriam, she's a lovely woman, I don't want to be giving a bad impression now or anything. We get along very well and she's always been supportive of my husband and I

mild-mannered and diplomatic way than what your sisters suggested.

Firstly, the thing is to be firm but non-confrontational. Be straight with your mother-in-law. Tell her you don't buy into superstitions and are having a baby shower, simple as, that it is something you want to do.

While saying this and standing your ground, you can also reassure her. Tell her you really want her to come and that she will enjoy herself. Leave it at that.

As you hinted in your letter, there is an underlying issue here, in that you feel she may interfere in your parenting. This is very common between new parents and their own parents. Parenting is hard, there is no question about it, and help from family is always welcome. However, while getting help, you are entitled to do things your way. I think starting as you mean to go on, as with this baby shower situation, is a good way to go about things.

Don't be afraid to ask for advice and take help, but do things whatever way you are most comfortable. If there is something you want to do, stand up for it, and as I said, in doing so you need not be controversial.

I wish you all the best in being a mother, Miriam **CL**

AGRIWORD 1,043

BY FINEAGAS

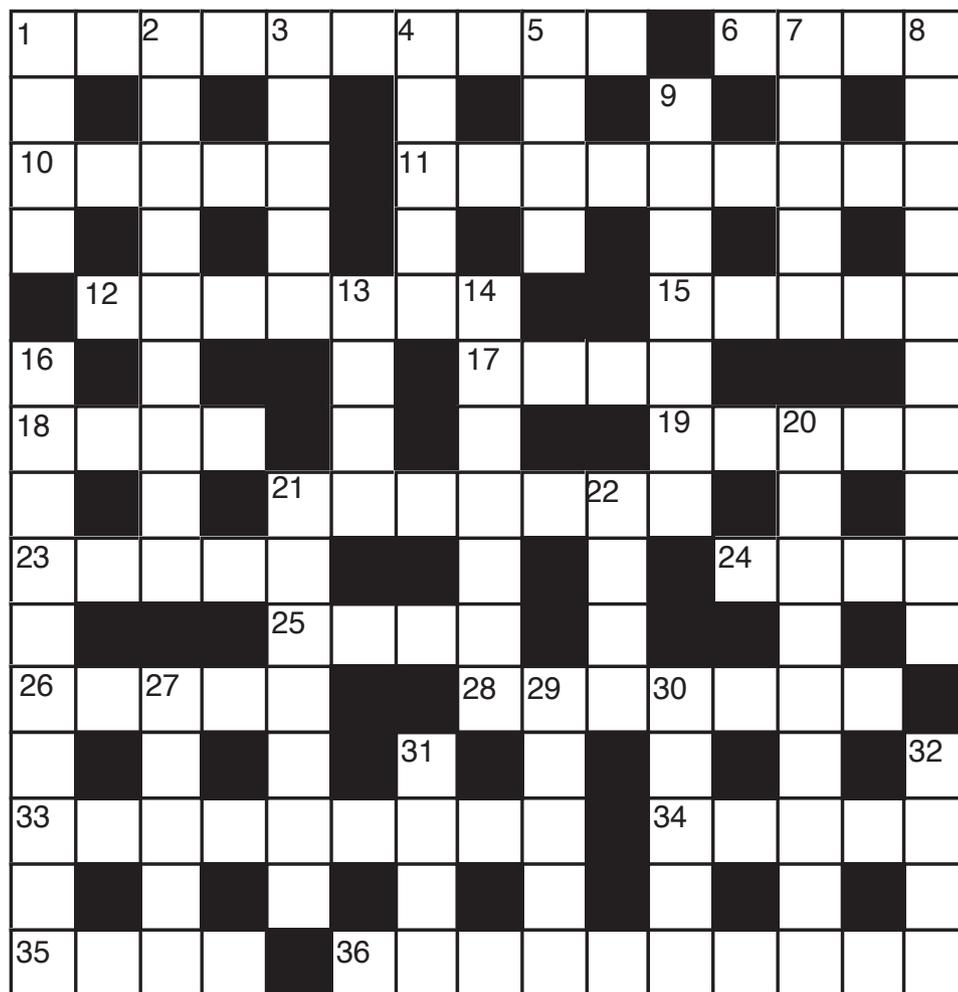
Some clues are cryptic, some more straightforward and some have an agricultural theme

ACROSS

- 1 Pin notices up for looking at (10)
- 6 A sign or portent (4)
- 10 Spinney (5)
- 11 Can you only see a certain colour of horse through this casement? (3,6)
- 12 & 30d Is one's sister's husband a member of the judiciary? (7-2-3)
- 15 The graduate's at home for washing here (5)
- 17 The insular location lies in disarray (4)
- 18 Unsilently (4)
- 19 Not left? Correct (5)
- 21 One who doesn't believe in God (7)
- 23 Reverie involving armed struggle (5)
- 24 Step (4)
- 25 Competent to sort out a bale (4)
- 26 Emotional turmoil caused by dispersing gnats (5)
- 28 Certainly not Samson's favourite hairdresser! (7)
- 33 With Linus, Matt prepared a pick-me-up (9)
- 34 Unfettered (5)
- 35 Natural coral formation (4)
- 36 How good it is for you - better than heat or wheal! (5,5)

DOWN

- 1 Small imperial unit of length (4)
- 2 Gurus peel off a very sticky liquid (9)
- 3 Put pressure on a Devon river, right? (5)
- 4 Bleat about an item of furniture (5)
- 5 Large antelope running wild in the Roxy (4)
- 7 Many fathers have the golden touch (5)
- 8 No magician's equipment at that time? Occasionally (3,3,4)
- 9 Type of hazelnut (7)
- 13 A novice in torrid surroundings? What a beastly place to stay! (4)
- 14 Tear Eden asunder, having come to maturity (7)
- 16 One hoping charitably to assemble a collection of note! (10)
- 20 Mexican dish of mashed avocado (9)
- 21 Put a spouse over the old city, (with no pay involved) (7)
- 22 Securely close the marine mammal (4)
- 27 Luge I manoeuvre with cunning (5)
- 29 Praise highly (5)
- 30 See 12 across.
- 31 Classical composer involved in samba choreography (4)
- 32 A Kildare teacher identifies the Garden of England (4)



>>Answers

AGRIWORD 1,042

ACROSS 1 Fabricated 6 Clap 10 Fiery 11 Have a ball 12 Realism 15 Alter 17 Yarn 18 Efts 19 Album 21 Colours 23 Torch 24 Smug 25 Euro 26 Locum 28 Snooker 33 Sales ring 35 Rook 36 Winter crop
DOWN 1 Fife 2 Beefeater 3 Idyll 4 Ashes 5 Envy 7 Leapt 8 Pilgrimage 9 Bananas 13 Ipsa facto 14 Mykonos 16 Fertiliser 20 Bumper car 21 Chemise 22 Reno 27 Cello 29 Night 30 Offer 31 Kiwi 32 Pomp

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MUNSTER

CORK FARM widow (70s) seeks affluent farmer to buy her 32+ hectares. Followed by possible marriage. A perfect match, money, farm and togetherness. Must be car owner. Livestock and machinery optional. 65-75 acceptable. Photo, phone, references Pls. No separated or divorced. **Box No. 9690**

SINGLE OUTGOING

Tipperary farmer 52 years old with no ties, non-smoker, S/D, genuine, kind-hearted and good natured. Lots of interests including singing, musicals, dog and horseracing and most sports. W.L.T.M single, genuine lady 40-55years old with no ties. Tipp or surrounding counties with view to friendship and relationship. Phone no and photo appreciated. All replies answered. **Box No. 9681**

AGE 34, W.L.T.M, female of similar age ,interests are nights out ,gaa ,country life, owns own car, easy going, non-smoker, social. **Box No: 9684**

55 YEAR old lady, no ties, living alone. General interests, W.L.T.M gentleman, similar gent for relationship, loves animals & countryside. **Box No. 9673**

KERRY MALE, Early 50s,single, enjoys outdoors, music, genuine and sincere. W.L.T.M female 45-55 for friendship/ relationship. **Box No. 9679**

ACTIVE, RECENTLY retired active professional lady, enjoys outdoor life, sport, current affairs, the arts, travel. Would like to meet like-minded gent interested in relationship/friendship **Box No. 9677**

COUNTRY AT heart respectful upbeat separated women 60 on the horizon. Looking to connect with genuine similar aged man from Limerick or surrounding counties for companionship/ relationship. **Box No. 9671**

MIDLANDS GENT. 41. C of I. Attractive and sound. Enthusiastic about country life, sport and good food. W.L.T.M a fun, chatty lady in her 30's. **Box No. 9675**

40 YEAR old Genuine Guy, South Tipp, Very mixed interests in life, my friends say I am funny and bit of a messer, considered cute, with a heart of gold. Enjoys conversation. Don't be shy, send a reply. **Box No. 9676**

SOUTH EAST, single, professional, attractive blonde lady, mid-thirties, from a farming background, athletic, outgoing and stylish. NS, SD. W.L.T.M a kind, caring, attractive, decent male for a long term relationship, aged 33 to 42. **Box No. 9665**

SINGLE MALE 55 W.L.T.M a female 48-60 from Tipperary or surrounding counties for a relationship. **Box No. 9667**

KIND KERRY MAN 63s year old, interests include holidays, dancing, seaside. W.L.T.M honest women, so could share take places and share a life with. **Box No. 9669**

CONNACHT

LEITRIM MALES, looking for love, from a farming background. W.L.T.M girl in her 30s. Interests include football and sheep farming. **Box No. 9683**

LEINSTER

SOUTH LEINSTER dairy, single man, never married, no ties. S.D , N.S. interests eating out, horseracing, socialising in pubs and clubs. Travelling abroad or weekends away occasionally . W.L.T.M a lady similar interests who is up for the crack! **Box No. 9688**

MIDLAND ATTRACTIVE lady mid-sixties, With an active lifestyle W.L.T.M a kind and caring gentleman for relationship. Interests reading, walking, visiting new places and gardening. Will reply to all replies only from Kilkenny, Carlow, Offaly, Laois, Kildare and Tipperary. **Box No. 9685**

NEW YEAR, new beginnings. Single lady, south east area, attractive, voluptuous, fun loving, enjoys weekends away, foreign holidays, nights in or out. I wish to meet gentleman, who is kind and caring, with a good sense of humour, aged 50-70. Phone number please. **Box No. 9686**

NORTH MIDLANDS

Male 43, Energetic, genuine guy, 6ft, Brown hair, normal build with positive outlook. Never married, no ties, NS, social drinker with GSOH. Part time farmers, a day job, enjoys music, dancing, dining out, outdoors and collecting, enjoys the simple things in life. W.L.T.M a bubbly, kind genuine girl 30-38 yrs. who is happy in both heels or wellies who is looking for friendship, hopefully leading to a serious relationship. Photo appreciated, likewise will reply with photo. Confidentiality assured. Love to hear from you. **Box No. 9687**

WIDOWER 70S quite manner, farming background, likes country life, T.V, current affairs , drawing and relaxing at home, N/S and occasional social drinker, W.L.T.M nice lady , single or widowed in 60s or 70s, preferably in Meath or surrounding counties. Phone number and photo appreciated and confidentiality assured. **Box No. 9682**

PROFESSIONAL MALE 45 N/S S/D From farming background. Likes cinema , walking, eating out, nights in. W.L.T.M male for relationship.From Kilkenny or surrounding counties. **Box No. 9677**

TOGETHER, with caring and sharing, our hearts and souls will be loved daily. Gentleman, 69, Dublin, never married. Farming origins, house, car, respectful, cultured, artistic, painting, joyful, tolerant. Seeking female partner. Together we will explore nationwide, the magic and mystery of mountains, monuments, moorlands. Lakes, waterfalls, abbeys, seascapes, harbours, woodlands and villages of our wonderful country. Celebrating you with romantic surprises and hearty high fives! **Box No. 9674**

TAKE A CHANCE on me: 47 year old Kilkenny dairy farmer, lives alone, never married, no ties. N/S, S/D. Respectful, kind & honest. Interests include dining out, cinema & nature. Would like to meet lady surrounding counties between 35-41 years old who I can share the simple things in life with. So take a chance on me. Confidentiality. **Box No. 9672**

MEATH MAN, mid 40's, looking for a lady who enjoys nights out, nights in and good company. Part time farmer, no ties. Easy going, tall, attractive and kind. Hair, car and house my own! All replies will be answered. **Box No. 9670**

ULSTER

TYRONE MALE 48 ns part time sheep farming I would like to meet tall slim honest female between 40 and 50 long term relationship I have lots of interests photo and number appreciated. **Box No. 9691**

TYRONE MALE 49, Separated, N/S, S/D, dairy farmer. I would love to meet kind, honest female of similar age with GSOH for friendship/company and possibly long term relationship. Phone number and photo appreciated. **Box No. 9687**

NORTHWEST FARMER fulltime livestock farmer, male, wishes to meet female 30 to 45 years for friendship/relationship. Non-smoker, honest and decent at all times, with real love for the countryside way of life. **Box No: 9680**

MONAGHAN GENT Mid 30's, genuine, honest, farming background, enjoys nature, weekends away and dining out. No ties, N/S. Would like to meet a genuine lady 30 - 35 with similar interests for friendship / relationship. **Box No. 9674**

BUBBLY DONEGAL, female looking for long term relationship. 46 years old, 5ft 6in, cuddly, NS, SD, divorced, no ties. I am from a farming background. I love country life, animals, nature, going to the cinema, eating out, travel and cosy nights in. Would like to meet respectable, kind gentleman with good sense of humour. Phone number and photo appreciated. **Box No. 9663**

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Farmers taking one for the team

We finished the radio programme last Saturday talking about the weather. We had two farmers from Galway on bracing themselves for the worst as storm Jorge approached. You could hear the exasperation in their voices. But what struck me most was how in both instances, their chief concern was not for themselves but for their farm animals and vulnerable neighbours.

I remarked how terrible it is that people find it so easy to talk down to farmers on a variety of issues and yet here were examples of typical farmer selflessness. Earlier last week, I made the long journey to Skibbereen to meet Cork's only female TD, Holly Cairns of the Social Democrats. Her house is definitely furthest of all TD's from Kildare Street. Holly grew up on a small holding where she still resides.

Holly has a profound love of farming and the environment. And she made a terrific point when chatting about both subjects and how they tend to collide in public discourse rather than combine. She said that while some people point the finger at farmers for the destruction of the environment, this is not because of personal failure but policy failure. This is the crucial point which is constantly being missed in the debate about



Damien O'Reilly

Listen to *Countrywide* with Damien O'Reilly on Saturdays at 8.10am on RTÉ Radio 1

agriculture and climate change. Anti-farmer environmentalists (many probably have never set foot on a farm) who are quick on Twitter to shame farmers for biodiversity breakdown simply have no grasp of how the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) works.

There is a dangerous communication vacuum between agriculture and society which is being filled with misinformation and anti-farming sentiment that does nothing for the viability of food production or the environment. Holly gave a good example of that policy failure which has landed farmers in the situation where they are taking one for the team on climate change. She explained how their single farm payment was cut a few years ago because they allowed bushes encroach onto the land they were claiming for. In other words, EU policy looked unfavourably on bushes growing wild. So when people blame agriculture, then play the ball and not the man. Biodiversity breakdown is due to policy diktat, not farmer misbehaviour.

A week earlier, I met with farmers in south Roscommon whose lands had been flooded. Where land has been lost to the lake, farmers have had to cut cattle numbers in order to comply with stocking rules at considerable financial loss. And yet they've been farming in an SAC, adhering to strict rules and

A potential upside

If there's one good thing to come out of the coronavirus panic, it might be to have convinced men to wash their hands properly after using the bathroom. It's frankly disgusting to observe while using pub or hotel toilets how blatantly dirty and unhygienic us male of the species are.

regulations for years to protect the environment which is now flooded with nesting areas for wildlife destroyed. Like the rest of us, farmers just want to get on with making a living and having peace of mind. The CAP has been tweaked and twisted several ways over the past 30-odd years and farmers have complied. Penalties remain very low, which is a good indication that they're farming within the rules.

Let's see what the EU Green Deal and new CAP will bring in terms of incentives and supports to tackle climate change. As always, farmers will follow the money. While it's easy for condescending Twitter addicted environmentalists to chastise farmers over climate change, one wonders would they be as quick to go to Galway and help out the desperate farmers who are suffering more than the rest of us because of the freak weather? Answers on a postcard. **CL**

» Backchat Women in Rugby

DUBLIN | 8 MARCH 2020

The LiveWIRE Women In Rugby Conference takes place in the Herbert Park Hotel, Dublin, on 8 March. It's free to attend.

This year's theme will be Leadership Journeys of Women in Rugby. Speakers on the day include women who have officiated, played and coached at the highest levels. They will share their leadership journeys from their first involvement in the sport at grassroots level. Karen Brown, an Olympic medal-winning field hockey player and coach will deliver the keynote address. Karen will talk about her transition into leadership in conversation with IRFU committee member Su Carty.

Gráinne McElwain will MC the panel on "Seeing a leader, being a leader". On the panel will be broadcaster, columnist and rugby volunteer Fiona Steed; elite IRFU referee Joy Neville and IRFU Youth Council chair Meadhbh Lewis.

For tickets register on Eventbrite.



For more information see www.irishrugby.ie

The event aims to promote women in rugby.

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