

RST Newsletter

Rathfeigh • Skryne • Tara



DIGITAL VERSION FOR DURATION OF CORONAVIRUS EPIDEMIC

SATURDAY 9th May 2020

ISSUE NO. 6



This clever photograph captures St. Patrick on the Hill of Tara looking towards the Church Tower on the Hill of Skryne

Photo taken by Hugh McNelis

Condolences

Our sincere sympathy goes to the Morland family on the death of Rose McElroy (Kentstown), mother of Georgina Morland, Skryne

To Lisa and the Gibbons family, Ross, on the death of her mother Margaret

To the Family of James Sheridan Ringlestown

May they rest in peace

Get Well Soon

The RST committee and the Tuesday Club would like to wish Norbert Coyle a speedy recovery after his recent bike accident. We are happy to report that he is recuperating at home where he is getting top priority nursing and the best of food. His Olympic ambitions have only been delayed as we now know that the games go ahead in 2021. Wearing a brace never stopped a Cavan man!

Thank You

Thank you to our Skryne Church sacristan Catherine for opening our church each day. Truly appreciated by many & to our alter society who continue to maintain our lovely church & keep the floral arrangements fresh —a grateful parishioner

Poem

A soldier stood at the pearly gates
His face all scarred and old
He stood before the man of fate
For admission to the fold
"What have you done", St Peter asked
"To gain admission here?"
"I've been a soldier Sir/' he said,
"For many and many a year".
The pearly gates swung open wide
As St Peter touched the bell.
'Inside", he said, "And choose your harp,
You've had your share of hell"
He met old comrades gone before
And shook them by the hand
There was no more talk of war,
He had found the promised land.
Anon

Congratulations



Happy birthday to Caitlin Battigan who celebrated her fifth birthday this week under a beautiful cherry blossom tree.

On hand to help her celebrate was big brother Nathan. Neighbours Mark, Louise, Alice & Ellen who serenaded her from a social distance with birthday music, balloons etc. To crown it all the Sun shone all day.

A Letter to Katie

This snapshot of someone's life at a moment in history was sent in by Eddie Johnson

Recently the RST Newsletter ran an article concerning the demise of Joan Gallagher of Loughlinstown, Tara. The article gave rise to a lot of memories for me and even led to a few facts that I didn't know beforehand - thanks to my cousin Matt Lynch of Painstown.

In early 1953 soon after I was ten years old our family of six moved from Edoxtown to England in search of a better life - my Father joined the U.K army. I was not happy about the uprooting but not old enough to speak up.

My grandparents (the Gaffneys) lived about a mile away around the road but very sadly they passed away in 1959 and 1961. Not only was their home the place I was born but my mother and my grandmother were born there. It is also the house that Joan Gallagher moved into after my grandparents died.

Joan was always very kind and welcoming when Sandra (my wife) and I went back to the area for a holiday or passing through. Always the cakes etc were on the table and I was free to walk around a garden full of memories. My very first memory is of my grandfather taking me out the front door and into the garden, pointing to a bank and showing me, "a host of golden daffidols fluttering and dancing in the breeze" as the well known poem by William Wordsworth goes. Those daffidols still come up on that bank every Spring

As I said Joan's demise caused me to meditate not only of our visits there and my life up to age 10 but also of events concerning the house long before I was born. The house was built for an Eddie Smyth and his wife (my great grandparents) and my grandmother (Briget Smyth) and her husband John Gaffney later raised their family (including my mother) there.

It is my grandmothers brother (Nicholas Smyth) that is the inspiration behind this writing effort. Nicholas was killed in action (WW1) at Sed el Bahr, Gallipoli on 30th April 1915.

He is featured in a book published in 2005, " A Brief History of 'The Blue Caps' The 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers 1914 - 1922 by Pat Hogarty. The last third of the book is taken up with a list of men who fell 1914-1918. On page 293 we see that Nicholas' home was in Loughlinstown, Tara - the Gaffney home until their demise.

The last letter Nicholas ever wrote was to his sister Katie. I remember Katie as an old lady. She was sister to my Grandmother Gaffney and lived next door to us at Edoxtown, Tara. Nicholas wrote her:

"My dear Katie,

I am writing you a couple of lines hoping to find that you are keeping well, also the baby and Mick and Paddy. I am not too well for the past week, I was laid up with a bad cold, but am getting on alright again. I suppose you had a letter from my mother, I told her to send my letter to you.

I think we are going away next week for certain, we sent all our kit away to France on Monday last. So that looks as if we are going. Shortly too I believe we are getting three days leave before we go, but I don't know whether we will get the chance to go to Ireland.

Do you know Willie Rafferty, he told me to tell you he was asking for you. I suppose you were wanting me down again before I came back, I would have gone down again only I had too many people to see. when did you hear from Maggie or is she in Navan yet?

Dear Katie, I have no more to say for the present, hoping this finds you all in good health.

Your loving brother, Nicholas.

PS Write soon and don't forget, write by return In case I might have gone to France."

Nicholas only thought he was going to France. He actually ended up on Turkish soil where he and far too many of his comrades fell at the end of April 1915. His letter to his sister Katie was his last.

GAA reminiscences

Tommy Mooney and Sam Maguire



This photo was taken by Dom O' Brien in 1954 on the farm of Tommy Mooney (now the Ward Union) in Greenpark. Meath had just won the All Ireland and Sam Maguire is held aloft on the rick of straw. The three boys in short pants on the rick are Gabriel, Raymond RIP, and Tex Mooney. Who else can you identify?



It's 1984, the Centenary Year of the GAA. Mickey Lynch, Skryne Juvenile Chairman and team mentor celebrates the Skryne U.12 success in the U 12 Championship having beaten Yellow Furze in the Final.

Playing With The Under Twelves by Donncha Quinlan

My family, would not be considered a local family by any stretch of the imagination. In fact we could be considered the complete opposite of famed Skryne families like O'Rourke's, Finnerty's, Rogan's, Carty's, Smyth's or Rooney's. We were "Blow Ins". We moved out to Waterside, Rathfeigh from Ashbourne in 1983. As we had enrolled in the recently established, Bunscoil na Cille, in Ashbourne, the opportunity to immerse ourselves in our new parish didn't present itself through the normal channel, the local primary school.

Fortunately, somehow, my father had found out that the U12s were starting their 1983 season with a training session in Fr McManus Park one Saturday afternoon. I still remember that first day, driving through the gates, passing the less than salubrious old dressing rooms on the left hand side, very much in trepidation, to have my first training session with team mates that I had never even met before. Luckily for me, that U12 team were being led by three stalwarts of Skryne GFC, namely, Seán Russell, Eamon Giles and the legendary Michael Lynch. That day proved to be the start of my short (in comparison to some of the legends from the families listed above), but hugely enjoyable and never to be forgotten career with Skryne GFC.

I still remember the first competitive match, a challenge Vs Duleek, on a sweltering hot day, when I was sprung from the bench and managed to bag a goal. Consequently, corner forward was my spot on the team until a career changing day in the early summer of 1984. We had managed to reach the U12B championship quarter final Vs Summerhill. However, consternation developed when the match was fixed when we were on holidays in West Clare. However, nothing was going to stop me missing the match so back we travelled from Clare so I could participate in what turned out to be an epic battle that ended in a draw! Back to Clare we went to return a week later for the replay. There was a surprise for me when the team was read out as Seán, Eamon and Mickey had me listed as right half back. From that day on, the half back line was my normal residence on any Skryne team I played on. We won the replay, overcame a dogged Ballinabrackey in what can only be described as "war" of a match, where some blood was spilt and our mentors had to show a lot of restraint on the sideline! We were massive underdogs in the final, coming up against a Graham Geraghty led Senechalstown. The final was played as a curtain raiser before a senior championship quarter final in Páirc Tailteann. I still remember looking at Fintan Murphy trying to get his senior panel to head into the dressing rooms to prepare for their match, none of whom were budging, as they were enthralled by our match which resulted in a famous 0-6 to 0-5 victory. The abiding memory from me that day was seeing Mickey Lynch hoisted onto the shoulders of supporting parents. His passion for Skryne GFC shone like a beacon that day.

A lovely postscript to this story was the fact that the club presented my Dad, a proud Cork man, with, I think, was the only All Ireland hurling ticket, for that centenary year, in recognition of the two trips he made back from West Clare. Off we went on the train to Thurles and, in the days when you could be hopped over the turnstile, enjoyed that centenary All Ireland hurling final.

So Skryne GFC, proved to be the gateway for me to life in rural Meath. Many happy days were spent with the Pentony's in Rathfeigh or the Battersby's in Loughanstown kicking a ball around talking about matches past or

battles to come. Louis Pentony was our driver on many an occasion and the pre match ritual for me for many matches was to cycle up to the house and discuss the match ahead at the kitchen table, with Jim and Marie.

Like all teams, we had good and bad days with that same U12 bunch. An U16 semi final defeat to Clonard was a hard one to take, but we more than made up for it in 1991 with a Minor B championship victory. Eamon was still at the helm that year, it was great to reward him with another championship victory for all his years of dedication.

And so on to 1992, a fantastic year for Skryne GFC. It remains my proudest GAA honour and achievement to have been selected to represent that legendary club to start the 1992 senior county final. We were probably given little hope that day, and youth was given it's fling with four starters, myself, Trevor, Micko and Ken from the previous year's minor team. I am sure that it must have given Seán, Mickey and Eamon tremendous satisfaction to see so many players that started out on that U12 panel in the summer of 1983, help the club win the Keegan Cup after so many years.

But life moves on. I continued to play for Skryne for a few years after that great day but then moved to Kilkenny for work and family reasons. The GAA remains a great part of my life but it now revolves around the small ball game for the most part !

So, even though, I was only a "blow in", I will always be very grateful to Skryne GFC for the opportunity it gave me as a young ten year old, to play the game with so many friends and great players and to make my own small contribution to the history of a great club.

Things to do

Discover all the aircraft movements in the world in real time

Flightradar24 is a global flight tracking service that provides you with real-time information about thousands of aircraft around the world.

<https://www.flightradar24.com/53.33,-6.25/8>

Take time to enjoy some art during this virtual tour of The Louvre

<https://www.louvre.fr/en/visites-en-ligne>

Skryne National School from Martin Kennedy

Well here we are. Another week over us. Hope you are all feeling a good bit better this week. I certainly am. I think we all felt more than a little let down last week. The "Road map" out of restrictions did not include a stop-off to allow us get at least a couple of weeks back in school before the holidays commence. We have to make it through to the end of June with Learning from Home. You know that on the school calendar - now in the bin (recycling of course!) - we were looking forward to a week off in June. That's in the bin now too - but I'm not sure which one to use for that. A couple of weeks back, when we thought we would return to school for the month of June, the teachers had made the decision at a Zoom Staff Meeting that they would continue to work through that week. They would forego their break in order to support the pupils. I thought it was very generous of them. However their kind gesture has been overtaken by events in the meantime. No return to school now until September at the earliest. We will miss a lot of the great end-of-year events that are a normal part of the school year drawing to a close. But, rest assured that we will be drawing on all the clever heads we have on staff to come with a variety of new ways to mark the end of your school year. We are working away on this quietly behind the scenes. Of course we don't have all the answers and would be very open to any suggestions that you may wish to throw into the mix for consideration. Get in touch.

I was in touch with Fr. Thomas this week regarding the First Holy Communion ceremony which was to take place towards the end of the month. This obviously cannot go ahead at the moment. There is still great uncertainty as to when we can hold "mass" gatherings and so we cannot offer an alternative date at present. In fairness to Fr. Thomas he is very keen to have as many possible present at this great family occasion. One thing he stressed to me was the joy and pride that he always sees in the grandparents of the children. Ms. McDonagh made the same point to me. They are keen to make sure that grandparents too can join in the celebrations. As that age cohort will be among the last group to have restrictions lifted it may well be October before we can consider celebrating First Communions. The good news is that there is no "Best Before" date on all the wonderful preparation the children have done. The prayers, hymns and artwork that you have put so much time into will stand to you when we eventually get to have the great day. By then even the hairdressers may be reopened for the mummies! Who knows?

We feel most though for the wonderful pupils we have this year in Rang 6. It really is such a shame that this super group of kids are not spending their last few weeks of their 8 year Primary School life with us in person. Fortunately we did have some great days out. Orienteering events, Olympic handball events, an amazing Cumann na mBunscol victory in Pairc Tailteann powered mainly by the boys from Rang 6 - although DJ didn't do too badly that day either. We also shared a great "Field Trip" when we visited Glasnevin Cemetery Museum and carried on to the Field of Dreams which is Croke Park. The Sky Walk Tour was the "high"light for many. (Sorry Abbie!) . It's great to see people conquer fears. In the next few weeks we will be reaching out to our Rang 6 pupils to see what they would like us to do for them as we say Bon Voyage in the coming weeks. She has some very good ideas - doesn't she always!

In normal times when we return after the Easter break , most teachers will spend a fair chunk of time revising work covered so far. They do this as we have our eyes fixed on the Standardised Testing which is done annually. We had set dates next week for these to take place. This will obviously not happen this year. Do I hear the children screaming? These tests are an important part of what teachers use to assess progress and attainment but they are no means the only part. Teachers use a wide range of tools and strategies to measure and assess the pupils in the class over the course of the whole school year, not only on what happens on a particular day in a particular test. It is important to remember this. It is also important to remember that schools were operating up until the 13th. March. That is into month 7 of the 10 month school year cycle. Most teachers will have had the bulk of the "heavy-lifting" done as regards the core curriculum subjects. Post Easter is often spent on revising ahead of tests as mentioned. After tests there is a lot more time given to the lighter side of the curriculum. Much more outdoor activity, art & crafts, drama and other less onerous topics. just like we build up the work at the start of the year, we begin to ease off as we draw towards end of year. Homework almost disappears- almost!

I am stating all this to help you realize that your children have more work done this year than you might have imagined. They majority are continuing to work through as they engage with the tasks set by teachers. Most of you are supporting your children incredibly. You are not their teacher. You cannot be. The classroom dynamic will produce work and results that simply cannot be replicated at home. Do your best over the coming weeks. It is all you can do. We are seeing the results of your support by the amazing work that pupils continue to send to their teachers. Keep it up. You are doing great. Look at the examples of work that come with this note as evidence. Many pupils are getting an opportunity at this time to be far more creative and imaginative than a narrower school curriculum content might allow. Wallow in the freedom. Soak it all up. There is far more learning to be had in life than can ever be gleaned from textbooks. Hone your life skills when we have the time offered to us by this crisis. Accent-tchu-ate the Positive.

Speaking of which it must be time for the weekly musical lesson. Well this week I have been absolutely struck by the beautiful bird song that seems louder than ever this year.

Thankfully I haven't yet been struck by anything else from a bird - so far ! The sun is shining, the skies are blue and the temperature is just fine. Back in 1967 a song was released that didn't really take off in the US. However in Britain , they loved it! So much that it climbed to No. 1 spot in the charts during 1968. Louis Armstrong was born in New Orleans (The Big Easy) and was also known as "Satchmo". He was entered into the Grammy Hall of Fame and this song will be forever associated with him. It seemed appropriate this week. It is called " What a Wonderful World" . Check it out on YouTube for the beautifully poetic lyrics. Mind you for the 2020 version there is one part we would have to rewrite

" I see friends holding hands,

Saying "How do you do?"

They're really saying

"I love you"

Tony Holohon and Simon Harris would not like that. By the way , Satchmo died in July 1971. His funeral service was held in the Corona Congregational Church suburb of New York where he then lived. It was called Corona. I kid you not. Look up irony in the dictionary.....

Time for some good news. We got word this week that we have been awarded our 5th Green Flag. This award has come courtesy of the tremendous work of our Coiste Glas and the teachers that drive it forward so well. They are ably abetted by a small core of dedicated assistants and advisors and we are indebted to all of you for the tremendous work you have put in over the year to make sure that the Biodiversity flag will join the flags already earned for Energy, Travel, Water and Recycling. We will celebrate in style when conditions allow. Maith sibh ar aon.

You know that saying about when you need a bus - and then two come along.... Well we had the same feeling this week but this one was about doctors. Joining the ranks of "heroes who don't wear capes" is a wonderful former pupil of ours whom we now have the pleasure of addressing as Dr. Swan. Always destined for great things we send our heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Swan. Your family can be justifiably proud of your wonderful achievement. No more injury excuses for Johnny and Hannah! Have a wonderful career Dr. Swan you are certainly entering at the deep end. Your calm approach will be greatly valued. Fan slán.







Here are the answers to our Set 20 Dingbats Challenge.
 Try your luck with Set 21 now. You should be getting better.

Page 20

- 1 Backgammon
- 2 Hopeless
- 3 Big day out
- 4 Over-powering strength
- 5 Too close for comfort
- 6 That is incredible
- 7 Heavy going
- 8 Country under siege
- 9 Missing in action

GOOD GOOD B B TRUE	N R U T The books The books The books The books	TAHC
ABCDEF GHIJKM NOPQRS TUVW XYZ	Times tables Times tables Times tables Times tables Times tables	CAST CAST CAST CAST
144 <hr/> indulgence	fracture fracture fracture fracture	X wait X waite ☑ weight

School Life Through the Fifties by Michael Mulvaney

I started school in Skryne in 1951, At that time Mrs Seagrave had infants, Mrs Harrington took first and second class, Mr Gallagher had third and fourth and last two were under the tutelage of Mr Smyth. Sometime after Easter in I think my first year at school I got pneumonia playing in a sand and gravel pile at the back of the house. My vivid memory of this event is the visit of the Doctor, Dr Marnane, who was the local GP for Skryne and surrounding area. I can remember having to take this awful tasting brown medicine and also can see the Dr taking his glass syringe with what appeared as a massive needle and holding it upright until tiny drops ran down the needle at which time he proceeded to use it on that part of my anatomy on which I usually sit. As a result of my illness I was kept back in class for another year.

After Mrs Seagrave I moved into Mrs Harrington's class. From the word go there was a bit of a personality clash between Mrs Harrington and myself and more often than not I was on the receiving end of her ruler for some misdemeanor or other. Eventually the two years passed and moved on to Mr Gallagher. I don't have many memories of time in his class but do remember he left the following year to be replaced by Mr Hogan. I don't remember exactly when he started but do remember him telling us he was going to start hurling in Skryne. Mr Hogan was a Laois man from a hurling stronghold. This he duly did because I remember the bag of hurls arriving in the school. Practice sessions were organised after school over in the pitch and players were lined up in rows of five across the pitch with a ball for each row. Those at the end were instructed to stop the ball and hit it on the ground back, those in the middle were told to double on the ball as it came and keep it going. This was the exercise with the eventual backs being the top of each row and the outfield players being the ones in the middle of the rows. We had little skill with the hurls but could we double on a ball, yes we could. The following year I think we got to the semi-final of the u14 hurling and the year after we made the final being beaten by a team from Longwood (and probably part of Offaly as well).

While hurling was played after school, football was played during school breaks. For those who cast their minds back the schools at that time were segregated, with the boys' playground being on the right and the girls on the left. The girls were fenced off from the boys with posts and bull wire. The shelters and the hard core area were the playground for the infants on both sides. At the top of the playground stretching across the full playground was the football pitch. The part below inside the wire was the bigger girls playground and the bit on the other side was for those boys who did not want to play football. At the time we had one leather ball for the school. This was bought by the pupils who used to bring in a penny a week and give to the teacher until the requisite amount to buy a new ball was saved. I think a ball at that time cost something like 18s in old money (216 pennies) so that

took a bit of saving from a small no of pupils. I can still vividly remember this lovely new ball arriving and it was carefully rubbed down with dubbin before being introduced to play. It was pure joy to kick the new ball and it would appear to travel very well. However as it was leather it soon lost its shape and once it got wet it was less inclined to travel and felt rather heavy to kick and didn't always go where it was intended.

As numbers were relatively small, our underage football had very little success. Championship football was the only competition and it was on a knockout basis. Consequently we had one serious competitive football game per year. Packy Mooney usually organised a game for the sports day and I think on reflection that he always tried to find a team where we would be in with a chance of a rare win. Despite the lack of success on the field we were non the less drawn to Gaelic football and the attraction of going to the football ground when training was on did not lose its pull.

The delegation of jobs to the pupils during school hours was seen as somewhat of a badge of honour. What seemed at the time to be a very important job during school hours was being allowed to go out to gather kindling to light the fire. This usually involved scouring around the churchyard under the beech and once that ground was cleared the venture took us down the back of the church and across the plank into the castle field and up to the row of beech trees that ran towards the castle. Success here was guaranteed and the armload was carried back for use in subsequent days. The competition was to see who would gather the most and I can recollect a major row with one of my fellow classmates who scattered the little bundles I had assembled for collection on the way back after he had filled his arms.

The best job however was being allowed to get out and mow the lawn. This was not an easy job as the mower was a cylinder mower pushed by the user and required a little strength to push as speed was of the essence in getting the mower to cut cleanly. This was almost a full days job and of course the liberty of being away from class was worth all the effort put into the job.

Another responsible job was being allowed to go mix the ink. In those days a lot of effort was put into teaching students to write (part of the three 'R's of 'reading, riting and ritmatic'. The writing was copied from the blackboard into the copy books which were lined to take capital letters and normal size and was done using a nib pen and ink. The concept being that each pupil would acquire the proper technique of writing with normal size print and capitals being easily distinguished. The inkwells of course in each desk were a source of mischief as many efforts were made to stick ones fellow pupils' fingers into the inkwell. Being caught was punishable with the old ruler or the birch but it was worth the risk. Speaking of the birch many efforts were made to access this same weapon of punishment with the intention of nicking it with a razor blade. The concept being that the birch would fracture with the administration of the first belt and as such would hopefully save the pupil from further belts. By the time the weapon would be replaced the punishment would be forgotten.

January and February over many winters gave us a new form of entertainment. That was sliding on the ice. The boys usually poured water on the concrete in front of the school down past the front door and down to the path up to the girls shelter. The entertainment was in running as fast as one could on to the ice and slide along as fast as possible. The trick was to crouch down and show your skills. If there was any snow, the slide was extended down to the pedestrian entrance and I do remember many lads flying through that entrance on to the road. Health and Safety, how did we survive. There was no interference from the teachers. On the way home the hill down Collierstown presented great sliding opportunities.

Religion played a very important part of the curriculum and weekly we had visits from our parish priests. Usually they asked questions about the previous weeks lessons and each pupil was sure to be asked at least one question. Of course all of this was training for the visit of the Diocesan Examiner who came to each school and class yearly to ascertain the competence of the school in passing on the religious instruction. It was very formalised and each pupil almost had to learn the '1p catechism' off by heart and be able to spit out the answers when asked. It was pretty intimidating for young children particularly if there was an unsympathetic catechist. In addition of course we had weekly confessions and each class crossed to the church for their absolution. In many instances the problem with the confession was trying to think up a sin to confess. At that time also the boys were taken to the church to practice being altar boys and to learn the latin responses off 'ad Deum qui lativicat, juven tutem mein' etc. Being on the bell when serving was probably the most rewarding job and a well aimed blow of the gong resulted in a clear crisp sound being emitted which reverberated until quenched by grasping the bell. Rosters for servers were made out and each server had to attend morning mass and in addition evening devotions. Pretty much annually we also had the 'mission week'. This was a visit to the parish of two or more priests from one of the missionary orders and were usually Redemptorists or Jesuits. All the laity of the parish were expected to attend each evening for the sermon which was usually fire and brimstone and the need for sinners to repent. It was a religion of fear, not love. Of course, one of the highlights of the religious calendar was the Corpus Christi procession. This procession necessitated the decoration of the school from whence the procession would start and down the road, around the graveyard and into the church with the Sacred Eucharist being carried under a canopy of pall bearers each side. All the first communion and confirmation classes were adorned in their outfits and the choir led the singing all the way. Each class was assembled and took part in the procession. This was usually a full day in preparation with flowers bunting flags etc adorning the grounds and flagpoles.

Rathfeigh National School from Seamus Tansley



Children's Art Competition *Keeping connected in times of Covid19*

Lots of children around the country are missing out on regular connections and contacts with their favourite older people- grandparents, friends and neighbours. Many are finding new ways to keep in touch with their cocooning loved ones.

Draw or paint a picture to show us how you are keeping in touch with some older people in your life.

The competition has three categories:

1. Children - Infants to second class
2. Children - Third to sixth class
3. Children with physical, sensory or intellectual disability (U 18)

Each category will have a winning prize of a €50 voucher.

Entry details

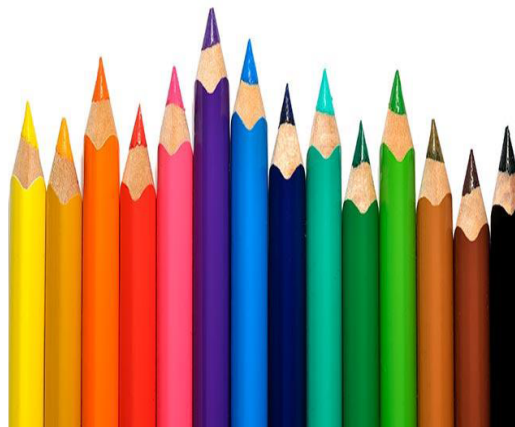
Pictures on an A4 page, parents/guardians to email a photo of entry to safeguarding.socialcare@hse.ie including the child's name and category. Use the subject line 'keeping connected competition'.

Closing date **29th May**. Winners will be announced on 15th June to mark *World Elder Abuse Awareness Day*.

We will share some inspiring entries on our social media pages

@safeguarding_ie
#keepingconnected
#intergenerations

T&C available on request.



“Keeping Connected”

A few weeks ago the children in Rathfeigh participated in the Irish Times “Isolation Art” Competition. The standard was excellent and we picked a number of winners in each classroom. I think the children would also enjoy participating in the “Keeping Connected” art competition. I’m sure the children are experiencing frustration, loneliness and sadness as they haven’t seen their friends or relatives in a good few weeks. This competition could be a great way for the children to express these emotions in art. Please e-mail entries to the address above. We will also pick a winner in each class so please upload your entries to “Edmodo” or e-mail the school – snrathfaiche1@eircom.net. Best of luck!!!

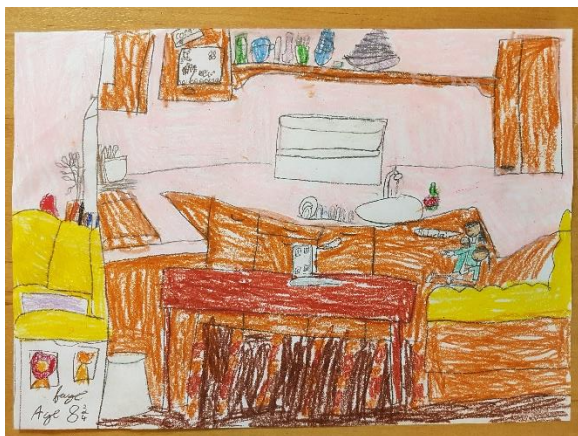
Certainty/Uncertainty

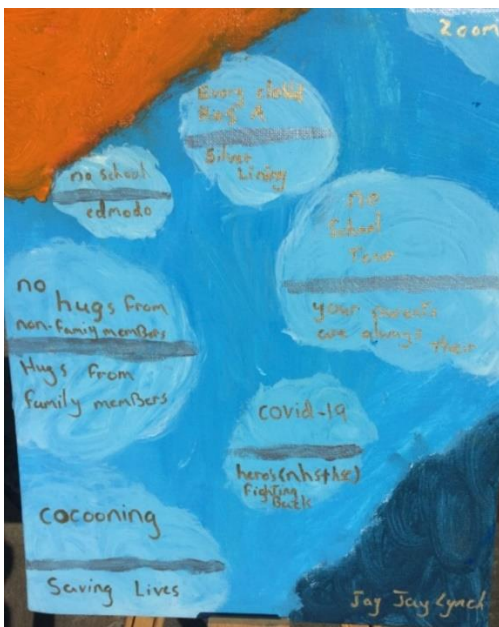
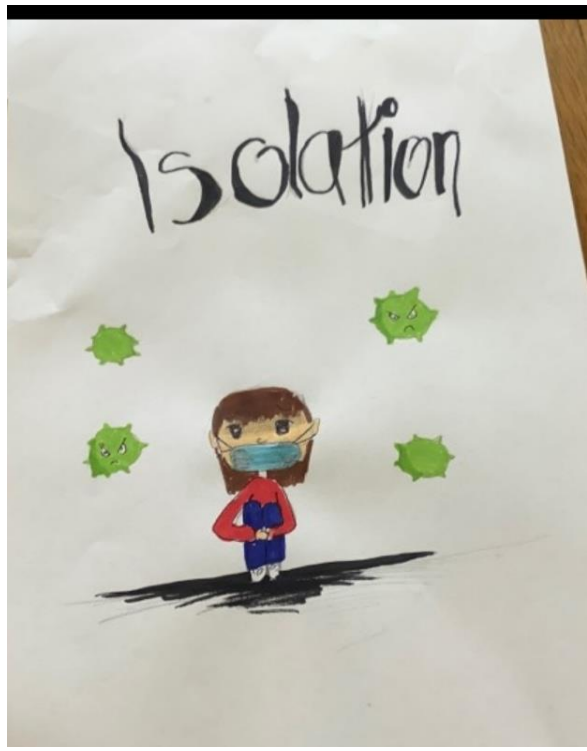
During the presidency of George W. Bush the then Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld famously made the following quote “As we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don’t know we don’t know”. Confused! Did you read it again? I think, believe it or not, it makes some sense or else maybe lockdown has had an adverse effect on me!

The reason I put in this quote is that in these times of uncertainty, especially in education, there are a lot of “knowns” and “unknowns”. We now know that schools won’t re-open before the summer holidays – no First Confession or First Communion, no Standardised tests, no school tours, no 6th class graduation etc. But there are a lot of unknowns. Will we be back in September? If so how will this happen under social distancing guidelines? Will the days be staggered? Will schools be safe? How much will the children’s education suffer long-term if they are off school for a more prolonged period? The sooner we get answers to these “unknowns” the better for the education and mental health of our children.

Children’s Art

Below are examples of some art work produced by the children over the last few weeks.





Ollie The Rooster by Sheelagh Mooney

The bantam rooster came to live at our place courtesy of my parent's friends Ollie and Rita. My parents couldn't understand why Rita was laughing so much when my Father happily accepted Ollie's generous offer of a magnificent rooster of dark plumage. It wasn't long before all became clear as the feathered 'Ollie' began to reveal his true colours and nature. Ollie was a terrifying misogynist who would shame the Taliban with his tactics. His only redeeming trait, a dubious one, was that he exercised a certain impartiality in his dislike of females. Young, old, glamorous or outdoorsy, he made no distinction and would launch an attack on any passing female without the slightest provocation. We never did figure out how he could distinguish tiny male children from female ones but he never erred.

No female visitor was safe. My mother, sister and I were regularly subjected to vicious sustained attacks and could no longer frequent the farmyard adjacent to the house. Even when my mother swung the yard brush almost decapitating him, he was not deterred and she was forced to beat a hasty retreat to the safety of the kitchen. Meanwhile my father, brother and Ollie of course were free to roam as they pleased.

Finally, my mother had enough of his antics and it looked like Ollie's days were numbered. The boiling pot beckoned. As he lingered on death row, as arrogant as ever, my mother had a lightening bulb moment and the solution dawned, he would go to live with my two bachelor uncles, Jack and Joe. Once there Ollie settled in well and soon became known affectionately, at least to my Uncles, as 'the Rottweiler', a name he lived up to. The uncles were delighted with him, not being that bothered about female company themselves. The three of them lived very companionably for a number of years in their male enclave during which time no female could safely step over the threshold of the gate. In fairness few attempted it.

When Ollie finally departed for that great chicken coop in the sky, my uncles were truly sad to see him go. No tears were ever shed in our house though when news of his demise filtered through

Memories from Eoin Hickey

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

Skryne and the early Hickeys

I've taken the title to this chapter from my mother, Elizabeth Hickey's, book *Skryne and the Early Normans* published in 1994 which gives a detailed account of the arrival in Skryne of the Norman knight, Adam de Fepoe and his followers in 1172.

I will try to give the reader a brief account of our family's arrival in Skryne and what it was like to grow up here in the 1950s.

In the spring of 1948 my parents, who were both working, lived in a top floor flat in St Stephen's Green, a few doors along from the Shelburne Hotel. They had three children and one on the way, so needed more space.

My brothers, the twins, Robin and Peter were born in 1944 and I arrived two years later. My father owned a motor car which he could park outside the front door on The Green, they used the Shelburne switchboard to make and receive phone calls and on sunny mornings the pram was parked, un-attended, inside The Green and carefully watched from the top floor window across the road.

So it was that, in the spring of 1948, they were on the lookout for a place in the country which my mother, part Irish but mostly English, would have described at that time as *The Home Counties*.

Having driven for a few weekends around Wicklow, Kildare and Meath they found nothing suitable. One morning a work colleague showed my mother a small newspaper advertisement "Castle for Rent in County Meath". The adrenalin flowed – at least for my mother.

Shortly before she died in 1999, in her beloved Skryne Castle, aged 83, my mother agreed to make a tape recording with my daughter Christina and myself. The recording was made over several days, lasts for about two hours and covers most of her long and varied life including the family's arrival in Skryne.

They came to view the castle one Saturday afternoon with Mr Counihan, the auctioneer for the owners. Mr Counihan didn't have a key, no wonder, the front door lock was massive and the key weighed about two pounds, so they climbed in through the coal house, into the courtyard, through the greenhouse and were in. My mother gave us a wonderful description of the house, justifying it all the way. I gather my father wasn't quite so enthusiastic!

The castle was completely bare of furniture. She explained that the kitchen and bathroom had tiled floors so wouldn't need Lino. Most of the other floors were wooden so could be stained, there was a built in corner cupboard in the kitchen and two of the bedrooms had walk in wardrobes! There were fireplaces in every room and lots of trees for firewood, ample space to grow vegetables and plenty of bedrooms to accommodate my father's mother and other family members! Betraying a lack of enthusiasm on her husband's behalf she kept on saying ".....and your father was very good". *They were divorced little more than a decade later!*

His widowed mother did come to live with them and brought her furniture with her which was very helpful. It wasn't to be though, and she left, but did leave her furniture behind her.

The rent for the castle, which included some five acres of what were described as *mature grounds*, a garage and some sheds, was £4 per week. They both stayed working and commuting to Dublin with Granny and helpers minding the children, but the rent and the travelling proved too much. My mother appealed to the landlord and had the rent reduced to £1 per week *and* had permission to keep PGs (paying guests) written into the lease – this was to prove very useful later. The rent remained at £1 per week up to her death in 1999, despite many struggles between herself and the landlord.

Some Old Photos

Skryne National School sometime during the 1950's



There are quite a few people in the parish who should be able to name the above pupils in this photograph sent in by Karen Carty on behalf of her dad, David. She will send in the names during the coming week.

How many can you name?

Ruby from Imelda Byrne



We would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thanks to everyone in the communities of Rathfeigh, Skryne, Tara and Ratoath for their help in bringing home our beautiful Saint Bernard Ruby who was missing for 3 nights.

Our 12 year old Saint Bernard went missing from the garden on Monday night 27th April. At 12 years of age and with the life expectancy of a Saint Bernard only being 8-10 years we knew if didn't find her as quickly as possible she wouldn't survive long. Ruby is hard of hearing, partially blind and her back legs fail her if she walks for more than 20 mins but she is the heart of our home. She's like your kindest relation. The dear Aunt that won't hear a bad word said against you no matter what you've done. Ever grateful to be part of our family she gives us love in bucketfuls. She was born on a horrible puppy farm and had 2 other not so kind homes before she came to live with us at the age of 2 and half. For around seven years if someone knocked on the door she skidaddled down to a bedroom to hide so nervous was she. So our greatest worry now, was that wherever she was she would probably be afraid to come out and would sooner starve than leave her safe place. Nonetheless we knew that she would have complete faith and trust in us to be doing everything we could to bring her home. It didn't bear thinking that we might not get to her in time.

There's a saying it takes a village to raise a child well it certainly took many villages to find Ruby. We learned a huge lesson in community spirit. People from all around volunteered their time to go out and search roads and ditches. Farmers checked their sheds and barns repeatedly. My neighbours were fantastic. So many people from far and wide joined in the search. It is wonderful to know that we are part of a fantastic community that stretches way beyond our local area. Everyone contributed different but equally valuable skills, whether it was words of kindness on the phone or messages of encouragement and advice from total strangers when it began to look grim.

One wonderful lady immediately designed a poster which was ideal for sharing on FB. We were also able to print it off and dropped it into local shops and nearby villages. A very caring gentleman called in at the end of a working day with a drone and scanned the neighbouring fields. When we had no luck he volunteered to come back the following day. LMFM allowed me on the radio and that opened up the search to people who may not have heard through Facebook or who may not have seen posters in the neighbouring villages. All the Facebook pages that posted her missing were wonderful. The Skryne lost pets page, the shelters, the Gaelic Football Clubs, the Community pages. So many people put themselves out to do this for us and from their pages the poster was shared over and over again and our chances of finding her increased. It was incredible and yet there was not one sighting.

I'm a big believer in the power of prayer and I know many of my friends and family lived too far away to physically help us but it's true to say all over the world there were people praying that she would be found. So for all of you who did that too I'm positive it made a difference.

When we got the call to say she had been found and she was alive it seemed too good to be true. We couldn't believe that we could be so very lucky. She was found in a ditch beside a little bridge in Macetown and we had searched it so many times over the 3 days. Only the night before my son had whistled to her from that exact spot. A lovely lady Denisa whom I had never met, had searched for Ruby the day before. She decided to go out again and although she wasn't familiar with the area had a feeling about searching that stretch of the road. Ruby was caught in brambles and with her legs so weak she wouldn't have been able to support herself to get out. Other searchers also arrived at the scene by chance and by the time we arrived about 10 minutes later there was great teamwork between everyone. We have a lot to be grateful for the way she was lifted out of the ditch with so much care and gentleness by Oisín Keogh. Aimee King made the calls to my family and to Paul Kelly our vet. He arrived without delay and gave Ruby an injection to make her comfortable. He called to the house the following morning as well and phoned numerous times to check her progress. She was shivering and wet but ate a few treats so we knew there was plenty of life there yet. We got her home with the help of Caroline Webb in her jeep. It was a miracle to have her home. She was carried into the sitting room and although she could barely support herself she struggled into the kitchen and did a tour and then back to the sitting room where she barely moved from the fire for two days. The great news is that she is almost back to her usual self. Happy Hounds Boarding Kennels's offered their facilities in their grooming parlour so I could give her a thorough wash today. There was a lot of dirt. She is being spoiled rotten of course. She received some delicious treats yesterday dropped at our gate by one of the kindest helpers. It's like Christmas for everyone in our house at the moment. We know we are on borrowed time with Ruby but the important thing is that we would have tried every avenue to get her back. Equally wonderful and precious is the fact that so many others were willing to do that too.

There is a lovely saying which really applies in this instance.

"The greatness of a community is measured by the compassionate actions of its members".

The Byrne Family -

Front page of the first issue of the RST Newsletter



I N T R O D U C T I O N

We welcome you to the first edition of the RST Newsletter, which is compiled to give the residents of Rathfeigh, Skryne, Tara information about their parish.

Every Country, County or Parish has its own distinct features. Skryne/Rathfeigh is home to more than 650 households or 3,000 people. There is no place like home! There is no place like our parish, steeped in historic and sporting traditions.

Whether you are new to the parish or long established here, we hope that this newsletter will renew your interest in your own area and make you aware of the many activities, sporting, cultural, educational, business and farming, which are based here. Do you know that citizens of our parish are members or more than 40 clubs/associations/societies etc.? We see this Newsletter as a resource where members of these organisations can publish information about their activities. Were it not for the voluntary

work of these individuals our community would indeed be a dreary place. Clubs, Associations, individuals - we invite you to submit regular articles.

A sincere thanks to the clubs for their generous contributions. A special word of thanks to Skryne G.F.C. for their sponsorship of the first 2 editions of the Newsletter. Congratulations to John and Trevor on their success last Sunday against Dublin.

Finally we ask all our parishioners to support our parish newsletter, which will be distributed to each household in the parish for the first four issues. Thereafter it will be available in all local shops. Please take a copy regularly and use it as a forum for improved communications.

Maurice Daly & Michael Fitzsimons.



SKRYNE G.F.C



SENIOR: To a large extent a youth policy has been adopted in the selecting of the team, so time and patience will be needed for the development of maturity (physical and mental) and ability. Having won two and lost one championship game, our seniors need to win their remaining matches (v. Dunboyne and Slane) to keep control over progress to the knockout stages.

In the league the objective is promotion to Division 1 but with five points dropped prospects for advancement are receding.

JUNIOR: Our Junior A side is the most successful of our adult teams and has conceded only one point in championship games. The team is a strong one and there are realistic hopes of reaching the knockout section of the competition. But fitness levels will need to improve in the case of some players.

In the "B" League which has been "owned" by Skryne in recent years, we have lost only one game and if strong teams are fielded, the competition can be won again.

At Junior C level Skryne is one of only two or three clubs to field two teams in this grade - the emphasis is on participation and enjoyment. The "A" team after two defeats, had a good win over Dunsany. The management is of the opinion that the "Special Delivery Service" (SDS) to Martin Browne was a major factor in this victory.

The aim of the "B" squad is to better last years performance. A first round game v Curragha achieved a draw thanks to brilliant displays by forwards John Allen and Anto Doyle and by up-coming defender Des Finnerty. The management does not want any reference made to the game v St. Colmcilles.

MINOR: This is the team which has made the most progress in the club this year, having already reached the knockout section of the Division 2 competition. It will take a good team to beat this committed side.

U.16: Despite achieving little success our under sixteens have been quite competitive with some games being narrowly lost. There are talented players on the team who will make an impact at adult level in a few years.

U.14 & U.12: Again little has been achieved in the way of victories but still development and participation are perhaps more important at these levels.

LADIES: The club was founded in the Summer of 1994. Over the past 3 years our panel has increased to 25 players ranging in age from 13-19. We have participated in the Meath Championship and League for the past 3 years. The team has gone from strength to strength and we are currently 3rd in the Meath Junior Championship. We have teams in Junior, Minor and U.16 level. Our trainers are Sean Connell and Martin Gillett. Training is at the G.A.A. pitch every Tuesday and Friday evening at 6.30 p.m. New members are always welcome. For any further information contact: Martin on (01)825 6459 or Sean on (046)25543.

The panel consists of: Mary Bennett, Niamh Connell, Naoimi Connell, Siobhan Connell, Aoife Creavin, Helen Creavin, Clare Cromwell, Sinead Daly, Lucia Dillon, Jenny Gillett, Mags Hamill, Chrissie Hoban, Karen Kellegher (Captain), Elaine Kellegher, Caroline Lynch, Brenda Murphy, Sinead McSorley, Emma O'Brien, Mary O'Rourke, Alison Reilly, Orla Tobin, Jennifer Tobin and Suzanne Whyte.

THIS ISSUE IS SPONSORED BY SKRYNE G.F.C.

The Night Sky by Tony Canavan

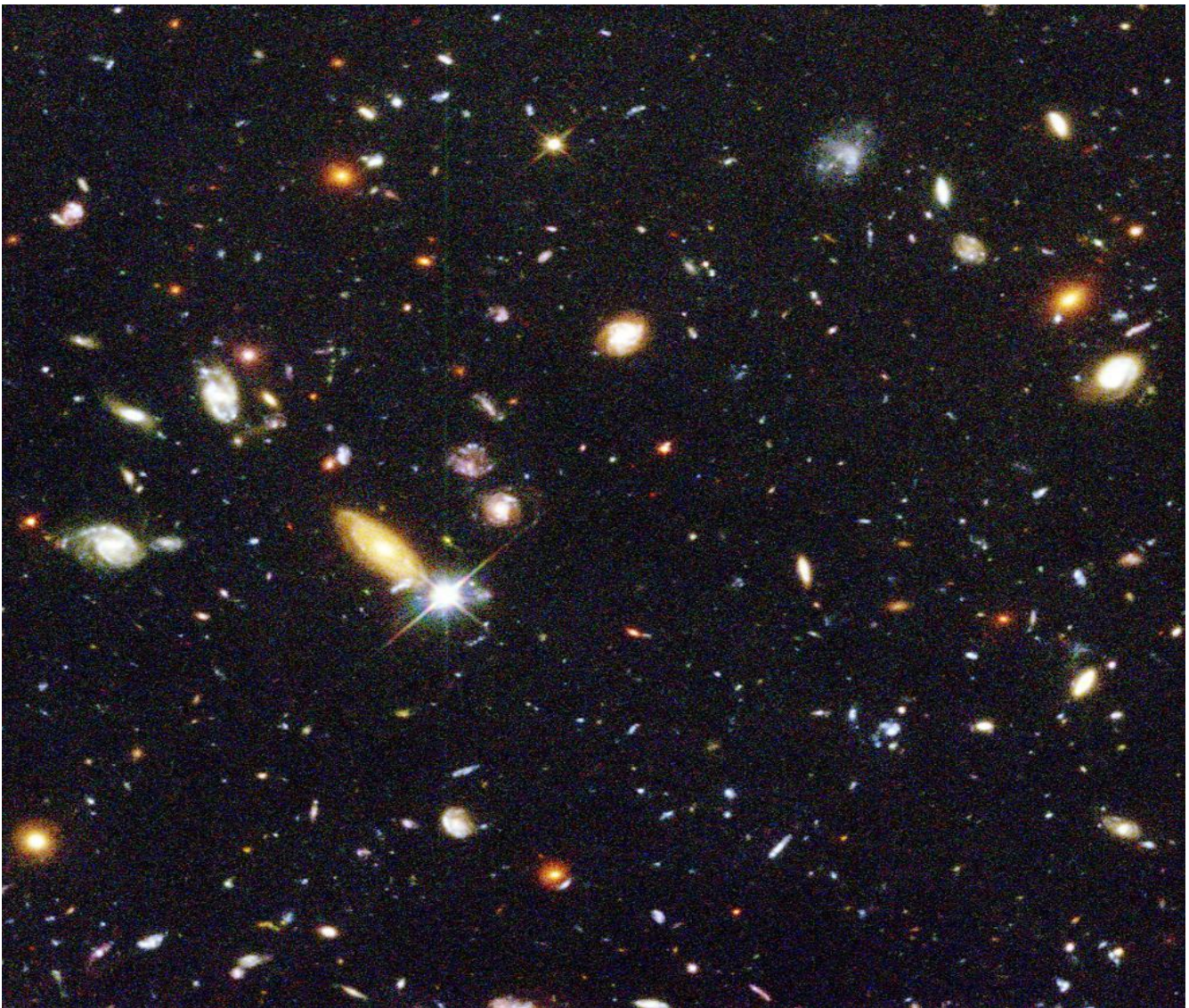
May 15th: 4 am on Friday morning Mars will be just above the crescent moon. Both will be visible to the naked eye.

May 24th: 10 pm Mercury will be only 5 degrees to the right of the crescent moon with Venus about 10 degrees to the west and setting. Mercury is 60% sunlit so should be visible.

26th May: 1030pm Pollux and Castor (Gemini heavenly twins) are only about 6 degrees to the right of the moon.

Any clear night during May, after full moon, about 4 am, you will see Jupiter and Saturn and Mars and the crescent moon rising low in the southeast, Vega very bright nearly overhead, Altair (flanked by two equidistant stars) straight down towards the horizon (altitude 35 degrees), Deneb, marking the constellation of Cygnus, the Swan, also known as the Northern Cross, in the east (altitude 55 degrees) forming a triangle with previous two, and Antares to the south, altitude 10 degrees. A nebula close to Antares (marking the constellation of Scorpius) contains some of the oldest stars in the Milky way.

Hubble 30th Anniversary: Hubble Deep Field Image 1995



This image, taken by the Hubble Telescope, was assembled between December 18 to 28, 1995. The 'speck' in space that the telescope pointed to, was the equivalent of a farthing at 70 ft. It was a part of the sky that on initial viewing was virtually empty. After 10 consecutive days pointed at the same 'speck' the above was the image, nearly all are galaxies except for a few foreground stars of the Milky Way. Bluer objects contain young stars and are relatively close, while redder objects contain older stellar populations and are further away. The universe is the same when viewed in all directions.

When you look at space you look back in time. We see the sun 8 minutes ago because it takes that long for its light to travel to us. The universe is 13.8 billion years old and in the above image we are seeing galaxies that are 13 billion years old and we are seeing them as they were 13 billion years ago. This is only 800 million years after the Big Bang. With the 30th anniversary of the Hubble telescope this, to me, was Hubble at its best.

The James Webb Space Telescope will be the successor to the Hubble telescope and is due for launch in 2021, (at a cost of 10 billion dollars). Webb will be able to see the first galaxies ever formed at the beginning of the universe, distant worlds around other stars as planets actually form and probe the mysterious structures and origins of our universe and our place in it.

The Sound of Silence by Anne Friel

On the first glorious Sunday in May of this year, I found myself in the garden sitting idly in the mid-afternoon sunshine. Due to the iron like fist of Coronavirus still holding the country in its grip, I had nowhere to go because of the 2 kilometres ruling. There was no beach to enjoy, no forest walk to explore, no museums or historical places beckoning, no clash of the ash in Croke Park or displays of youth/athleticism and skill by our own county men, not even a shopping centre to lure me with promises of reduced prices and one day sales!

So, I sat with three companions from the animal kingdom: my devoted dog and my two nonchalant cats soaking up vitamin D. I pondered about driving to the nearby village and stocking up on my weekly diet of newspapers: Sunday Independent, Observer and the Sunday Times. Then, I became aware of my surroundings and perished the thought of going into a shop. It was a moment of enlightenment, without cars, and motor bikes hurtling past, my ears were fully opened to the sounds that can be heard in nature's

dance. Beside me, Lassie snored rhythmically, once reaching such a crescendo that she resembled an old steam train going through a tunnel. I closed my eyes as I allowed all the sounds to wash over me.

The heavenly birdsong, I realized was coming from chaffinches and blackbirds, followed by intervals of silence and then the soft, sweet cooing of black ringed doves and pigeons. The former is a comparatively recent colonist, having arrived in Ireland from Europe in 1959. They only appeared in our garden in the last 4/5 years, a testament to the fact that they like to live in cereal growing areas. From the bushes came a slight rustling and I wondered if it was a hedgehog, normally nocturnal creatures but known to appear in daytime if they are in trouble of some sort. Before I could investigate, the dog sprang into action and disappeared into a thick hedgerow followed by the cats who were determined not to miss out on any opportunities to hunt.

When silence reigned after some minutes, I marvelled how sounds like certain smells can transport us back to different times and places. Last year in the month of May, I spent two wonderful days staying near the Shannon Callows. The word Callows coming from the Irish "Caladh" water meadow, are natural wildlife habitats on both sides of the Shannon between Athlone and Portumna and are classified as (SAC) Special Area of Conservation. It is truly a delight for the senses to visit here in early Summer. Amidst the staggering array of wildflowers are water mint, sedge, meadowsweet, buttercup and clover. Here too, I heard the singing of whinchats (belonging to the thrush family) and my own favourite the Cuckoo, such a pure almost ethereal sound coo-coo coo-coo. Alas, despite considerable efforts by Government and local farmers to protect the corncrake and their natural habitat, these birds due to climate change are extinct even in the Callows but a few survive on the islands off the west coast.

On our last evening we lingered outside our B&B watching the beautiful moon, when a stark, haunting sound floated on the air. Looking up I saw a skein of geese, making wild music to each other as they flew westwards. After just a couple of minutes they were gone but their voices stirred primeval emotions in me. I imagined the thousands of geese who have been witnesses to the bloodiest events in our history, skeins of them watching from the sky as the first Vikings landed in Ireland, flocks of them at the mouth of the

Boyne on wetlands at Drogheda, when Oliver Cromwell invaded and gaggles of them startled along the Liffey when HMY Helga sailed up that mighty river in 1916 and unleashed hell on the citizens of Dublin. How they must have honked and cackled at man`s inhumanity to man.

I thought too of all we have lost since ancient times, while concrete and our need to consume destroys more and more of the natural world. Since ancient Rome, geese have been used as “watch dogs.” They are territorial, reacting to the slightest sound and farmers in the past found them particularly useful in warding off certain predators.

Of course, any mention of geese always brings me to sadder thoughts of other “Wild Geese”, peculiar to Irish history. Those who were forced to leave Ireland after failed rebellions, treachery, and draconian measures, including religious discrimination. Their very name captured my imagination as a schoolgirl and sparked a lifelong passion for history.

And so back to that heaven -sent Sunday in May. My eyes drank in the emerald green of the lawns and the clouds of white and pink cherry blossom overhead, while the scent of lilacs wafted by on the breeze followed by a giant bumble bee, refreshed after a long winter`s sleep.

“I believe the world is incomprehensively beautiful,

An endless prospect of magic and wonder.”

Ansel Easton Adams, (1902-1984)

(Photographer/Environmentalist)

My Brother's Scribblings by Norbert Coyle

A special's

Hi Sarah,

Now re your question from whence on your couch you lay in vacant or in pensive mood....never heard the phrase "grey day pig".

However the Grade A special was well known around Dungimmon House where we kept about 200 pigs for slaughter at any given time.

In my semi-sainted Da's youth, pigs were "fattened" and usually one of the fattest was selected each autumn and killed "for the house".

A description common at the time for a good pig was...."Ah it would fill a pan with grace".

Grace aka grease was what we nowadays refer to as fat.

Bacon fat was used to fry bread and most everything else that required frying.

We used get 20 ton of pigmeal at a time and it was stored in the now defunct dairy. All pigs were fed by bucketing a mixture of meal and skim milk into cast iron troughs which accommodated 10 pigs at a time.

All went swimmingly until one fine day McCarrens....the pig factory in Cavan, announced to all and sundry that they would no longer pay for pigs by weight....usually anything from 280 lbs upwards...but now by grade and the grading referred to the thickness of the fat.

In years when the price of potatoes fell through the floor we used light a massive fire in the "cart house" and boil 5 cwt. of potatoes at a time.

These boiled potatoes were then transferred to an old bath like the old painted in the field by FAR. The Da insisted that all potatoes be squashed by hand lest an over anxious pig choke on a full spuddie.

To lose a pig would have been costly but even more worrying would be the fact that the story would inevitably leak out and one might be accused of poor husbandry and this could affect everything from the marriage prospects of the offspring to the cutting remarks of the neighbours who delighted in a bit of bad luck provided it involved a neighbour and not themselves.

I'm given to understand that this ignoble trait is called "schadenfrau" and occasionally "epicaricacy"....every day is a school daythough I hasten this was not common parlance in the Dungimmon hinterlands.

The Da dispatched his usual lot of fine porkers to McCarrens and a week or so later the miserable cheque arrived. The pigs were all graded "C" and the price was appropriate.

The Da was furious. McCarrens in their defense did a Trump on it and blamed "the housewives" who apparently according to "recent surveys" wanted lean bacon.

The Da wondered what the world was coming to.

He looked around the yard and casually noticed that the landrace boar was like yon Cassius....he had a lean and hungry look.

The Da put two and two together and wondering why the boar was slim and svelte it quickly dawned on him that the lil ole pixie was in possession of his reproductive organs as opposed to his normal porkers whom he'd castrated at six weeks old.

A new plan was set in motion. Pigs were no longer castrated at Dungimmon House despite the fact that this was unlawful if one was interested in the nitty gritty of agricultural law.

The factory did not accept uncastrated pigs so the Da had another cunning plan.

Rather than castrate the pigs at the standard 6 week stage....he would castrate them at 6 week before slaughter.

He did note that there was a vast difference between a 6 week old sucker (we never used the word "Bonham") and a fully grown porker...and whilst the dastardly deed was over and done with before the sucker knew it....it was a totally different story with Mr. Porker.

There lived a man in the vicinity who was exceptionally skilled at mechanics...he welded farm machinery....put handles in forks...and generally was the go to man in all danger ,temptations and afflictions.

His father had been a renowned coach builder and died when felling a tree....the Da used warn us when we cut trees to be careful..."Look what happened Pee Shurdin's father, Larry". Cared we a whit...we were young and knew that youth and immortality were happy bedfellows.

The Da sallied over to Pee Shurdins....knowing that some day he'd be in an email and hence sallied rather than drove to Pee.

He had a plan drawn out on the back of a Sweet Afton cigarette box....and he wanted Pee to make a "yoke " like his drawing.

He had drawn a simple rectangular box approx.the size of a pork pig on his back but excluding the legs.

The unique bit of this box was the fact that one of the long sides had to be hinged at the bottom and in the middle top of the hinged side the Da specified a long perforated iron handle which could be pulled across to the opposite side and hooked onto a suitable bar.

Pee made a proto type and the Da declared it "fit for purpose" and told Pee that indeed he truly was a genius.

The next bit was the easy bit as far as the Da was concerned.

The vet was called and arrived into the yard in a new tweed jacket and driving the latest Ford Capri.

The Da had explained that he wanted the pigs castrated and the vet had some misgivings....but when the Da explained his cunning plan the vet seemed happy enough. Just as a by the way ...this was not Mr O'Neill...our regular man known as "Nail the Vit" but his sidekick.

The vet arranged his instruments and the "procedure" began.

Note how when in hospital they refer to everything from an ingrown toenail to a headectomy as "the procedure".

The "box" was produced and duly explained to the vet. We consulted the manual that came with the box.

The idea was this....myself and a sibling would approach a porker from his right hand side....one at the shoulder and one at the hip.....

This procedure leaned a lot on an element of surprise....the idea was that we each in unison grabbed the animal's far front and rear leg and as we quickly upended the pig we then in one swift motion lifted and dumped the victim into the open box and in a flash drew the perforated latch across the box and hooked it on thus trapping the porker neatly, belly up, in the box.

Depending on the level of skill involvedit was sometimes necessary to grab both hind legs and make the required organs more easily accessible.

The vet then did his standard extraction making the incision smaller that one would expect and quickly stitched up and with a quick puff of powdery antiseptic the job was finished.

20 or so pigs later we were "tired but happy" and all trooped in to the seriously sainted Ma for tea and brown bread loaded with butter and apple jam.

The vet meanwhile had extracted hard cash from the Da which was not the easiest of tricks.

Around then I applied to UCD to study to be a vet....one didn't need points or anything then....I reckoned it would be a great job....new tweed suits....state of the art car....and getting money from lads like the Da who were as tight as the proverbial bull's ass going up a hill.

Six weeks later the pigs were dispatched to McCarrens and the cheque duly arrived about a week later....all A specials.

Listen in again next week to hear how the Da used science to deal with sour milk in the creamery on Monday in the "tremendous heat of mid July" .

Wildlife by Tom Bannon

Dandelion & Wild Garlic Photos





" When you look at a field of dandelions, you can either see hundreds of weeds or thousands of wishes"

The Dandelion
by Mrs. E. P. Erskine

"Oh, dandelion, yellow as gold,
What do you do all day?"
"I just wait here in the long green grass
Till the children come to play."

"Oh, dandelion, yellow as gold,
What do you do all night?"
"I wait and wait while the cool dew falls,
And my hair grows long and white."

"And what do you do when your hair grows white,
And the children come to play?"
"They take me up in their dimpled hands
And blow my hair away."

Birdwatching by Tom Bannon

----- The Elusive Hurley River Kingfisher -----



The opening lines of “The Kingfisher” by poet William Henry Davies tries to capture the amazing colours of the elusive kingfisher

“It was the Rainbow gave thee birth,
And left thee all her lovely hues”

Such are the incredible shades of brilliant blue, turquoise ,orange & white plumage on both sexes means you will not mistake this small bird with the long dagger-shaped beak for any other.

A marked bird in certain quarters as their colourful feathers were once widely used by milliners while their incredible fishing techniques made them the enemy of gamekeepers . Changes to their habitat in certain areas also impacted severely on their numbers.

Over the past few years, kingfishers have returned and are a regular sight here locally on the Hurley river. The slow flowing trout river with it's steep banks , good cover and increasing fish stocks in pools all along

the river are ideal for this bird.

It is always a memorable encounter to see one whether it is a brief fleeting glimpse as it flies low along the river quickly disappearing around a bend or if you catch one fishing from its perch over the river.

In the last few weeks as the breeding season is underway, there have been increased sightings all along the Hurley river of kingfishers flying up and down the river protecting their territory and seeking a mate. Delighted to see they are back breeding on the river again this year.

A symbol of love, prosperity and abundance, the kingfisher is definitely one of the jewels we are lucky to have as residents along our local river.

Places locally you may spot Kingfishers:

We are steeped in this area with easy access to some fantastic rivers from

- The majestic Boyne - you will spot them all along the Boyne but they are regulars on the stretch near the old tin Fisherman's hut on the walk along the ramparts.
- The River Hurley which rises near Garristown flows through Curraha, Macetown & Rathfeigh before joining the Nanny at Boolies Little, Duleek.
- The Nanny which flows through Kentstown, Duleek
- The river Skane which flows through Killmessan & Dalgan Park river walk
- Ratoath – I picked up a dead kingfisher two years ago on the wall outside Tesco so they are also along the Broad Meadow River

Some incredible video footage - Check out artist Robert Fuller's Youtube video, he constructed a man made nesting area and captured amazing footage of kingfishers inside their nesting chamber at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D61djLCc_GY

Flora and Fauna by Brid Conroy



The mythology of the Hawthorn tree. (Sceach Gheal)

Classified in early Irish law as an *Aithig fedo* or Commoner of the Wood.

The Hawthorn is known by a variety of different names, The May Tree, The Beltaine Tree, The May Blossom, The Whitethorn, The Quick etc. In Irish it is *Sceach Gael* but we also know it as the Faerie Tree for it is said to guard the entrance to the faerie realm and it is still considered bad luck to harm one. You may however collect sprigs of flowers during the month of May to place in and around the home to banish evil spirits or misfortune (always ask the guardians of the tree first).

There are many superstitions surrounding the Hawthorn and here are just a few of them:

During birth if a calf is born prematurely hanging its afterbirth on a Hawthorn tree was said to magically protect it and give it quick growth (one of the other names given to the Hawthorn is Quickset as it will take very easily as a cutting) This could be magic by association?

The Hawthorn has long been associated with fertility and at Beltaine (May 1st) young women would take a sprig of blossom and keep it close as a way of attracting a husband.

On the morning of Beltaine (dawn), men and women would bathe in the morning dew of the Hawthorn blossom to increase wealth, health, luck, good fortune, and beauty. Women would become more beautiful and men by washing their hands in the dew would become skilled craftsmen. Today it is still practiced and it is one of the woods used in the Hand fastening ritual as it will ensure a lasting relationship.

The Hawthorn is also known as a tree of protection and for this reason it will be found growing near a house. It will offer protection from storm and lightning.

On Beltaine it is the custom here in Ireland to hang strips of cloth or ribbons on a Hawthorn (especially if it grows near a well) in order to make a wish (the wishing tree of legend). This is also done to ask for Brigid's blessing on the cloth as these will then be used in healing (I hand crepe bandages on ours). It is also the custom to hang strips of coloured cloth from the branches, blue for health, red or pink for love, green or gold for prosperity etc. These will then be used as bindings in the hand fastening.

You may also use discarded pieces of wood in order to make wands or ritual tools but NEVER cut the wood from the tree. If you look in winter you will ALWAYS find pieces of windblown wood.

It has an immense amount of folklore attached to it in Ireland. The young leaves and flower buds are used as both a food eaten in spring salads, and as a medicine. Medicinally, an infusion is prepared which has been shown to be valuable in improving the heartbeat rate and strength, especially in heart failure, and in balancing the blood pressure; it also helps with irregular heartbeats and improves the peripheral circulation, helping with conditions such as Reynaud's and with poor memory since it improves the circulation to the brain.

The bioflavonoids relax and dilate the arteries and blood vessels thereby relieving angina. The bioflavonoids and proanthocyanins are also valuable antioxidants which help repair and prevent tissue damage, especially in the blood vessels. Hawthorn also helps to relieve anxiety and is traditionally thought to mend broken hearts, both emotionally and physically.

The berries are gathered in the autumn and have similar medicinal properties – they can be used fresh or dried in a decoction or infused in brandy to make a heart tonic for the winter months. For culinary use the berries are traditionally gathered after the first frost which converts some of the starches to sugars and makes the berries more palatable. Berries are used as an ingredient in hedgerow wine, or to make haw jelly as an accompaniment to wild game. The berries can also be mashed, removing the skin and seeds, and used to make a fruit leather as a way of storing them.

Thomas the Rhymer, the famous thirteenth century Scottish mystic and poet, once met the Fairy Queen by a hawthorn bush

from which a cuckoo was calling. She led him into the Fairy Underworld for a brief sojourn, but upon re-emerging into the world of mortals he found he had been absent for seven years. Themes of people being waylaid by the fairy folk to places where time passes differently are common in Celtic mythology, and the hawthorn was one of, if not the, most likely tree to be inhabited or protected by the Gentry. In Ireland most of the isolated trees, or so-called 'lone bushes', found in the landscape and said to be inhabited by fairies, were hawthorn trees. Such trees could not be cut down or damaged in any way without incurring the often fatal wrath of their supernatural guardians. The Fairy Queen by her hawthorn can also be seen as a representation of an earlier

pre-Christian archetype, reminding us of a Goddess-centred worship, practised by priestesses in sacred groves of hawthorn, planted in the round. The site of Westminster Abbey was once called Thorney Island after the sacred stand of thorn trees there.

Hawthorn is at its most prominent in the landscape when it blossoms during the month of May, and probably the most popular of its many vernacular names is the May-tree. As such, it is the only plant which is named after the month in which it blooms. It has many associations with May Day festivities. Though the tree now flowers around the middle of the month, it flowered much nearer the beginning of the month, before the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in 1752.

The blossoms were used for garlands, and large leafy branches were cut, set in the ground outside houses as so-called May bushes and decorated with local wildflowers. Using the blossoms for decorations outside was allowed, but there was a very strong taboo against bringing hawthorn into the house. In the early 1980s the Folklore Society's survey of 'unlucky' plants revealed that 23% of the items referred to hawthorn, more than twice as many instances as the second most unlucky plant. Across Ireland there was the belief that bringing hawthorn blossom into the house would be followed by illness and death, and there were many instances of hapless children being scolded by adults for innocently decorating the home. Mediaeval country folk also asserted that the smell of hawthorn blossom was just like the smell of death. Botanists later discovered that the chemical trimethylamine present in hawthorn blossom is also one of the first chemicals formed in decaying animal tissue. In the past, when corpses would

have been kept in the house for several days prior to burial, people would have been very familiar with the smell of death, so it is hardly surprising that hawthorn blossom was so unwelcome in the house.

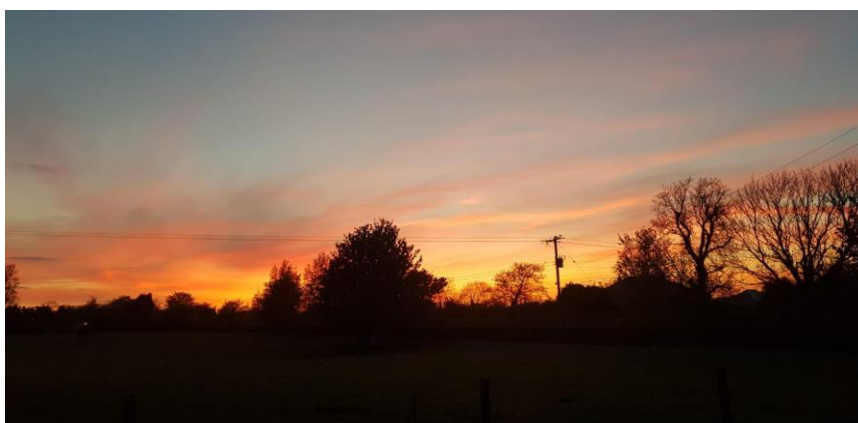
It has also been suggested that some of the hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) folklore may have originated for the related woodland hawthorn (*Crataegus laevigata*) which may well have been commoner during the early Middle Ages, when a lot of plant folklore was evolving. Woodland hawthorn blossom gives off much more of an unpleasant scent of death soon after it is cut, and it also blooms slightly earlier than hawthorn, so that its blossoms would have been more reliably available for Beltaine celebrations. It was normal to decorate a hawthorn at this time with flowers, ribbons and bright scraps of cloth and sometimes candles or rushlights were attached to the tree and lit on the eve of Beltaine. In some areas of Ireland small gifts of food and drink would be left under the tree for the fairies (presents under the tree, sound familiar?).

The Hawthorn has many uses , the young leaves are eaten and were commonly referred to as bread and cheese, the blossom and berries were made into wines and jellies, and decoctions of the flowers and leaves were used to stabilise blood pressure. The strong, close-grained wood was used for carving, and for making tool handles and other small household items. Probably its greatest practical use to people has been as hedging.

In common with other 'unlucky' trees it was widely believed that whitethorn was the tree upon which Christ was crucified, and Christ's thorns were also supposed to be made of whitethorn.

In Ireland it was believed that if one of your neighbours used a whitethorn (hawthorn) stick to herd cattle then he was up to no good. An old Irish custom was that the first milk of a newly calved cow should be taken and poured under a fairy tree as a tribute to the fairy's. It was also planted around the house and sheds to keep away witches.

Sunset on the Riggins



This beautiful scene was captured this week

Old Farm Machinery by Tom Bannon

Can you name these two old pieces of farm equipment? Answers in next week's RST



Last week's machines:

Beet Hoe and Grapper

Seed Barrow, used for sowing seeds

COVID 19 Community Support Group and Club Together

As you are aware Skryne GFC joined forces with the Active First Responders a few weeks back to form the local COVID 19 Community Support volunteer group to help local people most in need however we can in these restricted times. Since then the GAA has partnered with SuperValu and Centra to help keep the most vulnerable of us to keep well stocked up with essentials to get through these difficult times. As part of this “Club Together” initiative Skryne GFC have partnered with Supervalu Johnstown who will contact the COVID 19 Community Support group to assist with the delivery of groceries to the more vulnerable in our parish. This will be a drop and go service to ensure all physical distancing guidelines set out by the HSE will be adhered to all times.

I hope you will agree this could be a great help to the more isolated in the parish so please spread this message out to all your local contacts that may require the service or may know someone who does. The service will be up and running in the coming week with details advertised on all Skryne GFC social media platforms.

Thanks again and mind yourselves!

COVID 19 Community Support group

Cormac Grendon 0879409677

Ross Philips 0879798822

Des Manning 0860584116.

Stephen Naughton 0872225572;

Niall Muldoon 0852091801;

Sean O Regan 0868145169

Christy O Connor 086 2854057

Declan Smyth 087-2504983

A.F.R. (9 am - 6pm) 0868853713.

Please contact any of us for further information or assistance

Notices

Local Handy Man Available

SERVICES PROVIDED:

- Carpentry / Wooden Floors / Cabinet Making
- Radiator covers made to measure
- Shelving for Hot Presses
- Side Gates made to measure
- Under Stairs storage units
- Garden Maintenance including Hedge Cutting
- Power-washing Paths & Patios
- Supply and Fitting of Fireplaces & Stoves

NO JOB TOO SMALL!

Contact: Pauric

T: 046 9034846

M: 085 1597105

Swans of Oberstown would like to inform our customers that we are doing our best to keep the shop open and are taking advice from the government and the HSE on how best to do so.

Customer safety is of paramount importance to us all and we kindly request the same in return for all our staff. Please maintain the new social distancing etiquette and follow all HSE guidelines.

The Swan family would like to thank all our customers for your continued support. Rest assured we will strive to keep the shelves well stocked with all the essentials, together with lots of goodies to help us through these challenging times. As well as offering somewhere safe to shop we are also doing deliveries where possible. At the moment we are open from 8am-8pm. Stay safe.

I would be willing to offer any advice to readers regarding their vehicles. With garages closed readers may have queries regarding issues that they are worried about.

Ron Chawke

Ron Chawke Motors

086-1717159

ronchawkemotors@gmail.com

Local person seeking to buy site with a view to building a residential property in the Skryne/Tara area

Contact details:

086-0424290

A&J Print are open for business, this may be of particular interest to students who need to have their projects printed up

SEDUM AND SAGE

LOCAL PLANT NURSERY



FREE DELIVERY ON ORDERS OVER €50
WITHIN 50KM OF SKRYNE

CATALOGUE AVAILABLE AT:
[HTTP://SKRYNE SAVER.COM/SEDUM/](http://skrynesaver.com/sedum/)

EMAIL TO ORDER: [KIRSTENWALK@GMAIL.COM](mailto:kirstenwalk@gmail.com)

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

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