



RST Newsletter



Rathfeigh • Skryne • Tara



DIGITAL VERSION FOR DURATION OF CORONAVIRUS EPIDEMIC

SATURDAY 19th Dec 2020

ISSUE NO. 26



Beautiful Christmas Tree in Skryne Churchyard

A Very Strange Year

This has been a very strange year that has knocked many norms on the head with nothing being the same as in years past. The RST newsletter has been no exception to the trend and editing it during 2020 has been 'an experience'

When the first lockdown began in mid March and it's implications were becoming clear we had decided to cancel the RST until the coronavirus epidemic had passed. That was until we received a message from the GAA informing us that they had joined forces with the active first responders in setting up a covid-19 community support group and wanted us to include the details in our newsletter. Swans of Oberstown also wished their arrangements to be made known so we decided to produce a digital RST with a view to returning to hard copy when things were back to normal. We asked people if they were interested in letting us know how they were passing the time during this period of confinement, and boy, were we surprised by the response. We suddenly went from being a four page monthly circular to a multi-page weekly journal of very diverse and interesting articles. The level of contributions has continued unabated and we are extremely thankful to everyone for taking the time to put their thoughts and passions on paper. The 2020 set of RST newsletters will be a snapshot of life in our area during a year of massive uncertainty when life as we have known it was put on hold

We are taking a mid-winter break until the end of January 2021, when hopefully, we will be looking at returning to the life we enjoyed before the virus. In the meantime we would like to wish all our readers and contributors a very happy Christmas and all the best for 2021

Jim & Patricia Conroy

Condolences

Our sincere sympathy goes to

The Smyth & Hayes families on the death of Sean

May he rest in peace

Christmas Message from Fr. Thomas

The spirit of Christmas is love.
God loves us so much that He gave His Son to us.
Let us celebrate His birthday!

Close your eyes and feel how Christ works in your life.
Look back and be thankful for all the blessings you received
And for staying strong despite all odds that came your way.
Have a blessed Christmas!

May the love of our Savior, Jesus Christ,
surround you all the days of your life.
Merry Christmas to you and your family!

Wake up today and start your day
With heartfelt thanks for the birth of our Savior.
Angels are singing to bring this message to us.
Celebrate today!

Fill this season with heavenly rejoices.
We are so blessed to have Christ from this day onwards.
We have hope this Christmas because Jesus was born.
Have a Merry Christmas!

Arrangements for Christmas Masses:

Christmas Eve (24th Dec): Mass in Rathfeigh at 8pm
Mass in Skryne at 9.30pm

Christmas Day (25th Dec): Mass in Skryne at 9am & 11am
Mass in Rathfeigh at 12 noon.

St Stephen's Day (Sat 26th Dec): Mass in Rathfeigh at 6pm

Sunday 27th Dec: Mass in Skryne at 9am & 11am.

There will be no weekday masses during the week commencing 28th Decemeber.

Sat 2nd Jan: Mass in Rathfeigh at 6pm

Sun 3rd Jan: Mass in Skryne at 9am & 11am.

Weekday masses will re-commence on Wed 6th Jan at 9am in Skryne

Please note: Parishioners are reminded to remain in their cars for the duration of the mass and tune your car radio into 90FM. Holy communion will be distributed to you in your car as outlined in the directive received from the Bishop.

Thank You from Rathfeigh Parent's Association

Rathfeigh School Parents' Association would like to say a huge thank you to the local community for the terrific support shown during the recent "Cash For Clobber" event. We raised over €900 which will be invested in various school activities/events and provide financial help in buying necessary equipment and educational material in the school.

Thank You from Grateful Parishioners

We express our thanks and gratitude to our sacristan Catherine for opening and closing our Church on a daily basis during these difficult times. Many parishioners regularly visited for quiet reflection and to light votive candles.

Also thanks and appreciation to the alter society who replenished the flowers regularly and kept our lovely Church sparking clean.

Obituary – Sean Smyth

The Parish of Skryne and particularly Skryne GFC were plunged into mourning this week on hearing of the sad passing of Sean Smyth (Skryne) after an illness borne with typical determination and without complaint.

Sean is a former Chairperson of Skryne GFC and was instrumental in a tremendous amount of the improvement work carried out at McManus Park over a long number of years. As far back as 1981 Sean, along with his Committee, set about a major reconstruction of the playing surface on the pitch to include ploughing, levelling, draining and reseeded which also included increasing the size of the playing area to bring it up to a par with any inter county venue in the country. It has stood the test of time and is still one of the best around right up to this day.

Fast forward twelve years and Sean was at it again - upgrading facilities in McManus Park. This time it was the building of a new Clubhouse, dressing rooms, committee room and kitchen. He encountered some objections to his idea of positioning this new Clubhouse on the opposite side of the field as against close to the entrance where the old one had stood since 1937. His foresight proved correct and the gleaming new building opened in 1993, with the players exit straight on to the pitch being particularly welcomed by one and all. At that time, apart from Pairc Tailteann, Skryne's was the only pitch in Meath where the players entered and exited the playing area directly from the changing rooms.

As well as Chairperson Sean served Skryne GFC in every position including Secretary, Treasurer, Manager, Selector, Trainer/Coach and Committee member for more than 20 years but continued to help and support the Club right up to his sad passing this week.

As stated above he was Chairperson of the club for a total of nine years. He is the only person to be re-elected to the position on four different occasions. Sean was first elected to the Chair for 1978 and '79. Re-elected for 3 years 1981, '82 and '83. Then after a gap of seven years he became Chairperson for 1991, '92 and '93 and finally his last term was 1995. In between those years he acted as Secretary and Treasurer on different occasions.

On the playing front Sean had a short stay as a footballer but in his early days, ironically, he did win an Under 16 Championship medal with Navan De La Salles on an occasion when Skryne did not field a team. But it was as a Trainer he excelled and he gave unstinted service to the three wise men, namely, his brother-in-Law Jim Hayes, Mick Ryan (senior) and Jim Finnerty who managed the superb underage teams of the seventies. From 1974 to 1977 their teams won all before them including Under 16, 17, 18 (Minor) and under 21 Championships.

When Sean was elected Chairperson of Skryne GFC he was carrying on a family tradition as his Father, Brian, former Headmaster of Scoil Cholmcille, Skryne served the club as Chairperson for a total of ten years in the 1930s. He preceded and succeeded Fr. Michael McManus in the hot seat of the club. Both Fr. Mc and Brian Smyth were deeply involved in acquiring the field which has been Skryne's 'Home' since the mid 30s and as Fr. McManus was in the Chair at the time the pitch was named after him and McManus Park was born. It was named Grounds of the year then and this feat has been repeated many times since.

Sean's brother-in-Law Jim Hayes, a former Carlow Senior player, has also been Chairperson of Skryne GFC while two of his younger brothers, Brian and Dennis have played all grades of football with the Blues, Dennis winning Senior and Junior B Championship and Feis Cup medals in the 60s. Not to be outdone Brian won a Leinster Senior Colleges

medal with St. Finians Mullingar in 1960 and played in the All Ireland Final that same year only to be narrowly defeated by a starstudded St. Jarleths Tuam team.

Sean's two sons Bryan and Niall have kept the Family connection going and have played for Skryne. Niall has played all grades from underage to senior and played a prominent part in the Under 21 Championship victory over Simonstown in 1995. He also played in the famous Junior Championship Final (proper) of 1997 when Skryne were defeated 'very Controversially' on a scoreline of 0-11 to 0-10 by a strong Bective side. In that same year Niall was on the victorious Skryne Senior B League side which defeated Trim in the Final after a replay.

Sean's nephews Gerard and Liam Hayes have played all grades of football with the Blues. Gerard won a Feis Cup medal in 1981 and played in the Senior Championship that same year when Skryne were defeated by their old rivals Navan O'Mahonys in the Final, after a replay. Liam needs no introduction as he won every honour in the game both with Skryne and Meath. He captained Meath in the famous year of 1991 when the Royals won Leinster after the four match saga with Dublin in the first round. Sadly, Liam and Meath lost out narrowly to Down in the All Ireland Final. He proudly represented Skryne and Meath on the Irish team in the International Rules series in 1984 and 1987 against Australia.

Sean's Grandson Shane is currently an active member of Skryne GFC therefore continuing the Smyth family connection with the club right up to the present day, as it has been for over 90 years.

Sean was predeceased this year by his sister, Sr. Consolata, better known to the people of Skryne as Sr. Carmel Smyth.

The esteem in which Sean was held in the Parish can be gauged by the number of well wishers who contacted the family and the number of Condolence messages on the website this week. Also when the Skryne Gaelic Club organised a Guard of Honour at his Funeral, even with all Covid 19 directives and regulations being adhered to, the road was lined on both sides from the Church right down the hill towards Oberstown. Sean's coffin was draped in the famous Blue and White colours of his beloved Skryne Club.

Skryne GFC would like to pass on sincere sympathy to Sean's wife Mary, his two sons Bryan and Niall. His sisters Mary, Margaret and Emily, his brothers Denis, Patrick and Brian and all of the extended Smyth Family.

May Sean Rest in Peace.

Ar dheis De go raibh a Anam dilis.

SKRYNE GFC.

Rathfeigh Virtual Choir

Rathfeigh choir are keeping up their traditional Christmas carols performance in a virtual format this year. To watch just follow this link: https://youtu.be/_6CUU4uNFQ







Christmas Messages

*Merry
Christmas*



From Swan's Oberstown

Happy Christmas to all our loyal customers . This year will be one to forget yet one that will never be forgotten. We have had a very turbulent year but you have stuck with us through COVID and the works at the crossroads, we know it is still a work in progress but the council are trying to make it safer for everyone. For our customers there is much more room to park, it's safer and it's easier to get fuel for your car or fire. So thank you for your continued support through the rest of the year and for many more to come.

This year will be the first time in 66 years that the bar will not be open on Christmas Eve. For many it had become part of your Christmas tradition to come along and meet friends and neighbours, but, instead this year, while you're getting your last few bits before the big day, join us for a mince pie instead of a pint and wish everyone a Happy Christmas.



From O'Connell's Hill of Skryne

O' Connells would like to thank the community for their support throughout Covid, both when we were open and when we were closed. Wishing everyone a Happy Christmas and New Year.

Rachael, Tom and Family, Christy and Jim



Wishing all our friends and customers a safe and very Happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year let's hope we get to open our doors early 2021.
From Declan Irma and family



From Fox's Castle Lounge Hill of Skryne



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*A merry
Christmas and
Happy New Year
From Greally
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A Winter Scene from Sinead Thackaberry

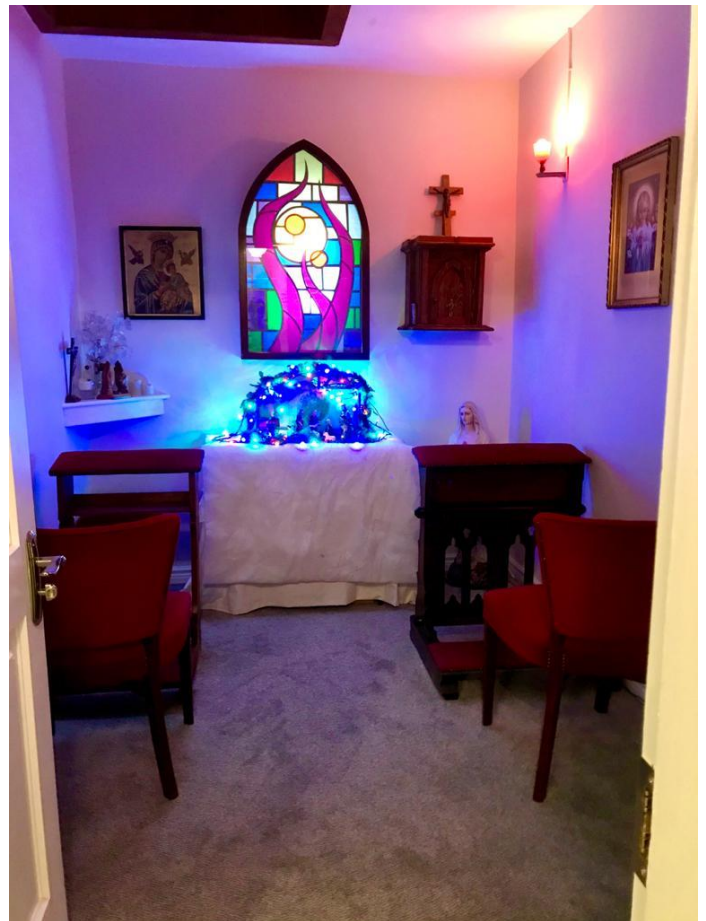


*Lovely winter
morning at Bellew,
Rathfeigh recently.*

Christmas Greetings from Hillview Nursing Home

All the staff and residents are keeping well and keeping ourselves busy with plenty of fun activities in preparation for Christmas. Everyone in Hillview would like to wish the local community a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year





Light Up a Life from Jimmy Gibbons

In relation to the Christmas Tree outside church (photo on front page):

Light Up a Life is our Christmas Campaign where people are invited to sponsor a light on our Christmas tree in honour of a friend or loved one. Each light symbolises our special thoughts for them at Christmas time. Funds raised from sponsoring a light will go towards local St. Vincent de Paul.

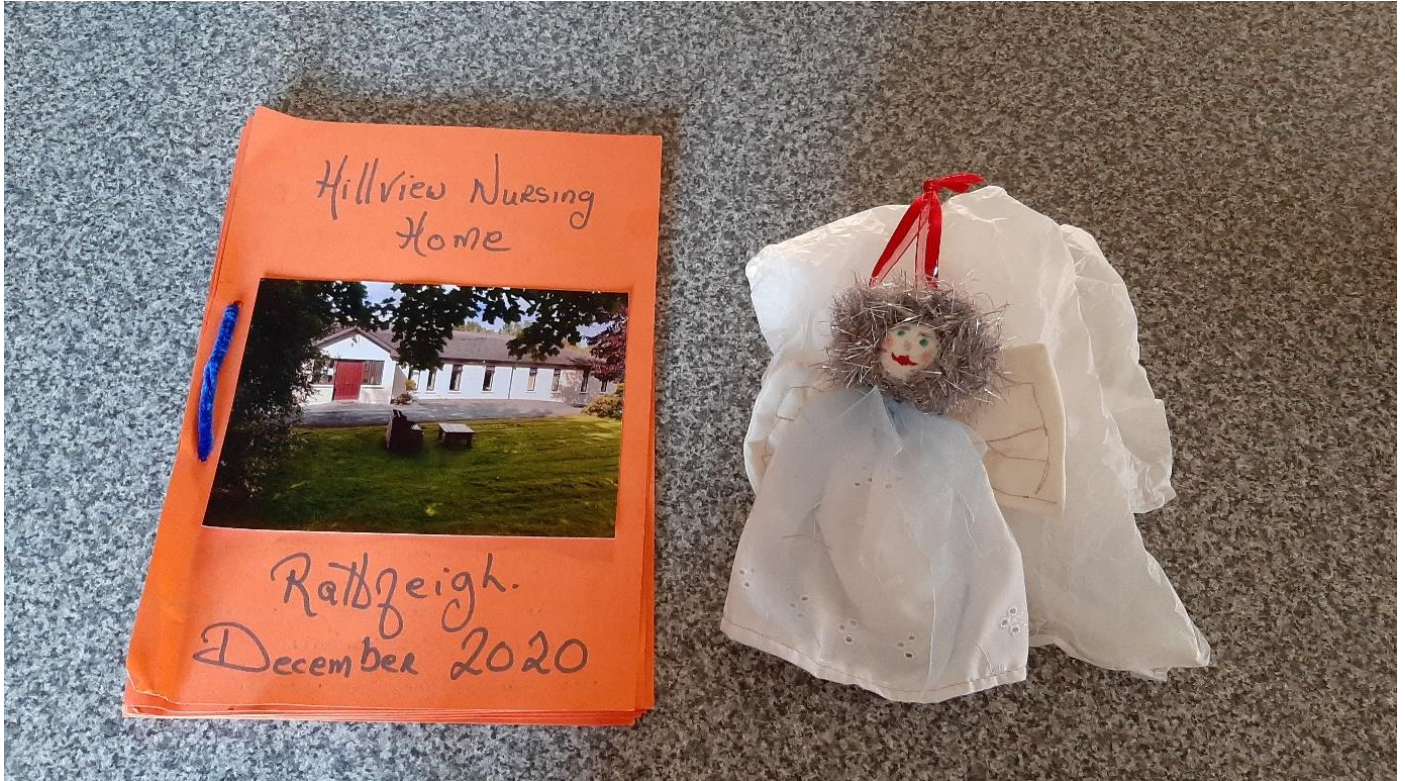
Cards cost €5 and are available by contacting Catherine Hanly on 0863325740 or at Swan's shop.

Christmas at Skryne Hill Preschool

The children of Skryne Hill Preschool have been very busy getting ready for Christmas. This year, we focused on kindness and helping others.



As part of this, we made a book with photos and cards for the residents of a local nursing home and sent them some sweets as we knew that they couldn't have visitors and we wanted to try to cheer them up. We were delighted when they wrote back to us – they made us a book too! We saw how they play games like us and that they have friends in the home like we have friends at preschool. They made us a beautiful angel which we hung on our tree. We are making them Christmas decoartions for their tree now as a surprise!



Another way we showed kindness towards others was through our food collection for families in Meath



We also made presents for our family and friends – that was great fun!



Christmas Choirs



Rathfeigh Choir Christmas 2019



Scoil Cholmcille Christmas Carols 2016

Skryne Tara Women's Soccer

SKRYNE TARA WOMENS FIRST YEAR

The Skryne Tara Womens Team who won runners up medals v Summerhill Park Celtic in the Shield Final last February before the corona virus pandemic began. They had earlier dispatched of Slane Wanderers in an epic semi final at the MDL grounds on penalties following a 1-1 scoreline after extra time.



Skryne Tara are one of the pioneering, founding mothers of womens' soccer in the North East Womens League which now has grown in its first year to 12 Teams from Meath, Louth, Cavan & Balbriggan, North Dublin. The season started in August - five months later than scheduled due to the pandemic. They secured their first league win in the second round of fixtures defeating Torro 4 - 1 at Ross Cross.

In mid September Skryne Tara took on Oriels best – Quay Celtic Dundalk in the first round of the Cup and after a tremendous tussle and wholehearted performance it finished 1 – 1 after extra time. Skryne were edged out in the penalty shoot out but considering Quay Celtic had beaten Skryne 7-1 and 6-0 in a pre season tournament this performance was a real indication of how far the side have progressed.

Skryne Tara had impressive displays v Parkvilla, Park Celtic, Torro, Kingscourt & Trim Celtic in their group of 6 in the league. The League and cup were postponed due to the Covid 19 restrictions in early October and it is hoped that the remaining fixtures can be played in the new year.



Jack Conroy and his burgeoning, blossoming team have vastly improved over the last year and have just resumed training on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 -7:30pm in the new Kentstown Community Park. Jack is calling on all past players of the club and new recruits to join for the new season.

Please contact Jack on 086 1249982 if interested.



The class of 2020: Rachel Whelan, Eimear Clarke, Emma Swan, Melanie Kirwan, Clíodhna O' Riordan, Lisa Donnelly, Colleen Jordan, Denise Sanfilippo, Amy Herbert, Elisha Stewart, Ciara Maguire, Mari Sheehan, Katie Cullen, Anna Caldwell, Katie Ryan, Ellen Ryan, Roisin O'Dowd, Kate Thorpe, Cia White, Zara Cleary, Rea Pender, Samantha Clarke, Rebecca Clarke, Michelle Clarke, Steffi Finegan, Sophie Finegan, Sarah Hanley, Clíodhna Mangan, Claire Caffrey, Molly Fitzpatrick, Ella McCartan.

Skryne Community Alert

It has been a very tough year for many of us in the RST area. Many were unable to work due to social distancing regulations or their jobs were not deemed essential services. Some are still unable to do so. Many of us lost friends or family during lockdown and we were unable to say our goodbyes in the traditional manner. Some may have family abroad who will not be coming home to visit this Christmas. Lack of social contact can have a huge impact on our mental health. Now is the perfect time to make contact in a safe manner with neighbours or friends in the area that may be feeling down or lonely. A phone call, or a knock on the door while keeping a safe distance, just to say hello and ask how they are doing. It can make all the difference.

Well done to all of the local groups that came together this last year to lift out spirits in the community, whether through the publishing of and contributions to the new format RST newsletter, or the liturgy videos shared on YouTube, and to those that helped people who were cocooning with shopping and prescription collections. Even Santa made a special extra effort to visit the RST area during the week!

On matters of crime, please remember to be extra vigilant in the run up to Christmas. Many of us start to relax and ease our guard, making this prime time for burglaries and for theft of valuables from your car. Remember not to leave doors or windows open. Set your alarm, including when you are at home. Ensure your home is well lit up. Use timer switches. Few things are more inviting to a burglar than a house with no lights on after dark. Keep a lookout for suspicious activity in the area and report such activity straight away to Gardai on 018010600. Please save that number to your phone, so you will have it to hand if out for a walk or a drive. If you are not already signed up to Skryne Text Alert, you can drop us an email to skrynecommunityalert@gmail.com Please include your name and address with Eircode and we will get an application form to you.

We wish you all a very Happy and Healthy Christmas and look forward to a brighter 2021 for all of us.

Skryne Community Alert Group

Mulled Wine Recipe from Peter O'Reilly



This recipe has always been a firm favourite in our house for parties and meet ups at Christmas (*remembering the good old days!*)

Ingredients

<i>1 lemon</i>	<i>12 cloves</i>
<i>1.25 cup (300 ml) water</i>	<i>1cup (6 oz) sugar</i>
<i>1 bottle red wine</i>	<i>½ bottle port</i>
<i>2 cinnamon sticks</i>	<i>Little nutmeg</i>

Put the sugar and water into a small pot and bring to boil for one minute then turn off heat. Pare the lemon rind very thinly and put it in the pan/pot. With a very sharp knife cut away the thick white pith from the lemon and discard it. Stud the pared lemon with the cloves and add to the pan, together with the sugar/water syrup. Add the wine and port. Heat slowly stirring with the cinnamon stick and until just boiling. Remove from the heat and strain.

Serve hot with a little nutmeg grated/sprinkled on top.

Skryne National School from Martin Kennedy

Here we go with a little seasonal message to all from the pupils and staff at Skryne NS. It is customary at this time of year to drop a line to those we are separated from at Christmas time. This remove however has been greatly moderated by the channel that the RST has provided for us to share some insight into the relative normality of life in school. We thank you sincerely for affording us that opportunity. Thank you for the past nine months of news, features and some excellent writing.

We have enjoyed being able to open a window on school life and being allowed to show you that in the vast majority of cases the children are doing just fine. Of course we have not been able to participate in so many of the external events that are normally such a part of our fabric - then again nothing in these past nine months has been normal. But what a bunch of resilient young people we are privileged to work with. Their willingness to just row in with all the changes and new routines we imposed on them was inspirational for us. I still recall the words of wisdom thrown at me by a pupil in Rang 3 back in September as I tried to explain what working with Covid restrictions would mean for everybody. "So it's just the same with a few differences!". What was I worried about? The children have been fantastic and just love being together with friends in a safe place. Sometimes all we need are the little things. It is such a shame that we cannot see that more clearly a little more often.

These past few weeks have seen us being able to bring an extra bit of fun into the building. We invited accomplished drummer Éamonn Cagney to provide a few workshops for all the pupils and as the accompanying pictures illustrate the children really enjoyed the experience. Live entertainment is so hard to beat and Éamonn had a wonderful way with the children. Apologies if some drum kits appear on the Santa wishlists!

We also put on a performance of the Snow Queen story which we streamed to all classes and on Monday next we will show the pantomime Jack and the Beanstalk for our pupils. It really is difficult to match the atmosphere of live performance and audience interaction but we expect to hear a few howls of laughter from the classrooms come Monday.

Of course we were disappointed not to be able to hold our traditional Christmas celebration in the church. For many it really was the kickstart to Christmas. Alas it could not take place this year. So instead the children performed in school and we have uploaded their performances to the website. Naturally the Junior Infants stole the show as per usual with their wonderful costumed nativity play. All the performances may be viewed on the website. Speaking of views on the website leads us neatly to another story. back in November we crossed the 300,000 hit mark on the site. A special prize was awarded to the keyboard warrior. The next target mark was set at 306090 and believe it or not the same boy hit the magic number again. Paddy is pictured here with his second winning prize. His thumb is still sore! We may well have to ban him from future competitions. Please don't tell him that the next target number has been set at 321,321. You just might have a chance.

We had a little fun last week ahead of the All Ireland Hurling Final. The biggest child in the school had a special interest. Pupils were encouraged to wear sports jerseys of their choice and we were hoping to see some unusual sportswear. We were not disappointed. Geansaithe arrived from such far flung enclaves as Australia, South Africa and Sligo! Some of the winners are pictured here. The Biggest Child loved the bookmark ladies. They know the way

to the Principal's heart. (Broken on Sunday BTW). No truth in the rumour that Johnny Logan is my favourite singer!!

So strange to have All Ireland Finals just before Christmas but the games have been a real outlet for so many over the past months . Full credit to all the amazing sportstars who have kept us entertained. Skill levels have been incredible despite the conditions of heavy pitches and some lousy weather. The Big Ball game gets centre stage this weekend with the Dubs on the brink of pushing the record books to new breaking points. Best wishes to the Royal Ladies as they chase All Ireland glory in the intermediate Final on Sunday. Wouldn't that be a super Christmas present?

We want to sign off on a positive as we look to a New Year that may start with a bump or two yet but that promises to offer us a way back to our more familiar way of living. The way we all behave and interact over the holiday period will be crucial in determining how big those bumps will be. Please be sensible in the way that you celebrate with family and friends.

We look forward to celebrating two very big events with friends and colleagues Michael Newman who got engaged to Múinteoir Clíona (RTE School Hub) earlier this term and also with Bn. Uí Raghallaigh who has been blessed with baby Dualta just in time to help his brothers deal with those troublesome elves who have invaded the house. We look forward with optimism to the day we can share your joy and happiness for these life changing events. Congratulations from all at Sc. Cholmcille.

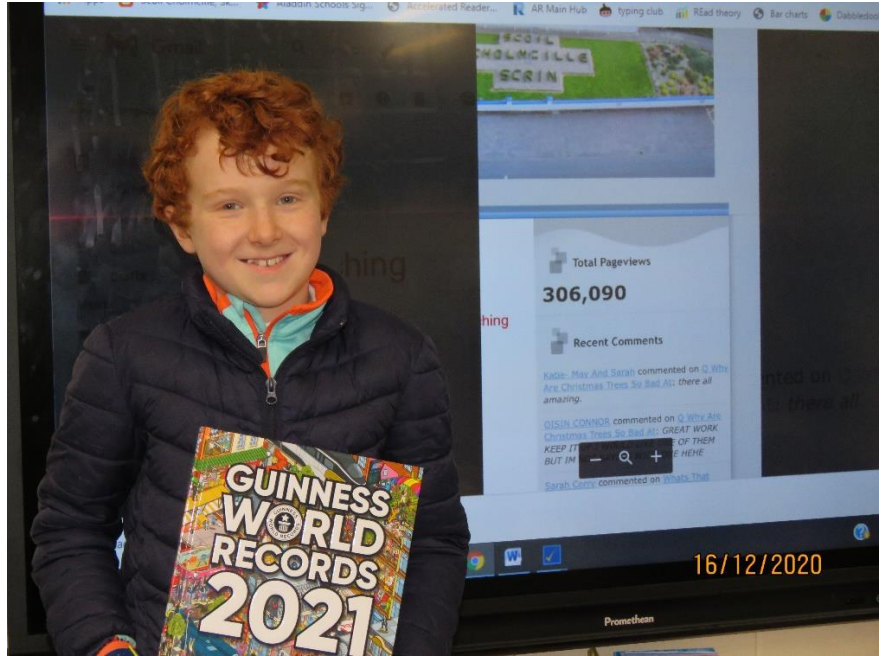
Finally a major thank you to the wider school community who have been so supportive over the past months. You have cooperated with all we have asked you to adapt to. A special word of thanks to those who have sent us emails, cards and messages of appreciation and encouragement. Your encouragement is the fuel that keeps us going. Míle buiochas daoibh ar aon.

The secret gardeners, leaf sweepers and general tidy-uppers are also really valued by us all. Great work but done quietly and effectively.

A word also of sympathy to those in our community who have lost close relatives and friends during the past months. It has been difficult not to have been able to share the support which friends and community can wrap around you at times of loss. Know that you are in our thoughts.

Have a special Christmas with those close to you and look to the brighter days ahead as we move away from the darkness of Winter Solstice and climb steadily towards the brighter days which Spring and vaccines promise. Fan sa chóngar agus fan slán.





The Hill of Tara

Continuing our serialisation of 'The Hill of Tara' which was written by Kenneth MacGowan in 1979.

THE HARVEST FESTIVAL

The Harvest Festival or Feis was a great event in the history of Tara. It was held triannually for one week and marked the period of Samhaintide, namely the three days before and three days after November Day. This event made Tara famous for nowhere in the western world at that time was there anything to equal the gaiety and splendour of royal Tara.

This festival was initiated by King Eochy who was also known as the Doctor of Erin because of his great wisdom and learning. He reigned some 1,300 years before the coming of Christ. Long before Imperial Rome, Athens or Troy became recognised as places of culture, Ireland had its own civilisation.

The festival served several different purposes. Matters of national interest were discussed, new laws enacted and the assessment of tribute examined. Tribal disputes were settled by chieftains and the provision of a militia for the preservation of the peace and protection of the country organised.

In fact, it also provided a time for reconciliation. It was absolutely forbidden for anyone to carry arms during the festival and there were severe laws for dealing with any form of faction or differences.

During the period of the festival certain concessions were given to criminals and nobody was allowed to use the occasion to take revenge or to try to recover debts due. Neither was anyone permitted to seize property or have anyone imprisoned.

But the festival, as the very title suggests, was also a time for feasting and merry-making. In fine weather some

activities took place out of doors but the great banquet hall must have served well in catering for those present. The place of every king and chieftain was fixed by the public heralds with great exactness and the feasting and drinking continued late into the night.

Both rich and poor were welcomed to the royal palace for the festivities and days preceding its opening saw the five chariot roads which led to Tara from all parts of Ireland thronged with people coming to participate.

The twelve magnificent portals of the palace were thrown open to admit princes, poets, athletes, bards and druids with their flowing beards. Jugglers and trick-o-the-loop performers were present to provide amusement with their own style of talents.

At sunset each evening the guests adjourned to the banquet hall which was capable of holding one thousand people at a sitting. The best of food and most elaborate dishes were prepared and the meals are said to have consisted of roast goose, mallard, venison, oxen, pheasant, and boars.

Music played an important part in the festivities and musicians came from all parts of the country to participate and entertain the guests. To the present day many Feiseanna are still held annually throughout Ireland and a high standard is expected from competitors.

In the year 76 A.D. Tuathal Teachtmhar (Toole the Lawful) who had been a powerful prince, became high king having killed a usurper who held the throne. In addition to ensuring the continuance of the Feis at Tara he also decreed that annual events should take place in other parts of the country.

Tuathal directed that a religious festival be held at

<p>Mancart cuid doib</p> <p>Enactiu me fmuin doib.</p> <p>Dyghim. ar lonc pmar doib</p> <p>Suid lram lonchru cric doib.</p> <p>T. m. m. f. i. n. d. li. i. r. u. a. c. h. a. r. d.</p> <p>Ollam rill loayg doib</p> <p>Amogh rill camenai. d.</p> <p>B. m. p. a. c. l. e. a. c. loayg do.</p> <p>A. u. g. e. r. r. i. f. i. reic hedi do</p> <p>Radi r. d. m. u. d. r. o. m. i. t. i. d. colpcha doib</p> <p>Ullanne r. f. i. c. r. u. a. c. h. a. r. d.</p>	<p>N. m. m. a. m. i. m. e. l. doib.</p> <p>a. r. l. i. n. n. a. g. c. o. l. p. d. a. d. o. b.</p> <p>S. c. o. l. a. r. e. e. l. i. r. d. i. r. u. a. c. h. a. r. d.</p> <p>T. o. b. a. i. n. m. e. l. d.</p> <p>T. i. n. d. a. r. m. i. t. e. c. a. r. d.</p> <p>C. a. m. p. a. r. r. e. a. c. a. c. h. n. a. i. d.</p> <p>C. l. i. f. f. a. n. a. i. g. c. o. l. p. c. h. a. d.</p> <p>C. o. m. h. i. r. l. a. m. m. r. u. m. e. d. i. m. o. r. t. o. m. d.</p> <p>R. a. m. m. i. r. u. i. f. c. a. i. r. u. m. i. t. e. c. a. r. d. doib</p> <p>C. a. m. p. e. m. a. m. r. c. o. r. c. a. i. r. l. i. m. m. a. m. e. m. d. a. doib.</p>	<p>dabuch. Dalem am mel doib</p> <p>laffran</p> <p>bin d. m. i. n. t. i. g.</p> <p>dail</p> <p>l. i. f. i. c. e.</p>	<p>Neccige mel doib</p> <p>Fidcellay colpcha. v.</p> <p>Deobige l. f. c. h. m. u. r. c. h. a. r. d. o. i. b.</p> <p>U. m. a. n. d. i. d. i. n. c. h. y. u. a. c. h. a. r. d.</p> <p>U. l. o. m. e. l. doib</p> <p>L. i. m. a. r. u. m. i. t. g. l. e. a. n. d.</p> <p>C. n. e. c. a. n. u. c. a. m. e. q. u. i. m. d.</p> <p>B. r. a. g. l. e. a. r. u. r. i. m. m. a. d.</p> <p>O. y. u. c. h. r. i. g. d. r. o. m. a. d.</p> <p>D. o. r. t. a. m. n. i. t. e. d. n. a. m. n. a. d. o. i. b.</p> <p>Ma. i. t. i. n. g. r. e. l. a. d. a. m. r. i. g. n. a. m. a. i. d. a. b.</p>	<p>A. n. a. d. c. u. i. d. doib.</p> <p>S. l. g. a. m. m. e. r. a. m. u. i. d. o. i. b.</p> <p>A. m. o. g. d. u. i. d. l. a. n. c. i. n. g. h. a. n. d.</p> <p>A. m. u. y. n. g. l. a. n. d. m. a. d. u. r. d.</p> <p>A. m. e. d. d. o. a. y. g. d. o.</p> <p>A. m. u. d. h. a. l. o. a. y. g. d. o.</p> <p>C. l. i. c. a. d. h. u. i. d. o.</p> <p>S. t. i. n. d. a. r. d. c. a. c. h. m. a. m. d. o.</p> <p>A. m. e. e. c. h. a. m. e. p. a. m. e. d. a.</p> <p>C. a. n. o. a. l. e. n. d. i. d.</p> <p>A. m. u. d. i. a. r. y. d. o. f. f. c. o. l. p. c. h. a. d. o. i. b.</p> <p>A. f. e. r. u. m. m. d. r. e. c. h. l. a. c. m. d. i. r. u. a. c. h. a. r. d.</p> <p>C. r. a. c. h. a. m. r. y. m. d. m. m. n. e. r. u. a. m. m. d. a. d.</p> <p>R. a. c. h. b. u. r. g. e. y. c. b. a. n. g. e. m. l. g. e. a. m. d. o. i. b.</p>
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Plan of the Great Banquet Hall
from the Book of Leinster

Tlachta near Athboy at Springtime; a fair to be held at Usnach about mid-Summer, also that a marriage market along with sports and games take place at Tailteann on the first Sunday of August. The latter continued up to the reign of the last high king.

The Tara Festival came to an end with the abandonment of Tara in the 6th century A.D. The annalists recorded these events until the year 554 A.D. when they enter "The last Feis of Tara was held".

Memories from Eoin Hickey

This is the final extract taken from Eoin's memoir titled 'Growing Up In Skryne'

The road straight ahead from Maher's Cross goes to Belper, where the local dispensary doctor, Doctor Murnane and his wife Alice, also a doctor, lived. Mrs Murnane was born in 1903 in South Africa, just after the Second Boer War and brought up there. My mother took her to lunch at Finnstown House Hotel when the doctor was in her nineties and still practising medicine. Mrs Murnane lived on to be the grand old age of 105. She was long predeceased by her husband and also by her daughter, Dr Marie, who lived in New York.

Further on up this road is the top of the Hill of Tara, with magnificent views across the whole country. Mr Benson, the old clergyman at Skryne, used to say that he had seen Croagh Patrick from Tara, *obviously when his eyesight was better!* Very near the top of the hill was Miss Tillson's thatched cottage. Today this is a modern bungalow, home to Joan Maguire (Joan Divine), who married all those years ago in Skryne Castle; Michael, her son, runs the souvenir shop and café opposite.



View of Skryne from Tara with Miss. Tillson's cottage – mid Fifties.

Miss Tillson would have been one of the very few regular churchgoers to St Patrick's Church at Tara. The stained glass window in St Patrick's was by the distinguished stained glass artist Evie Hone, titled *The Descent of the Holy Spirit* it was commissioned in 1933. When the

church was deconsecrated in 1991 and taken over by the O.P.W., the window was boarded up – but not at all safe. My mother and others campaigned to have it secured and eventually the O.P.W. came and removed it for temporary safe keeping. Now secure, also in the church at Tara, after resting awhile at Skryne Church, is the Cusack Stone which my mother unearthed while researching at Trevet.

Any time I'm on Tara I am reminded of some of Liam Hayes's writings about how Sean Boylan, in the Eighties, brought the Meath team up here to train on dark winter nights with only the lights of the cars. He wanted them *in a sacred place, to breathe in the air and to experience the spirit*. It must have worked!

It was on top of the Hill of Tara that at Easter 1953, An Tóstal, a new body to promote tourism, held *The Pageant of St Patrick*. It was a monster occasion. Anew McMaster played the role of Patrick; there were hundreds of participants, and tens of thousands of visitors, including the Taoiseach, Mr Eamon de Valera. So important was he that the organisers ran a telephone line down along the hedge, the mile or so to Dr Murnane's house at Belper so that he could be kept in touch with the outside world. I recall this event very well, even though I was only six, for my mother, along with Mrs Murphy of the Dairy Shop in Dunshaughlin took on the catering for the event. Two huge marquees were hired, along with ten gas Burco boilers. Trestle tables and bales of straw completed the fit out – I slept the night before in the tent with the night watchman!

Archaeological excavations opening up the Mound of the Hostages were a major event in the 1950s, undertaken by Professor Sean O'Riordan of UCD, who fell ill and died before they could be finished. The project was then taken over by Professor Rhuaidhri de Valera, who completed the work in 1959. My mother worked with them on the excavations, despite having five children at the time.

Now as we leave the Hill of Tara, the pony is delighted to be on his way home. Not very far down on our right is a spring well, just like that on the Hill of Skryne, feeding out to form a stream which runs down alongside the road. This stream is always rich in watercress and knowing that we were coming this way today, I've brought along two enamel buckets so we'll stop the pony and pick some.

We head back down the hill at a fast trot, halting the pony only at the main road, which has just recently been tarred for the first time. We start to climb towards Skryne; the hedges are cut so we have a good view to our right of both the front and side of the castle with its high round tower on the corner – which reminds me: I promised to return to the explanation of the Ghost of Skryne Castle. It's a long story! We've just arrived at the top of the hill and must disembark, so I'm afraid we'll have to leave it to another time.

The End

Rathfeigh National School from Seamus Tansley

Fundraiser

Last week's fundraiser organised by our Parents' Association was a tremendous success. Due to Covid-19 this was our only fundraiser in 2020 and our Parents' Association ensured it was very successful. Even the most optimistic in Rathfeigh couldn't have envisaged the amount of bags collected in this "Cash for Clobber" fundraiser. Our school hall was half full of bags by the end of the weekend and we thank everyone, not just in Rathfeigh, but also from Skryne for supporting us. The money garnered from the fundraiser will be pumped back into the school for the benefit of all the children. Thanks to everyone on the Parents' Association who gave of their time on Friday and Saturday to ensure the event ran smoothly and safely.

Our PA also ran a "Guess the weight of the Clobber" competition. A lot of maths and guesswork was needed in order to get an estimate of the total weight. A Christmas hamper will be on its way early next week to the person with the closest "guess".

We thank our Parents' Association for the staffroom treats that they generously gave to us last week. It was a lovely surprise for which we thank them.

Christmas Raffle

Our student council Christmas Raffle takes place on Tuesday. Faye, Rhys, Lucy and Isobel have done trojan work organising this raffle. There will be two hampers as prizes – one hamper from Juniors-Second and another hamper from Third-Sixth. Tickets will be on sale until Monday. Good luck everyone.

Christmas Play

Following strict guidelines issued by the Department of Education and Science in line with Covid-19 restrictions parents/guardians will not be invited to attend our Christmas celebrations this year. However, as it is important to support positive well-being for pupils in our school we have decided to record all classes participating in a Christmas celebration on Monday while socially distancing. These will be posted on the online learning platform "Edmodo". We hope to be able to see the finished product in school on Tuesday.

We would like all the children to wear either a Christmas jumper or Christmas colours to school on Monday if possible. If there are any parents/guardians who do not want their child to be recorded please let the class teacher know Monday morning.

Tuesday will be a non-uniform day also as it is the last day of the term.

All-Ireland Final

This evening's All-Ireland final promises to be very exciting. Although it is more low-key this year due to Covid-19 we all hope for a close and exciting game. The children in 3rd/4th and 5th/6th have given their verdicts and winning margins for the game. The children in each class with the closest winning margin will get a selection box on Monday. If the predictions are anything to go by then it looks like an easy win for Dublin!! Hopefully the game will be closer than the Rathfeigh children expect!!

Kris Kindle

The children in 3rd/4th and 5th/6th are really excited about opening their Kris Kindle presents on Monday. They dropped in the presents to the school more than a week ago due to Covid. We hope everyone gets something special from their classmates!

Thanks

This year has been difficult and stressful to say the least. A collective effort has resulted in the school remaining open during this difficult period. We have a fantastic staff and without everyone putting their shoulder to the wheel we may not have gotten through the last few months. I want to thank all the following people personally for their invaluable support and dedication over the last four months – Mrs Vaughan, Mrs Campbell, Ms O’Donoghue, Ms Reynolds, Mrs Cooke, Nicola (SNA), Helen (secretary), Jackie (caretaker) and Ingrid (cleaner). Parents/guardians have been very supportive of the work that all the teachers are doing and for that we thank them. Our Parents’ Association did an excellent fundraiser and we thank them for their huge efforts. Our Board of Management members have worked tirelessly since March. Their advice and hard work ensured that the school has remained open since the end of August. Thanks Máire (Chairperson), Connor, Jackie, Bridget, Bernard, Clare and Mary. Of course the biggest thanks must go to the children. To say they have been brilliant is an understatement. They have never complained and have been so resilient. We are all so proud of every one of them and we wish them a safe and enjoyable Christmas.

Over the last few months the RST has been a great source of information for the people in Rathfeigh and Skryne. A big thanks to Jim for undertaking this mammoth task on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Many thanks.

We wish everyone in Rathfeigh and Skryne a happy, healthy and safe Christmas. We hope to see everyone back in school on January 6th.

Stay positive. Positive anything is better than negative nothing!!

(Below are a few festive pictures of the children in school).







Full Many a Flower is born to Blush unseen by Vincent Coyle

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

These wonderful lines from Gray's Elegy are so apt and so true.

There were many in our midst who lived spectacular lives but their demure and self effacing nature ensured that they passed to their eternal reward...in the words of Walter Scott's poem..and oft quoted by the Mammy..."unwept, unhonour'd and unsung".

A man of that nature lived among us in my youth .He was quietly outstanding. He built our church in Ballinacree without ever asking the congregation in general for a bob. The Mammy once asked him where he got the money .

"I asked all the old bachelors in the parish who had no living relations to help out and to their eternal credit...they coughed up"he said.

The man I refer to was none other than the Clara native Fr. Troy.

Fr.Troy and Patrick Kavanagh's P.P. had something in common.

They both trained for their priesthood in Salamanca in Spain.

It must have been a bit of a shock to the system to have spent 7 years in the Spanish sunshine ,eating oranges and drinking wine and then to arrive home to Inniskeen or Mountnugent and probably on the type of day when you wouldn't let a dog out.

My first encounter with Fr. Troy was on a sunny day at the school gable where he taught us the Latin responses for Mass.

He wanted us to say "Juventutem meam" but would not allow any slurring over the words or skipping bits here and there.

He encouraged us to say and say slowly...Juven....tutemmeam.

He made "meam" into two words....May and am.

His favourite phrase was "Say it again laddie".

We said it again and again and hence I can still say it today.

The De Profundus was that bit at the end of Mass from psalm 130 or in English...Out of the depths...

Lots of lassies and lads used it as titles for their poems.

We'll mention Oscar Wilde...C.S.Lewis...and Christina Rossetti.

The famous Elizabeth Barrett Browning and indeed Baudelaire and the famous Dorothy Parker amongst others.

Just as an aside Dorothy Parker was once told that the American president Calvin Coolidge had died

....Coolidge was a bit of a waster and did nothing or less in his lifetime...Cool hand Luke Parker remarked..."How can they tell ?

At the end of the Mass one took a good run at the De Profundus and hoped that with a bit of speed and the occasional slurring of words together one might reach the end line and could then relax.

This was grand with Fr. Butler or other quiet ,gentle curates....but inevitably with Fr. Troy...the call came in the middle of the slur..."Say it again laddie".

This was a heartbreaker but had to be endured.

Eventually one could grab the biretta..pass it to Fr. Troy and escape to the freedom of the sacristy.

My youngest brother who shall be nameless to protect Finbarr was out in the yard one day when a cock leapt up and picked him on the cheek.

He left a mark the size of a sixpence....in old money...or a five cent piece in today's lingo.

The resultant mark was bright purple and hard and not a pretty sight.

Our sainted Mammy took Finbarr to the Doc. who said...."We'll wait until he matures and then we'll have it surgically removed"

One day shortly afterwards Fr. Troy called and Mammy showed him the mark on Finbarr's cheek and suggested that he touch it.

She believed that if he touched it...it would disappear.

A few days later one of my younger brothers alerted Mammy to the fact that the bruise...mark...lump..or whatever it was had gone completely.

That was Fr. Troy said the Mammy confidently.

We once had a wonderful cow who gave us more milk than any three others.

One fine day the Da came into the kitchen to the Mammy to say that the "good cow" was above in the field and couldn't get up because of "milk fever".

Milk fever in those days affected the best cows in the herd and was generally fatal. The Da was distraught and not a very happy bunny.

The Mammy suggested that he head for the parochial house in Mountnugent and tell Fr. Troy . This he did and was advised by Fr. Troy to head off home where he find his cows walking around the field eating grass.

This proved to be the case.

The Da became a bit more religious for the next few weeks or so and then reverted to normality.

One day a woman who was a pal of the Mammy called to say that her daughter was suffering from a constant nose bleed and a cure could not be found despite visits to quacks, chemists,doctors and indeed hospital. She was naturally "up the walls".

The Mammy instantly suggested that Fr. Troy was yer only man when all else failed. Fr. Troy was summoned and duly arrived.

He banned everybody from the bedroom where the young girl was and knelt down and prayed for a while.

He then popped downstairs and advised the young girls mother to remove the cotton wool from her daughter's nose as she was perfectly all right.

She has remained “perfectly all right “ to this day.

Now here’s the question.

Were these happenings miracles or coincidences or would all three examples have righted themselves anyway.

Some folk say that when a man goes to Lourdes with one leg and comes home with two...then that’s a miracle.

Some say that if you ask a fortune teller for the winning numbers in next week’s lotto and he gives them to youthen he can truly foretell the future.

Some call these folk skeptics and even cynics.

Some believe implicitly in miracles.

Me...I’m a bit of a doubting Thomas and generally need to pop the paw in before I believe.

I was around for the three instances mentioned and not only knew the people involved but also knew Fr. Troy.

I believe that these three examples were indeed miracles.

Fr. Troy was not a man for publicity and avoided the limelight.

He’s probably up there now saying....”Nobody asked you to write that laddie”.

That’s true but in today’s world where everything is known or so we think, it behoves someone to write this account .

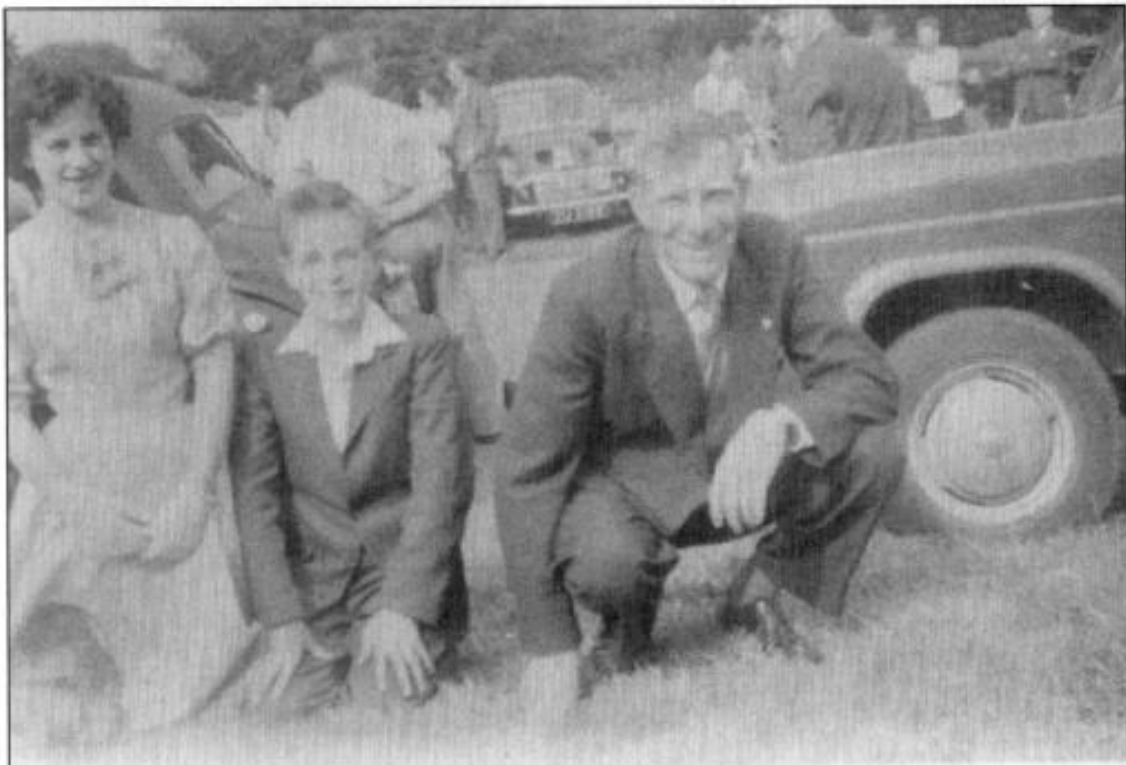
The girl with the nose bleed and my brother were both probably too young to remember...and I can’t see the cow writing to the editors of the Celt or the Chronicle.

I wonder if any of our readers have had similar experiences..?

Some more extracts from Joan's Milestones along the journey of life

Racing On Wooden Wheels!

My Father was a very good racing cyclist when he was young, (probably one of the top five or six in Ireland during the late thirty's and forty's), he raced in Ireland and England, on the track and on the road, I think he favoured the track, this would be in a sports field and they would use cane wheels on their bikes, (this was for lightness).



*The Phoenix Park
Waiting for the winner of An Ras Tealteann.
Sheila Keelan, (McCluskey), Patsy Keelan and George Gallagher,.*

A lap of the track would have to be measured so that four laps was a mile.

There were also Flappers which they rode in, but these were outside the Cycling Federation Rules (akin to the G.A.A. ban on foreign games) and if they were caught they were in serious trouble.

I only remember his last two or three big races, as he finished racing when I was still very young, and even at the end of his cycling career

he was bringing home the prizes. Our house was full of lovely things he won over the years.

Other names I remember who raced in my Father's time, were Christol and Anderson.

So another of the highlights of our year in the early 1960's was "An Ras Tealteann", an eight-day bicycle race around Ireland which was an annual affair. In those days it always ended in the Phoenix Park on the eighth day, and there would be thousands there to greet the cyclists at the finishing line, but we would be some of the first there as Dad would have to get us a "good spot" don't you know.

Jimmie Keelan

(note the cane wheels attached to front axle for easy carrying)



The Night Sky by Tony Canavan

Sunrise: 840 am

Sunset: 407 pm

New Moon: 14th December

Full Moon: 30th November (Penumbral Eclipse)

December 21st: The Great Conjunction: If you look to the west around 4/5 pm you will see Jupiter (altitude 13°, azimuth 200°) and close by to the left you will see a fainter Saturn. The two planets are almost together in line of sight on 21st December called The Great Conjunction. Many astronomers believe that 'The Star of Bethlehem' referred to in the Bible was actually a Great Triple Conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn and Earth. (see below).

This is the closest the two have been since 1623 and no doubt observed by Johannes Kepler who studied planetary motion resulting in **Kepler's Laws of Planetary Motion**, which laid the basis for **Newton's Laws of Gravity**. This was also during the lifetime of **Galileo Galilei** who invented the telescope.

Mars: The red planet is in the South each evening and does not set until about 3 am.

December 21st: Winter Solstice: The December solstice occurs at 1002 am when the sun reaches its most southern point in our sky. On this day the Northern Latitudes are tilted as far as possible away from the sun and so the sun's path across the sky is very low. The path of the sun rises from then on as the northern latitudes starts to tilt back towards the sun and the days start to get longer and the sun higher in the sky.

Any clear evening: On any clear evening there is a feast of stars in the evening sky with the constellations of **Orion, Taurus and Auriga and Gemini and all their companions**, rising in the evening sky from 8 pm in December. Best viewed around midnight when they are high to the south. On a clear night it is spectacular.

Star of Bethlehem: The account of the 'Star of Bethlehem' has fascinated astronomers for years and many books have been written on the subject. The presence of the star can be claimed to be a miraculous event (a new star) or a natural event and astronomers have examined the latter. The only reference that astronomers have is the Gospel of Matthew as it is the only gospel in which it is mentioned. It is possible now to run the clock back to the time of Jesus and examine the night sky to try and find a celestial event that would have brought the Magi from Mesopotamia, in a region that is modern day Iraq, a part of the world with a very rich culture. This journey would have taken months. One of the first problems that astronomers have is that the exact year of the birth of Jesus is unknown but again relying on Matthew's account it was in the reign of King Herod who is believed to have died in either 1 B.C. or 2 B.C. which would put Jesus's birth before 1 or 2 B.C. So astronomers tend to examine the night sky between 1 B.C. and 7 B.C. and there are a number of options because the Babylonians and the Chinese kept very accurate records of the night sky.

Alignment of the planets: A strong possibility is the triple alignment of Jupiter and Saturn. The Magi are known to have been learned priests/astrologers who made precise studies of the night sky. The alignment of the planets would have been unknown to Herod so as in Matthew's Gospel they called on Herod to inform him. This was a **Triple Alignment** (Jupiter and Saturn coming together three times in a few months), caused by 'retrograde motion' or the inner planets catching up with, and overtaking the outer planets. The planets in this case must be exactly aligned on the same celestial plane. This only occurs every 900 years. The alignments happen over a period of months the first occurring on the 27th March 7 B.C. The planets appeared together in the dawn sky (in the East). The coming together was in the constellation of Pisces (The Fish) and each neighbouring country had been allocated a constellation. Pisces was the constellation (Ptolemaic astronomy) of the region of Jerusalem. This triple conjunction is recorded on Babylonian clay tablets. This would have been a very significant event to the Magi who would have tried to interpret its significance to some important event on earth.

Comet: A very good option:

The Chinese record an event in 5 B.C. in March to April a brilliant 'broom star' (Comet) appeared in the constellation of the OX for more than 70 days.

The tail of a comet points down towards the horizon as if indicating that something important is happening. Matthew indicates that the star was seen twice, once to bring the Magi to Jerusalem and then to bring them to Bethlehem. The comet would have been seen on its way into the sun, disappears for a few weeks and reappears on its way back. This could explain how the 'Star of Bethlehem' appeared twice to the Magi.

Giotto's 'Adoration of the Magi' in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, Italy, showing the star as a comet.



Whatever it was it has become an enduring symbol of peace.

Happy Christmas

Pastoral Scene Near Dalgan Park Last Month

Photo sent in by Norbert Coyle





BRUCE STILL BRINGING LIGHT INTO PEOPLE'S LIVES

Tom O'Neill, whose retired guide dog now lives with Joan Gallagher, talks about his old friend, Bruce.

BRUCE was my faithful guide dog for nearly nine years until he retired in January 2001.

Over the next eight years or so, this serious, steady, working dog and myself travelled from our home in Balbriggan to my office in Dublin City Centre, by train or bus and during the years we worked as a team, we travelled all around the country and abroad. We visited schools on a regular basis talking about guide dogs and what it is like to be visually impaired. Bruce loved these occasions as he lapped up the attention from the children and adults alike.

When the time came for Bruce to retire, a lady called Joan Gallagher, who had just retired herself, took Bruce to live with her in Co. Meath. With Joan, Bruce has found a new niche for himself as a member of Peata, The Irish Organisation for Pets and People. This is a voluntary association whose main aim and activity is the organisation and control of visiting pets in caring institutions such as long stay nursing homes, establishments for the mentally, physically and vision impaired, day care centres and home visits. This is known as pet-facilitated therapy (PFT) and is a term used to describe the use of companion animals (usually dogs) in various clinical, therapeutic and remedial situations. Experience has shown that the dogs are a boon to residents and staff, bring companionship and aid social interaction and help to combat isolation, loneliness, boredom and depression.

Bruce and Joan, who are a fully approved Peata Visiting Team, visit "Silver Stream" Retirement Home in Ratoath, Co. Meath every Thursday. The patients love him and he loves them, (especially the ones who sneak him the odd biscuit).

Bruce forgets many of his pains when he arrives at Silver Stream because he runs to the door to get in. I wonder is it the joy of meeting the residents again or the hope of getting a little tit-bit he would never have got as a guide dog!

When friends phone Joan, their first question is "how is Bruce", then they ask how she is herself! This very neatly summarises the importance of the dog in the visiting scheme relationship. Further information about Peata may be obtained by writing to: Peata, 5 Kenilworth Square, Dublin 6. Ph: 01 2964474 or by visiting their website www.peata.org.



Bruce with new owner Joan

THE TELLY

Sometimes, when I look at the televisions (plural!) in the house and consider the way we take the box for granted I have to smile at the memory of the first telly that arrived in my family home. I think the year was 1967 and I know for sure that it arrived in time for Christmas. Prior to that we depended for our viewing on neighbours who had got in earlier and invested in this magical technology. The idea that it was going to be there at my fingertips every day of the week nearly blew me away! I soon found out that viewing time was rationed due to homework, yardwork and the danger of "wearing it out" but the initial delicious joy will stay with me forever. Watching television was a family thing. No remote and one set per house meant that everyone watched the same programmes. You can just imagine who controlled the viewing. It certainly wasn't me. Fortunately my father had a broad range of tastes or else great tolerance and so it was that everything from The Magic Roundabout to The Outsider was appreciated by us all. Westerns and detective programmes were particular favourites so The Virginian, The High Chaparral, (Howdy, Brother Buck), Cannon, Mannix and a whole host of braver than brave heroes entered my life and became firm friends. Their phrases made their way into our lives. (Sorry about that, Chief; This message will self-destruct in five seconds; Book him, Danno; and even: That's a grand cake, Nora!). The trouble was that they became unmissable and were often the cause of much grief as parents decided that mundane activities like study and pulping turnips had to be dealt with too. Strangely enough, considering I was a complete addict in my youth, I could happily live without a television today. I'll go now. Have to see who won the X-Factor. - J. Scanton

Christmas Crackers

Q What do you call Santa's little helpers?

A Subordinate Clauses!

Q How do sheep greet each other at Christmas time?

A Merry Christmas to ewe!

Q What do you have in December that you don't have in any other month?

A The letter 'D'!

Q What do you call a letter put up the chimney on Christmas Eve?

A Blackmail!

Q What is white and goes up?

A A confused snowflake!

Q What do you give a railway station master for Christmas?

A Platform Shoes!

Q Why does Santa have 3 gardens?

A So he can ho-ho-ho!



Christmas Magic and Moonlight by Anne Frehill

One of our greatest gifts is the faculty of memory, the process by which the mind stores and then retrieves information and mental images which we have learned or experienced. Of course, memory can be selective, when the brain selects “to forget” certain facts or occurrences, as in the case of traumatic events or even in boring, and less interesting happenings. Like all our faculties we fail to properly appreciate memory until something goes wrong. One of the cruellest groups of disorders is that relating to memory, caused by abnormal changes in the brain, and often known under the umbrella term of “dementia.” Memories are part and parcel of every individual and is it not astonishing that during a single lifetime (given joy and sorrow, tears and laughter, triumph, and tragedy) or in the succinct words of Shakespeare “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune”, every individual accumulates his own unique set of memories.

Now that Christmas is approaching, here are some memories (albeit nostalgic) of Christmases past. Preparations began in November when my dear mother, who took great delight in baking, made three Christmas cakes and three Christmas puddings for our family. The smells which emanated from that kitchen as she systematically greased and lined baking tins and then beat, whisked, and stirred in an assortment of ingredients was mesmerising to the young. Even as a very small child I loved to help with the making of the cakes but with hindsight I suppose all I was waiting for was the opportunity to purloin a few dried vine fruits or have a tasty lick of the wooden spoon which to my uninitiated palate bore traces of exotic spices and forbidden brandy. The puddings were a different matter and I tried to avoid the kitchen at all costs when my mother was making them. I hated the way each one had to be steamed for several hours and the precision around sealing it correctly with greaseproof paper, tin foil, and string before submerging it into the large saucepan of simmering water. Afterwards, both cakes and puddings were put away in airtight containers and to my astonishment fed periodically with whiskey until Christmas week arrived.

Every year on the first Saturday in December, I took a walk through the frost covered fields with my father to what was referred to as “the wood.” A couple of acres separate from the farm where Dad grew Norway spruce and fir trees interspersed with birch and some magnificent oaks. It was always a magical place for me no matter the season but especially at that time of year as my young mind conjured up all sorts of images relating to fairies and the little people! Red picture-book toadstools with white spots otherwise known as *Amanita muscaria* or fly agaric, were everywhere and as a child of five or six years of age, I believed that if I searched hard enough under them that I would find traces of mischievous elves. My poor father watched me with an eagle eye as he knew that they belonged to a group of poisonous mushrooms. Then he would coax me to take his hand and walk beneath the trees. My eyes marvelling at the height of the spruce and fir, some of which reached 40 m, while the beauty and scale of the oaks never failed to impress even my immature mind. However, it was the young trees that most interested us on such days as we were searching for a suitable one to act as our Christmas tree. Eventually, he would select from a group of youngsters, a suitable Norway spruce or fir and mark it with twine to be felled later in the day when I was safely back home and out of the way of falling branches.

I was given the job of choosing the holly bushes with the most luscious berries and there were several. Again, these were marked with twine, branches were cut and brought home nearer to the big day, to be placed behind pictures and mirrors not only in our own house but in the houses of neighbours. I shall never forget that initial piney -refreshing odour which assailed our nostrils when we first entered the wood. And as our sense of smell is the most evocative one of all I still love to walk through a forest or get the lingering scent from a real Christmas tree.

The following Saturday he would bring it proudly into the house and it would be erected in the sitting room. Then it took an hour or more to untangle sets of Christmas lights from previous years before decorating the tree with an eclectic collection of shiny baubles, miniature snowmen, tiny sleigh bells, and reams of tinsel. Finally, came the task of putting a large star at the tip of the tree, and to this day I can see

in my mind`s eye my mother standing on the top rung of a wobbly step-ladder putting the last touches to the Christmas decorations.

The exchange of Christmas cards was of huge importance in those days, without the omnipresent social media platforms which have taken over our world. My parents list began with cards to friends and relations who had emigrated sometime between the 1920`s and the 1950`s, then cards to Dublin, Galway and the largest of the Aran Islands where Mam`s friend, a nurse, had married a local fisherman. And finally, cards to friends and neighbours in Meath. Over the following days I watched with growing excitement as cards began to arrive at our house, from USA, England and the four provinces. Most portrayed idyllic Victorian scenes i.e. children skating on frozen ponds, muffled up in hats, scarfs and gloves or Santa Claus near a massive Christmas tree with a sack of toys. Others pulled at the heart strings as they showed sheep and /or robins in snowy landscapes. Last but not least came cards in all shapes and sizes, revealing the simplicity of the stable where Jesus, the Son of God and the Prince of Peace was born. Although, I could not possibly have explained it then I always found myself, despite the glitter on the other cards, gazing in awe at the baby Jesus lying in the manger.

Around this time my parents threw themselves into the task of killing/ plucking and preparing their thirty or so turkeys for the market run by Ganly-Craigie. My mother reared them from day-old chicks and lavished attention on them. It was a horrific shock to my childish mind when the time came to kill them but mercifully, she always arranged for me to go to my friend`s house on those two days as I would literally have screamed "blue murder."

There was no doubt about it her turkeys were superb but for years I stubbornly refused to eat even a morsel of turkey meat much to her consternation. To distract me from the plight of the poor turkeys she encouraged me to write a long letter with the help of an older sister to Santa Claus, not only listing the toys I wanted him to bring but also telling him about various happenings in the previous year. It was certainly a great way to get my mind off my worries about the fowl as it took at least three or four attempts before I

was satisfied that my letter (complete with blots of ink and thumb prints) was suitable to be posted to the North Pole.

Pride of place was given to the beautiful old crib with small carved figures of Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus, while from the side an ox and donkey contemplated the Divine Infant. The crib was placed on a small table in the corner of our kitchen so that unlike the tree which was in the sitting room, we would not forget the real meaning of Christmas.



On the penultimate weekend before Christmas my father used to play cards at night in local houses and because there were young children in those houses to play with me, I often accompanied him. The prizes were usually the same each year, a bottle of Powers whiskey, a box of Milk Tray chocolates or 50 cigarettes (Major). I know that he won the cigarettes at least one year and the whiskey another year but as they did not interest me, I have no real memories about them. An example I suppose of the selective memory I

mentioned earlier. Yet, I can recall the journeys by shank's mare with Dad to and from those homes. Some nights were pitch black, with not even a hint of a star as we walked along the deserted road. Only the glow of a cigarette or two in the dark coming from the opposite direction indicated that there were other people still out and about. Then, catching Dad's hand tightly as they came nearer, I would hold my breath imagining all sorts of wicked wanderers and phantoms. However, to my relief vaguely familiar voices would say "Goodnight" and he would reply in an equally friendly manner: "Goodnight men", and on we would go like ships passing in the night. Of course, on the moonlight nights it was different, not only did passers-by address each other on first name terms but they often stopped for a chat while I studied the stars and fancied that by picking out the brightest one of all I had found the same star that had guided the Three Wise Men to a manger in the town of Bethlehem.

When Christmas Eve dawned, I seemed to have an internal clock which got me up early as I did not want to miss out on one second of the day. First on the list of chores to be completed was the Christmas cake.

Mam would by then have iced it with a layer of home-made almond icing and home-made white icing. So, all that remained to be done was the scattering of tiny, silver edible balls on the top along with miniature reindeer pulling a cute sleigh complete with Santa Claus. And to finish, a big red bow tied around the side!

Next came the preparation of the stuffing followed by pastry making for the mince pies, to be put in the fridge until the following day. And my favourite chore of all, helping Mam make English trifle, I was allowed taste a sponge finger drowned in sherry, part of that sumptuous dessert. Then after a light lunch she took down her finest china and dinner service plus a canteen of silver-plated cutlery with ivory handles, (the provenance of the cutlery is unknown!). I hadn't got a clue then that ivory came from the tusks and teeth of elephants and so I was blissfully unaware of the suffering which those poor animals endured. Every item had to be washed in soapy water, dried and polished in anticipation of the delicious meals to be served not only on Christmas day but also served to visitors until the 6th January when they were fondly put away for another year, with the exception of a visit from "Yanks" or some important family occasion.

By mid-afternoon I settled down beside the radio to listen to Radio Eireann where Santa Claus called out the names of Irish children from his long list. My name was never mentioned but that did not matter to me as the programme reassured me that all was well with Santa and that he would soon be arriving in Meath.

After tea, we lit a big candle and placed it carefully in the window where it was monitored regularly by the steely eye of my mother lest it caught fire. Later, my bath over, all that remained for me to do was to watch Dad leaving some hay out for the reindeer at the front door followed by Mam putting a plate of Christmas pudding with a glass of whiskey near the biggest fireplace in the house. Indeed, at that time we still had fireplaces in each room and for Christmas a small fire burned in every single room. Nowadays, with AI (artificial intelligence) we can even turn on the heating systems in our homes from miles away or just pre- set our oil/gas systems before we leave home to switch -on at certain times. So, it was no mean feat to maintain a warm fire in all the rooms.

Supper that night was unusual because it consisted of so called “shop Christmas cake” washed down with Club orange. It was customary in those days for shopkeepers to reward their customers at Christmas with the present of a Christmas cake and a calendar for the coming year. However, as the cake was “shop-made” and usually tasted dry and overly sweet in contrast to my mother`s rich, juicy, and moist cakes she was eager to dispose of it. She knew from experience that once we tasted her delicious baking the shop - cake would not stand a chance and would ultimately be wasted and as an able homemaker she prided herself on not wasting food.

At bedtime, my father who was a natural storyteller, regaled me with stories about foxes, hedgehogs, and reindeer. I begged for one final peep out the window if it was a moonlight night because I knew that Santa and his reindeer were somewhere in the sky. And when my mother had tucked me in, Dad always said.

“Go Mbeirimid beo ag an am seo arís ”(may we be all alive this time next year).

Finally, what better way to finish than with a piece written by a Norwegian novelist who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

“And when we give each other

Christmas gifts in His name, let us

remember that He has given us the sun, the moon, and the stars,

and the earth with its forests and mountains and oceans- and all that lives and move upon them. He has given us all green things and everything that blossoms and bears fruit,

and all that we quarrel about and

all that we have misused – and to

save us from our foolishness, from

all our sins, He came down to earth

and gave us Himself.

Sigrid Undset

(1882-1949)

RST Community Centre



The RST Centre wishes all our supporters a safe and very happy Christmas. Thank you for using our very modern facilities.

The **RST AGM** will be held on **Monday 11th January @ 8 pm**. It will be a Virtual **ZOOM** meeting. Details about joining the meeting are as follows:

Meeting ID: 810 5478 9637

Passcode: 869003. {Reminder to follow later}

CORK CITY IN FLAMES—NIGHT OF HORROR.

**PANIC-STRICKEN
CITIZENS.**

'A VERITABLE HELL.

**PITIFUL SPECTACLE
OF DESOLATION.**

2,000 PERSONS IDLE

**MOST REV. DR. COHALAN
ON AMBUSHES.**

IMPORTANT DECREE.

Practically the whole of the south side of Patrick street, Cork, the principal thoroughfare of the city, in which were situated the leading business establishments, has been reduced to ruins by fires started after Curfew began in Cork on Saturday night.

The damage already done is roughly estimated at £2,000,000, while it is believed that as an immediate result over 2,000 persons will be thrown out of employment.

In addition to the desolation in the business locality, extensive destruction was caused by the burning down of the Municipal Buildings, the City Hall, and the Carnegie Free Library.

APPALLING DAMAGE.

Citizens of Cork, the "Irish Independent" correspondent telegraphed last night, never experienced such a night of terror as that of Saturday. Residents in every part of the town were terrified all through the night, by rifle and revolver firing, bomb explosions, outbreaks of fire, such as never were seen before, the breaking and smashing of windows of business premises, and the crashing of falling buildings. This dreadful state of things continued till dawn,












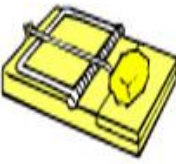
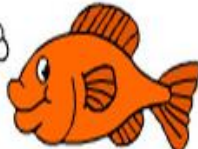
when it was seen that the greater portion of the chief business centre of Cork was of ruins, and that in many places fires were still blazing.

It was an appalling spectacle. Approaching Curfew hour, 10 o'clock on Saturday night, people still on the streets were startled by the discharge of revolver and rifle shots. This firing, which was intermittent and lasted until 10 o'clock, had the effect of immediately clearing the thoroughfares, and, with the exception of armed parties, no one seemed to be abroad at that time.

Dingbats

Can you solve this Dingbats puzzle?

Answers will appear in the next issue of the newsletter

 <p>fable</p>	 <p>bump bump</p>	  <p>COCOA</p>	
01	02	03	04
<p>filly</p> 	 <p>reptile</p>	<p>T</p> 	 <p>glue</p>
05	06	07	08
	<p>STOP</p> 	 <p>EE</p>	<p>Au</p> 
09	10	11	12

Last weeks answers

1 Fog Horn, 2 Fish Tank, 3 Box Clever, 4 Stop The Pidgeon, 5 Doctor Zeus, 6 Hourglass Figure, 7 Drain Pipes, 8 Parcel Force, 9 Hat Trick, 10 Brain Strain, 11 Playing The Fool, 12 Not Bad

Poetry Corner

Life's Diversities by Brian Smyth

(I)

The sound of tinkling bells is on the highway
And music softly sweetly from them swells
But withered "caoin" notes sound a down the byway
A broken, halting, strain of grief that wells
In hearts glooms smothered, a beaten knells.

(II)

The laugh of lightsome spirits as they wander
Flows full and frenzied free from troubles gall
And scarce if ever in their course they ponder
Or think of others tho' pleading voices call
Craving the help to lift them from their fall.

(III)

And saddened hearts will troop along the byway
Lost in the mazy ways, which lead astray
Whilst gorged and happy they tread the highway
Drinking the joys of life, tasting what ere they may
Tho' hapless ones and wead slow wither and decay.

(IV)

Though sound of tinkling bells be on the highway
This bright and gay music too must have an end
Like to the kindred strains which haunt the byway
Chastened, saddened wayfarers will trend
With reckonings of the life which God to them did lend.

I Look Out My Window by Lucia Reynolds

This virus is here and no visitors can come
So I look out the window at the glistening sun,
I watch, I wait, as I sit in my chair,
I look out my window but nobody's there,
Will anyone come, am I left here to stay,
As I sit by my window no visitors today,
Well its four months now and I do despair,
I look out my window it's so unfair,
The Doctors and Nurses are busy I hear,
I need my family I want them near,
This age comes to us all, if you are lucky they say,
I look out my window still no one today,
When the Nurse says its tea time she shows me the way,
She asked how I'm feeling I say I'm ok,
I have a small room I sleep here alone,
I look out my window I want to go home,
Its morning time now, I sit and I pray,
So I look out my window, WILL SOMEONE COME TODAY

Some Paraprosdokians from Norbert Coyle

The first time I heard about paraprosdokians, I liked them. Paraprosdokians are figures of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected & is frequently humorous. (Winston Churchill loved them.)

1. Where there's a will, I want to be in it.
2. The last thing I want to do is hurt you... but it's still on my list.
3. Since light travels faster than sound, some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
4. If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.
5. We never really grow up... we only learn how to act in public.
6. War does not determine who is right, only who is left.
7. Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
8. To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.
9. I didn't say it was your fault, I said I was blaming you.
10. You do not need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.
11. I used to be indecisive, but now I'm not so sure.
12. To be sure of hitting the target, shoot first & call whatever you hit the target.
13. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian, any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.
14. You're never too old to learn something stupid.
15. I'm supposed to respect my elders, but it's getting harder & harder for me to find one now.

8 Differences

Find the 8 differences hidden in these two seemingly identical pictures



Some Awful Christmas Jokes

The teacher asked her Sunday School class to draw a picture of a Bible story with a Christmas theme. She was puzzled by Kate's picture, which showed four people on an airplane. She asked her which story it was meant to represent. 'The Flight to Egypt,' was the reply. Pointing at each figure, the teacher ventured: 'That must be Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus. But who's the fourth person?'" 'Oh,' explained Kate happily, 'that's Pontius - the pilot!'

If athletes get athlete's foot, what do astronauts get? Missile toe.

At a clearance sale, the wife of a senior judge found the perfect green tie to match one of her husband's sports jackets. Soon after, while the couple was relaxing at a resort to get his mind off a complicated cocaine-conspiracy case, he noticed a small, round disc sewn into the tie. The judge showed it to the police, who were equally suspicious that it might be a 'bug', planted by the conspiracy defendants. The police took the tie away for some serious analysis. A few days later, the judge phoned Scotland Yard to find out the results of their tests. "Well, we're not really sure where the disc came from," the police told him. "But we did discover that if you press it, it plays Jingle Bells."



First man: 'My wife doesn't know what she wants for Christmas.'
Second man: 'You're lucky. Mine does.'

The grandson had just taken a photograph of his grandmother who'd come to stay for Christmas and her 89th birthday. 'Grannie, I sure hope I'm around next year to photograph you on your 90th birthday,' he said tactfully. 'Why not?' his grandmother shrugged. 'You look healthy enough.'

If you have a lot of tension this Christmas and you get a headache, do what it says on the aspirin bottle: 'Take two aspirin' and 'Keep away from children.'

A surgeon, an architect and a politician were arguing as to whose profession was the oldest. Said the surgeon: "Eve was made from Adam's rib, and that surely was a surgical operation."
"Maybe," admitted the architect, "but prior to that, order was created out of chaos, and that was an architectural job."
"But," the politician pointed out in triumph, "somebody had to have created the chaos first!"



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Christmas Science Camp



9am-2pm on 2nd January at
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€50 per child.

Make our own Christmas Crystals,
Leaky Pen Christmas Chromatography,
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Contact: Pauric

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Childminder available

A reliable/mature
childminder is available in the
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3 days of work per week
from January 2021.

References upon request. If
interested, please contact
Teresa on 087-2449823



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Contacts

Apologies to all whose submissions have been omitted due to time/ space constraints or perhaps as a result of gross negligence by the compiler. Hopefully we will be able to include those items in future issues

Do you have family or friends living abroad or elsewhere in Ireland who would like to receive the RST?

Do you have neighbours or friends who do not have email?

Perhaps you could send us their contact details, or family member details, and we will add them to our mailing list

Our next newsletter will be due out Saturday 30th January 2021

Please send all articles to jimconroy747@gmail.com or to patriciaconroy1@hotmail.com