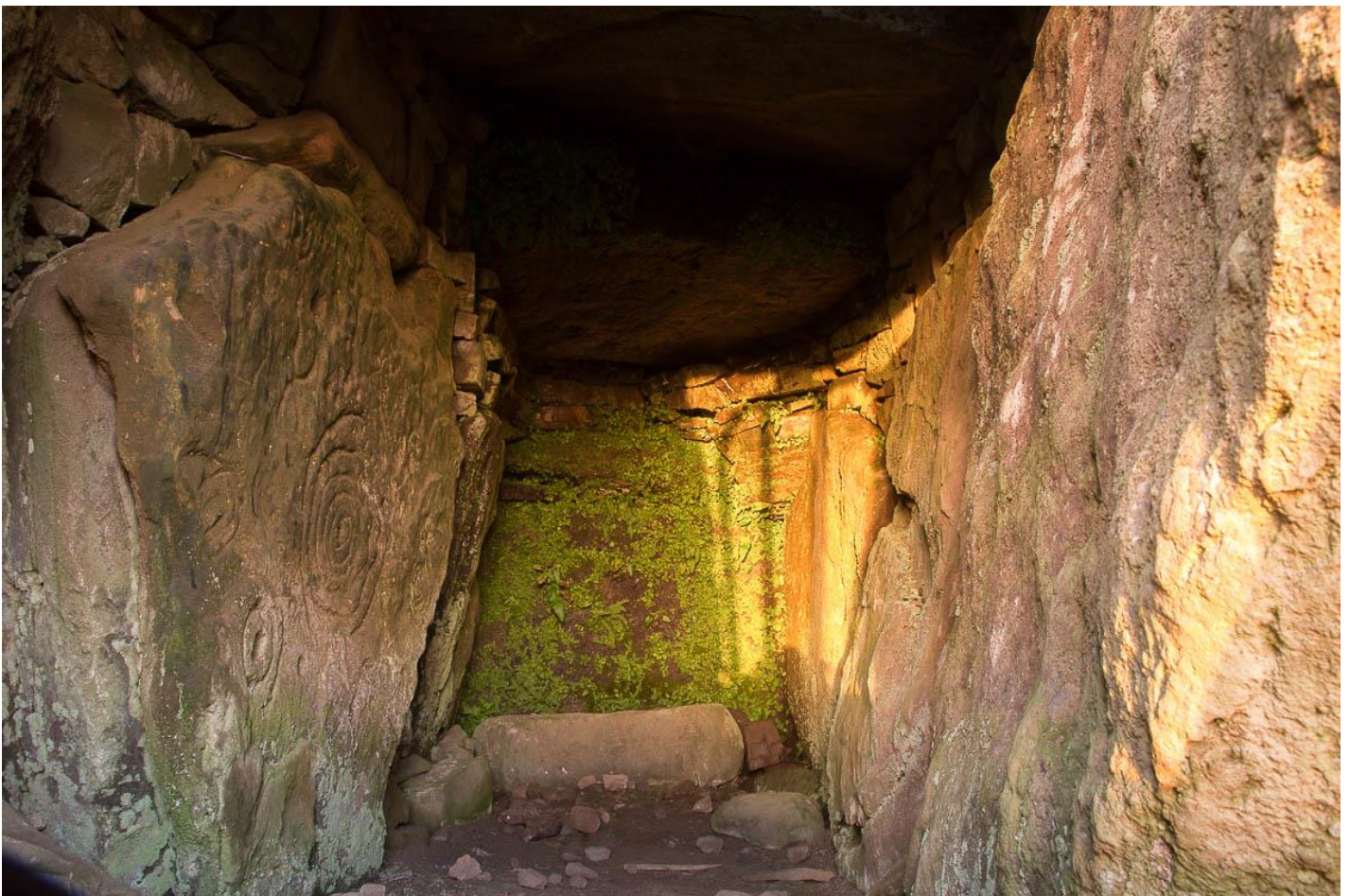


## *Mound of The Hostages, Hill of Tara*



*Photo taken by Hugh McNelis*

## Condolences

Our sincere sympathy goes to the Tormey family on the death of Moya Corry (nee Tormey) who passed away recently just three days after her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday

May she rest in peace

## Missing

Colin Downey from Gillstown, Garlow Cross, has been missing from his home since the early hours of Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May. Colin is 44 years old and approx. 5'10" in height. He is believed to be wearing a black jacket, black tracksuit bottoms and wellies.



Searches have been ongoing each day in the Walterstown area with the help of the local community, Gardai, Meath River Rescue and Meath Civil Defence. Please keep an eye on the Walterstown Community Alert facebook page for details of the next planned searches, as all help in the searches will be appreciated until Colin has been found. Help is welcome from adults (no children allowed) and social distancing must be maintained.

Navan Gardai are interested in seeing any dashcam footage from 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> May covering the routes between Walterstown and Johnstown. If you have footage, please contact Navan Gardai on 046 9036100

# A Tribute to Tex Mooney

## *Doug Mooney eulogy in Carlow Cathedral at his father's funeral*

Dad, or Tex as he was known to most in Meath, was younger brother to Raymond and Gabriel and they shared a happy childhood growing up on the farm in Greenpark, Skryne. I'm told they showed their tough country metal by playing Cowboys and Indians amongst the cowsheds, using nuts and bolts as ammunition for their bows instead of arrows – no wonder Gabriel went on to train to become a plastic surgeon.

But it was GAA that was the biggest part of their lives growing up in Skryne. Their father Tommy was a Skryne club legend who instilled Dad's love of the GAA. They spent every Sunday at a match, which left their 'Ma' Bernadette, the local Principal of Rathfeigh primary school, some well-earned peace and quiet away from her beloved lads.

Alongside his cousin Ken, Tex played right half forward for Skryne, and although his medal haul was perhaps less illustrious than older brother Raymond and other distinguished family that followed, his passion for the GAA was ingrained for life.

After attending Rathfeigh Primary School and then St Finians, Mullingar, he spent a spell training to be a priest, but it was decided his questioning of authority and tendency for pursuing tough questions was better suited to a career in journalism.

He started his journalistic career in UCD as university correspondent for the *Irish Press*. Upon graduation he worked as a sub-editor in the Irish Press and subsequently took up the position of sports editor and assistant editor with the Meath Chronicle, where through determination and hard work he forever transformed the way local sports journalism should be done in the county.

While working as a student journalist he rang a young lady named Ann Duffy, to enquire about the results of the pony racing that was held in her father's field– when she challenged him on his lack of knowledge of equine matters as a sports journalist, he must have decided he liked her sassy tone and again showed his determination by badgering her into a date and although she had a couple of other dates lined up that week, she finally relented.

A blossoming long distance relationship followed with Ann working as a student nurse in Manchester and Tex visiting her every other weekend, although it also helped that he was a big Manchester United fan. I'm sure the priority was to see Ann and not a United match!

They married in 1973 and settled in Macetown, County Meath and soon followed 3 sons Tommy, Peter and their crowning achievement Douglas.

An opportunity to become Editor of the Nationalist in Carlow came up in 1988 and soon after the whole family moved to Carlow, where we settled in Beechwood Park in Pollerton. Dad's passion for GAA wasn't diminished and he soon took his sons to join Éire Óg, where he coached the underage groups from U8 through to minor during the 90s – he would be regularly heard shouting "**Catch the ball BEFORE it bounces**", which must have worked as we won many underage championships and many of the players he coached went on to represent their county at senior level.

Many of our childhood Sundays were spent at Croke Park getting lifted over the turnstile to watch a Meath match that Dad was covering, but I'm not sure the Croke Park press box was meant as a child minding service as well.



He had a stubborn side as well, which many who crossed paths with him found out, so much so that he persisted in a game of silent treatment for over 2 months with his youngest misbehaving 10 year old, even when sharing car journeys alone to matches and training. Although this was probably better than getting my mouth washed out with actual soap and water when he once caught me swearing.

His sense of community and fighting for good causes was a big part of his life in Carlow, he founded Tinteán Carlow, which develops housing for vulnerable individuals including elderly and disabled. He also spent many years as a volunteer on the board of St Vincent de Paul hostel in Carlow. More recently he acted as a volunteer for Meals on Wheels, helped set up Carlow First Responders, worked with the Syrian community in Carlow, was an active member of the Bournlum Wood resident's association and would often be seen picking up litter on his morning walk to mass. He instilled this sense of community in his 3 boys by regularly getting them to clear the cut between Beechwood Park and the Dublin road and his favourite saying was *"What's this your Grandad used to say? A little bit of help is better than a great deal of pity."*

In 1997 Dad was recruited by Liam Hayes and Cathal Dervan, who he acted as a mentor to in their early careers, to work for a start-up sports paper in Dublin called The Title, which became Ireland on Sunday and then The Irish Mail on Sunday where he remained as Chief Sub Editor until his retirement. One thing I'm struck by recently, is the number of seasoned journalists who now credit Dad with giving them their break in journalism.

Due to a road traffic incident in 2003, Dad's health and energy levels diminished in his later years and he retired from journalism in 2009.

In his retirement he continued to fight for good causes and got to spend more time with his wife, and see Tommy and Douglas marry and he inherited two daughters in law, Fran and Laura and 4 grandchildren, Zazie, Noah, Áine and Erin who he loved very much.

He spoke to his other son Peter every Sunday from Shanghai, although we're still waiting for the life coaching Dad imparted to come to fruition.

There were two things that struck me about the specific timing of his death:

1. He passed away a few minutes after the RTÉ news started, which was on in the room – so he must have just been waiting to get the news headlines before he checked out.
2. May 9<sup>th</sup> was supposed to be the day the 2020 GAA county championship started, but it was cancelled for the first time ever. He must have thought there's no point in carrying on.

Our father was a loving, loyal husband.

He would do anything for anyone especially his family.

He was the epitome of integrity, and the most reliable man I've ever known. If I could have half of these qualities I will have done well.

We're proud to call him our Dad and will miss him so much.

This photo which includes Tex Mooney as a young boy appeared in the RST 9<sup>TH</sup> May 2020



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.

## Skryne GAA

This action shot was sent in by Norbert Coyle



Ciaran Lenihan showing how it's done , back in the days when life was normal How we miss it !!



## Skryne National School from Martin Kennedy

Here we are. Another week. Another note to prepare. There is a pattern emerging over the last few weeks and we are becoming accustomed to it. Familiarity it is said can breed contempt but thank God we haven't reached that stage yet - and hopefully never will. But you know what, it can breed complacency and it's cousin lethargy. I think I met them both this week and it is hardly surprising. From the school perspective we are working in a vacuum. The vibrancy and energy of the classroom is missing from our lives and, hard to believe, but we are all missing it. Routine, excitement, fun and games, friends and yes, rows and disagreements. We are missing them all - well maybe not so much the disagreements. They are part of our "normal" life but some invisible enemy has taken them from us. It can be hard to keep going. I certainly got that sense this week. The volume of material being sent in to teachers has seen a definite slide. Hardly surprising. Teachers are sharing the same emotions as many of you are. Education is a flame that we love to nurture, feed and watch grow. But like all fires it needs oxygen to sustain it and keep it alive. The oxygen we as teachers need is the work that you complete across the whole spectrum of learning. When we see the amazing efforts that many children are making it gives us the oxygen necessary to keep coming up with fresh and inventive content that keeps the flame of education burning. We are edging towards the end of a most unusual school year but there is still some time to go. I am asking you all to stay engaged with your teachers for the next 5/6 weeks. We have a few surprises up our sleeves but we really do need you to stay connected with us. Try to do a little every day. For parents, do keep your children engaged. For pupils, share what you do with us. We do care for you all and want to know that you are doing ok during this crazy time. Keep the oxygen coming. We love to share your achievements.

One thing that has kept many of us going over the past few weeks has been the steady stream of memes, jokes and video clips which have been circulating. They have been a very welcome piece of light relief. However now and again you can come across one that stops you in your tracks and brings a very necessary sense of balance to our lives. I am sharing this one because it does just that.

For a small amount of perspective at this moment, imagine you were born in 1900. When you are 14, World War I starts, and ends on your 18th birthday with 22 million people killed. Thousands of Irishmen have been killed. Later in the year, a Spanish Flu epidemic hits the planet and runs until you are 20. Fifty million people die from it in those two years. Yes, 50 million. From 1916 up to 1923 this country experiences both rebellion and Civil War. Thousands die and families are torn apart with members on both sides of the divide. When you're 29, the Great Depression in the US begins and has a global impact. Unemployment hits 25%, global GDP drops 27%. That runs until you are 33. The world economy nearly collapses. When you turn 39, World War II starts. You aren't even over the hill yet. When you're 41, the United States is fully pulled into WWII. Between your 39th and 45th birthday, 75 million people perish in the war and the Holocaust kills six million. At 52, the Korean War starts and five million perish. At 64 the Vietnam War begins, and it doesn't end for many years. Four million people die in that conflict. Approaching your 62nd birthday you have the Cuban Missile Crisis, a tipping point in the Cold War. Life on our planet, as we know it, could well have ended. Great leaders prevented that from happening. As you turn 75, the Vietnam War finally ends. From 1968 up to 1998 we had the Troubles in the North of Ireland which caused misery, division and cost thousands of lives. Think of everyone on the planet born in 1900. How do you survive all of that? A kid in 1985 didn't think their 85 year old grandparent understood how hard school was. Yet those grandparents (and now great grandparents) survived through everything listed above.

Perspective is an amazing art. Let's try and keep things in perspective. Let's be smart, help each other out, and we will get through all of this. In the history of the world, there has never been a storm that lasted. This too, shall pass.

Some people got in touch to say that they missed the musical references from last weeks note. Apologies - but a double dose of Satchmo didn't do you any harm. I am going to follow on that theme a little this week but not before calling in a well known wordsmith to back up my argument for including musical references. Here's what he said :

" The man that hath no music in himself, nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds, is fit for treasons, strategems and soils..... let no such man be trusted. (William Shakespeare).

*"Don't know much about History, don't much Biology,  
Don't know much about a Science book, don't know much about the French I took,  
But I do know that I love you, and I know that if you love me too,  
What a wonderful world this would be....."*

Maybe the Fab Four were right. *"All you need is love"*

Love each other well through this tough time. Enjoy the Wonderful World.\*\*

\*\* Sam Cooke who made this song such a big hit back in 1960 also had a major hit with a tune called "A Change is Gonna Come". We could certainly do with a bit of that right now. Incidentally, when Sam Cooke got married for the second time, his father married him. Figure that out.

Judging by the lyrics of "Wonderful World", Sam wasn't the brightest of students. He can take solace from the words of another great performer

" You don't need brains to listen to music". ( Luciano Pavarotti)

We can get oxygen from many different places.

\*\*\*\*\*

Today should have been a very special day for the pupils in Rang 2 at Sc. Cholmcille. It wasn't to be. But you now what, with that new sense of perspective we all have we can realize that the big day is just postponed. It will take place at a time when we can gather in safety with friends family and relations ,all of whom want to share such a great occasion with us. It will be even better when we are all together. The good news is that there is no "Best Before" date on all the prayers, hymns and preparation that goes in to getting ready for First Communion.No other class will have had a First Communion like yours. You are special people in so many ways. Special people get special treatment and we were delighted to be able to send you a unique card, designed just for you by past-pupil Elaine Kellegher ([www.LaineyK.com](http://www.LaineyK.com)). Beautifully printed by our friends at AJPrint you have a wonderful souvenir to keep as a reminder of just how special you are - and to remind you of the great day that is yet to come.

\*\*\*\*\*

.Here is just a sample of the "oxygen" teachers received during the past week. There are many more examples on the school website.

[www.skryneschool.blogspot.com](http://www.skryneschool.blogspot.com)











Dingbats Challenge - Set 22

<p>Book Book <u>Book</u> Lost</p>	<p>DD</p>	<p>CATED</p>
<p>GO TO</p>	<p>I.Q.</p>	<p>SURFACE</p>
<p>All <u>        </u> BOARD</p>	<p>UJUSTME</p>	<p><del>ER</del></p>

Here are the answers to our Set 21 Dingbats Challenge.

**PAGE 21**

- 1 Too good to be true
- 2 Turn up for the books
- 3 Back chat
- 4 Noel
- 5 Five times tables
- 6 Forecast
- 7 Gross over indulgence
- 8 Multiple fractures
- 9 Correct weight



## Saving the Hay by Sheelagh Mooney

One of the Summer rituals of my childhood was saving the hay. Everyone was expected to participate, uncles, neighbours and adult cousins were all roped in. Young teachers, rookie journalists and office-based insurance brokers were all expected to unearth their country roots and get their city softened hands back to the land from which they had only recently escaped. I'm not sure what they thought of this but us kids loved it and looked forward to those people-packed days on the farm. We would help my Mother to prepare picnics and fill flasks to load into a large wicker basket to be taken to the fields. There we would hang around like young dogs enviously watching the workers devour mountains of sandwiches and cake washed down with vats of steaming tea and hope they would leave some for us, just for the joy of eating in the meadows.

In the hayfield we competed for adult attention and to drive the Massey Ferguson tractor between the stacks of hay bales. Farm safety wasn't a big issue in those days. I think my Father considered it the best technique for learning the rudiments of driving.

Memories of those largely uneventful childhood summers now meld into one long glorious warm summer. Except one; it was the last load of the last day and the bales were piled high on the trailer. The tractor with my Father at the helm moved slowly and deliberately over the deep rutted grooves towards the gate, shuddering to a halt to let the passengers sitting precariously aloft flatten to avoid the overhanging trees at the gateway. A cheer rose when they narrowly cleared the gap and the tractor made its slow way onto the roadway. My Father smiled as he pulled on the throttle and his pipe simultaneously, jettisoning the laughing crew atop onto their backs. All heads swivelled to survey the now empty fields, the adults with relief no doubt. The Gods had smiled on them that summer and there were few complaints other than the unusually hot working conditions.

The tractor and trailer trundled along the narrow windy road pulling in occasionally to let a horn blowing grinning neighbour pass. This was country living and those who lived on the lane expected the unexpected on their little road.

Finally, the tractor made its last sweeping manoeuvre off the road and towards the haggard and the haybarn. My Father began reversing over the cobblestoned yard to align the trailer with the neatly stacked bales in the barn when the ropes started to loosen. Perhaps they had been less careful on this last trip. In seconds, the load started to shift and tumble and bales began to fly. As an eight-year old I was surprised to see 'old uncles' take flight to jump clear. Then I too was flying high; grabbed by the back of my tee-shirt as one of my uncles parachuted the two of us to safety.

Nothing much was said other than to discuss how to get the fallen bales into the barn without delay. In the warmth of the kitchen later not a mention was made of the incident in the yard, all talk was of football. For a child often slurred as a 'talking machine' even I knew not to refer to it.

## Things to do from Michael Mulvaney

GeoHive is an initiative by Ordnance Survey Ireland to provide easy access to publically available spatial data

<http://map.geohive.ie/>

When you type in the above link into your browser the home page should open  
From the menu top left select Base information and mapping  
A drop down menu comes up with a range of different maps  
Play around with these in particular the old 6in maps and there is a wealth of information there for those who may be interested.

An example is the cross we know as Georges X. This was McKeowns X. (no relation of the current McKeowns of Macetown) Garlow X on the main road was Philpotstown and Im sure there are other bits available that might surprise many people.  
Also the aerial views are excellent.  
A super source of information.

There is a five minute video on the basics of Geohive on the official Ordnance Survey Ireland website:

<https://www.osi.ie/services/geohive-2/>

## Memories from Eoin Hickey

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



*The Steeple at Skryne – a painting by Rachel O'Connell c.1996*

### Skryne and the Castle

Skryne is a well-known landmark. The hill with its tall steeple can be seen from all over County Meath. When Saint Patrick travelled from Slane to Tara he must have come by Skryne, he certainly did later on – sure, according to legend, didn't they steal his shoes at Garlow Cross! Saint Columcilles' Shrine rested on The Hill and gave us our name and he is still much honoured in the parish today. Adam de Feypo and his



Norman knights came in 1172 and built their castle – to quote from my mother’s book Skryne and the Early Normans:

*Let us take ourselves back to the year 1172 or so and imagine ourselves approaching Skryne for the first time with Adam de Feypo and his soldiers..... they might have halted again at the small monastic settlement of Trevet where..... he might have been told the story of King Art and shown his burial mound. Leaving Trevet they would have climbed to a boggy plateau drained by a shallow lake, and reached the community centre there – a ring fort situated north of the lake.... He would have seen ahead of him the two hills of Tara and Skryne;..... Skryne distinguished by its small Church and scattered buildings of the precinct. Adam would have been interested in this landscape. Here he intended to establish the house of Feypo and from this land would come its wealth and power.*

By the 16th century the Augustinian Friars had established their monastery on the slope of the Hill below the church. Perhaps it was because of its ancient history that in 1948 my parents were attracted to Skryne. It was in this year that Skryne won the Senior County Football Championship - *and Kilmessan won the hurling!* Sean T O’Kelly was President of Ireland; some rationing was still in place after the war and Eamon de Valera handed over as Taoiseach to John A. Costello who went on later that year to declare an Irish Republic. My story, however, is local; built around Skryne Castle and my mother, who had quite an influence on us her children and on others, during her half century at Skryne Castle.

Skryne Castle, by any standard, was and is a substantial residence; there are three floors and no basement. By far the most interesting feature of the house was its fireplaces, or rather *chimney pieces*. There were three important ones; in the hall and in the two front reception rooms, reputed to be by the renown eighteenth century artists; two by Adams and one by Bossi. Whether they were original or not we never really knew but they were masterpieces of art and quite something to grow up with and to take for granted. Judging by the number of dealers who came to buy them over the years there must have been something to them. Sadly, after our time, when the castle was being renovated they were stolen along with the pair of heavy gilt mirrors in the drawing room.

The upstairs drawing room is the place most associated with *The Ghost of Skryne Castle*, written so much about by ghost writers. On winter nights when we sat downstairs in the kitchen we regularly heard footsteps crossing the drawing room floor above, to and from the tower, knowing there was no one up there. As we became a little older - and braver we did investigate and so too did the ghost story writers who came from Ireland and abroad. *Terrible Tales From Ireland* by Sara Gilbert is one, *True Encounters With the World Beyond* by Hans Holzer is another and most distinguished is; *Living With Ghosts, The Ghost of Skryne Castle* by Michael of Greece. Michael of Greece came to the castle several times while

researching his book and became good friends with my mother. He is, no less than, a cousin of Prince Philip and grandson of King George I of Greece. He wrote us a very kind letter when our mother died. We'll come back to the ghost later on.



*Interiors of Skryne Castle: the drawing room and the main staircase.*

# Rathfeigh National School from Seamus Tansley

## Sixth class pupils

It seems unlikely at this stage that our 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils will be returning to school before the summer holidays. This is extremely disappointing for the pupils, their parents/guardians and their teachers. The children have spent eight years in Rathfeigh and during that time we have seen them develop academically, socially and physically. They have made great friendships and have experienced many ups and downs together. I think it would be a shame if the Government doesn't allow the children to come back for a day or two in June to say goodbye properly to their classmates and of course to get the very important school jumper signed! We have 19 pupils in sixth class. I'm very confident we can accommodate this number of pupils safely under social distancing guidelines. If we can't do this safely for this small number then the chances of doing it safely in September for considerably larger numbers seems remote!!

Ms Reynolds (6<sup>th</sup> class teacher) had a Zoom meeting with the sixth class pupils during the week to get feedback from the children on a number of items. The children said they would love to come back for a day or two in June and really want to get their jumpers signed. They are very disappointed that there won't be a 6<sup>th</sup> class graduation but said they would like to come back at a later date (even September) to have the graduation. We will, of course, accommodate this request but with a few prayers this may happen in June!!

## Mental Health Awareness

A number of countries around the world are celebrating mental health awareness this week. The theme is Kindness. More so than ever we have to be aware of our own mental health and the mental health of our children. We are facing a varied amount of stresses in our life and the coronavirus pandemic may be adding to the stresses for many people. There are many supports available to adults and children in terms of mental health and we shouldn't be afraid to get help if needed.

Pieta House have confirmed that Rathfeigh National School has been awarded with an Amber Flag for our commitment to promoting mental health in our school. Ms. Ward introduced this initiative for which we thank her. Pieta House contacted the school this week by e-mail (below).

Dear Amber Flag Committee in Rathfeigh National School,

We, at Pieta, are delighted to inform you that your school has been awarded with the Amber Flag! 😊

We would like to thank the Amber Flag Committee for their commitment and dedication to promoting Positive Mental Health in your school this year. As you know in order to receive a Pieta Amber Flag you have to set and achieve goals throughout the year and our team found your application to be an outstanding initiative promoting positive mental health. We are truly overwhelmed with the amazing initiatives being run in schools this year. You are all a credit to your school.

We know how difficult the last few months have been and we are so thankful that you were able to achieve your goals either in person or "virtually". We understand it's been a trying time for the Amber Flag Committee but we hope that you can look back on your achievements throughout the year and be grateful of the time you spent together and the goals you've accomplished! Don't underestimate the positive impact that your work has had this year. We, here at Pieta, certainly don't.

Attached are certificates for the Amber Flag Committee that you can edit the names and forward them to everyone, if you wish. There is also a certificate for your school that we hope you will display to show your



great achievements. We are hoping to send the physical flags once we get back from working remotely, hopefully this will be in September so thank you for your understanding.

Well done to all of you. Pieta's Amber Flag Team hope that you are proud of all your accomplishments this year, especially in spite of the current situation. We certainly are!

Kindest regards,  
The Pieta Amber Flag Team

### **Keeping Connected Art Competition**

There is still time for the children to enter the “Keeping Connected” art competition (details below). We would love if children in all classes entered. Please also e-mail your entries to the individual class Edmodo learning platforms or the school e-mail [snrathfaiche1@eircom.net](mailto:snrathfaiche1@eircom.net). We will be picking a winner from each class. Best of luck everyone!



### **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](mailto: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 15<sup>th</sup> June to mark *World Elder Abuse Awareness Day*.

We will share some inspiring entries on our social media pages  
[@safeguarding\\_ie](https://twitter.com/safeguarding_ie)  
[#keepingconnected](https://twitter.com/keepingconnected)  
[#intergenerations](https://twitter.com/intergenerations)

T&C available on request.



## Ladies Mini Marathon 1983

A group of ladies ran in the very first Women's Mini Marathon in 1983 to raise much needed funds for Skryne Hall.

They raised £1,200 which was a great sum at that time.



From left: Sarah Russell, Anne Gray, Anne Ruddy (ex NT Rathfeigh School), Pat Cromwell, Doreen McGoey, Eileen Gray, Angela McLornan and Anne Greevy.



Making presentation of cheque to Fr. John Healy P.P. from left: Angela McLornan, Anne Greevy, Eileen Gray, Fr. Healy, Pat Cromwell, Doreen McGoey, Anne Gray.



# The Great Hunger or Famine of 1846 to 1849 by Michael Mulvaney

On Sunday May 17<sup>th</sup> Josepha Madigan laid a wreath in remembrance of the victims of the famine in the years 1846 to 1849. This tragic event has left a permanent mark on the psyche of the Irish and is commemorated in many towns and cities throughout Ireland, North America and Liverpool. The impact of this famine has left indelible marks not just in Ireland but through England, Liverpool especially, as it was the port of exit to North America, Scotland, Canada in particular Grosse Isle, Quebec City, Montreal and Toronto and into the US with thousands of Irish arriving into the major towns and cities. Support structures as we know them today were non-existent and how these poor wretched people survived is a remarkable tribute to their resilience and strength of character.

Many of you will remember the trip by the Tuesday Club a few years ago to Strokestown House which has been established as the major centre of remembrance of this terrible period in Irish history. There are a number of very informative talks which can be downloaded and viewed for free available from their website. These talks give an account in particular of the 1450 people who left the estate at Strokestown in 1846 and travelled to Dublin by foot from Strokestown to the docks in Dublin and there waited for a boat to take them on their onward journey to Liverpool. Again in Liverpool they waited for onward travel to North America and when this transport did arrive it was of the poorest quality being totally unsuitable for human cargo but was built for carrying lumber and goods. The talks cover much of the trauma experienced by these poor wretches and the sickness and disease which wiped out hundreds of them in transit or on arrival in Grosse Isle near to Quebec City where a quarantine station was set up. All in all through the famine years in excess of 6000 are buried in mass graves in Grosse Isle with many more thousands dying in Montreal and Toronto and on down to Buffalo. The authorities were stretched beyond all bounds to deal with this influx and provide facilities. Many kind people tried to help with aid and in particular the religious orders in Canada showed great compassion and kindness with many of them dying as a result of picking up the diseases which were rampant among these unfortunates

Thankfully Maurice Daly passed on the reminder and anybody who has an interest in Irish History and in particular the famine will enjoy these talks which can be downloaded from the Strokestown site below:

[www.irishheritagetrust.ie](http://www.irishheritagetrust.ie) [www.strokestownpark.ie](http://www.strokestownpark.ie)

[faminestudies@irishheritagetrust.ie](mailto:faminestudies@irishheritagetrust.ie) [Christine.kinealy@quinipiac.edu](mailto:Christine.kinealy@quinipiac.edu)



# The Night Sky by Tony Canavan

May 23<sup>rd</sup>: Saturday at about 10 pm Venus and Mercury are very close together with Mercury upper left of Venus. They are setting earlier so we are starting to lose Venus having been so prominent in May. Comet Swan continues on its journey and can be seen to the right. (getting closer to Capella each evening).

May 26<sup>th</sup>: Tuesday at 10 pm Venus has nearly set, Mercury higher in the sky now, upper left. There is a fabulous crescent moon next to Pollux & Castor and comet Swan is only 5 degrees to the right of Capella ( Capella is directly above the position of the setting sun, azimuth 308 degrees altitude 30 degrees and it never sets at our latitude.). The Swan comet is on its way to the sun (should see it easily through binoculars), rounding the sun in June and returning past the earth in October back out into space. Much fainter in October.

Every morning Saturn with Jupiter are in the night sky at 4 am.

Saturn has a day length of 10.5 hrs and a year length of 29.5 earth years (one complete orbit of the sun). It is 9.6 earth distances from the sun, and it has an average orbital speed of 9.5 kms/sec. Like Jupiter it is thought to have a large rock core. With a 6inch telescope it is possible to see the rings of Saturn. It has over 60 moons, some being found by Voyager and others by the Cassini spaceship. The main moons are, Mimas, Enceladus, Tethys, Dione, Rhea, Lapetus and Titan. Titan is the biggest (bigger than Mercury) and is extremely cold but with the right temperature to form liquid methane on the surface. It is the only heavenly body besides earth known to have a liquid surface.



Saturn's moon Enceladus showing water plumes

The fly-by of the moon Enceladus by Cassini in 2005 showed that it has a heavily cratered northern half and a smooth southern half. The smoothness is due to volcanic activity smoothing out the southern surface of Enceladus and Cassini also discovered water rich plumes venting from the South pole region (which also feeds one of the rings of Saturn). The Cassini probe actually flew through the plumes and on completion of its mission plunged into the atmosphere of Saturn. The vents spew hydrogen rich hot water, fuelling chemical reactions that can transform organic compounds into amino acids crucial for replicating the genetical information to form life. Because of its volcanic activity (caused by the flexing of the moon by Saturn) the presence of hydrothermal vents in the subsurface ocean is highly likely. These thermal vents are also present in the oceans on earth and are believed to be one of the most likely sources of the beginnings of life on earth.

NASA has a \$1billion dollar project to land a Dragonfly nuclear powered helicopter on Titan. It will take 8 years to reach Titan. Due to be launched in 2026 it will arrive at Titan in 2034.

Huygen's probe from Cassini discovered that Titan has Methane, Ethane, Propylene, Nitrogen and Carbon which are all key ingredients for life.

Exciting discoveries ahead.

## A Department Store of Iconic Grandeur by Anne Frehill

For many of us, Clerys department store will always be synonymous with Dublin. Unlike some of its rivals it served the needs of both town and country families. Here, the wily shopper could find something for every stage of life: from baptism through communions, confirmations, debutante balls, graduations, weddings, and the retirement years. It truly helped customers to “hatch, match and dispatch” their loved ones. From its inception to well into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, it also had a whole section devoted to the Catholic clergy where everyone from a humble curate to the most venerated bishop could find suitable apparel for his place in the hierarchy.

Clerys opened its doors to the public for the first time in 1853 and was then known as “The New Mart”, situated on 23-28 Lower Sackville Street, now O Connell Street. It was one of the world’s first department stores, managed by Peter Mc Swiney, George Delaney and Co. The former was related to both James Joyce and Daniel O Connell. Over the years it had its own internal struggles but ultimately proved itself as a store beloved by both young and not so young, despite having many of the major events of Dublin’s history played out on its doorstep. These included the burning down of Clerys and its neighbour the Imperial hotel during Easter week of 1916. The firm moved to the temporary location of the Metropolitan Hall in Lower Abbey Street. Eventually on August 9<sup>th</sup> 1922, the sparkling new Clerys building was officially opened for business in its original location. Clerys was back, bigger, and bolder than ever, and it imitated many of the stylish features of London’s Selfridges.

In 1941, Clerys was again in trouble this time financial, but Denis Guiney an incorrigible Kerryman, bought the store out of receivership for a quarter of a million. He continued to expand the business until his death in 1967 when his nephew Arthur Walls took over the day-to day management, while his widow Mary Guiney remained as Chairperson until her demise at the ripe old age of 103 years in 2004.

In my student days, I got a job there during the Christmas holidays. I was assigned to different Departments each morning, depending on where there was an extra pair of hands required. While my favourite one was the Make-up counter, I dreaded Ladies Footwear, surely the worst of mankind's foibles were on display there. For every genteel old lady and shy young nun who required basic walking shoes, there were haughty women who tried to squeeze their size six feet into shoes at least one size smaller and then complained that the shoes were not comfortable. Next came the "time wasters" who had set their eyes on the most expensive footwear but due to their limited income could not afford to splash out for such an extravagance. Nevertheless, they insisted on trying on these shoes in every colour and in a few different sizes. I will never forget the pompous titled lady, who refused to allow anyone to serve her except the Supervisor and then insulted her when she could not find any shoes to accommodate her large bunions. Worst of all were the females who tottered around in vertiginous heels and swanky coats, they seemed to regard an assistant as some sort of slave who was there specifically for the purpose of forcing a malodorous foot into a long tight boot.

It was whispered among the staff that Clerys also had its ghosts, although management was extremely reticent about spectral goings-on. I can recall night security men saying that they sometimes heard footsteps in the empty store after hours but when they went to investigate, they could find no intruders. From the year 1986, there is a well -documented case involving a mature member of staff who entered the storeroom on the ground floor late one evening. She felt something brush past her in that small space and when she turned around, she saw what she described later as "an elderly female figure in dark, outdated clothes". Believing the woman to be a customer she said, "I am sorry, we are closed" but the figure disappeared.

That ghost was later linked to a murder which took place over 132 years earlier, in the Imperial Hotel, which was subsumed into Clerys main store, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A retired doctor and his wife were staying at the hotel in order to experience the delights which the new store had to offer. The head porter befriended them, and the doctor asked him to take care of a large case of sovereigns which he had brought

with him. However, the porter was tempted by all the money and lost it on gambling aided and abetted by a crony. He replaced the coins with coppers but when the owner looked for his full money back, the porter along with his partner in crime lured the good doctor and his wife into a dark part of the building and strangled them. The year was 1854.

Sadly, Clerys is no more but she reigned supreme as the grande dame of Dublin's department stores for many years. Yet, she had one further surprise, all who worked in Clerys soon learned, that it was an education in itself.

## My Brother's Scribblings from Norbert Coyle

Greetings ...to all you survivors ...

Coronavirus...covid 19...two phrases that scare most folks with the possible exception of Boris and the Donald...and to be fair to them....they have "underlying problems".

This lockdown and cocoon period has developed a life of it's own...akin to the growth industry that emerged in recent years in the "health and safety " world.

In the "good old days" lads and lassies sat in chairs and teens in transition slouched merrily. Nowadays one is advised to sit upright and maintain proper posture lest one's upper vertebrae slip slide merrily down to one's coccyx.

Reminds me of my then 98 year old cousin who was whacking away happily into a small plate of sliced up sausages and gently asked his wonderful carer from some colonized African country if he might perchance have a little salt in order to "spice" up the rather dull sausages.

"Oh no James" she responded dutifully..."Salt is not good for you"..."Oh then I'd better not have it in case I die young" responded Jim.

For most of his life when the world around him had fancy salt and pepper dispensers ...and some of the fancier models required a week in the simulator to get the hang of the things...Jim had a glass bowl with a small salt spoon ...he considered everyone worth their salt...now there are those who will argue that had he been less generous with the salt he might have lived to be 150 as opposed to almost 100.

Airport security is another of these growth industries....it grew like mushrooms or city cranes and appeared out of nowhere. Clearly a total con job and the proof is that if it was really required then it would have been applied to busses ,trains and indeed all forms of transport...but no...it was a well maneuvered job creation gee gaw and we all fell for it .



Lockdown and cocoonery has its own special sideshow which is gaining in momentum exponentially and is now almost part and parcel of the cocooned life.

Yes....the ubiquitous WhatsApp messages.

Sometimes I have nearly 100 per day...some great ...some good...and some ...ah c'mere now.

They're like the "R" number....if we could get them down to an acceptable level then they might die naturally .

Life in cocoon world has its compensations. Sport had almost disappeared...well except for old games ....but to be fair....we have SKY and CNN and they bring daily doses of the best ever entertainment...it's a joy to watch the daily diatribe on Sky as the gov. flunkie of the day is wheeled out to ignore all questions and state categorically that "we acted at the right time in the right manner".

Yes Beth...and your question....."One of my radiators is cold ...should I bleed it or just put on a stiff upper lip and grin and bear it and wait for the good weather?"

"Wonderful question Beth ...and before I hand you over to a non national from the NHS...all non nationals as far as one can see...front line doing a wonderful job...this is my considered response to your excellent question...yes indeed ...when I cook cabbage at home as I occasionally do...I find that a small bit of bread soda helps ..and now to Cindy from the BBC"

Then after an hour or so...time is now our greatest friend ...we switch to CNN...they show the Donald at his brilliant best...yes it's all Cheena's fault...we're doing great...awesome if you ask me...we got it whacked ...deaths are rising they tell me....that's just fake news....no not you...that's a naasty question...you're a disgrace...and your Station should be baned for broadcasting fake news ...Chuck from Fox...your question...yes ...good question...you're right ...I'll have this God Bless America war beaten next week....slight pause as he slugs from a hip flask of Jeyes Fluid.

Today on WhatsApp there was the usual proliferation of .."Ah Mhuire me..the world is more full of weeping than one can understand".

Lots of folk whined in unison and bemoaned their ill luck.

Somebody asked a group I belong to..."And how are you all coping"

The usual responses...1st world stuff...can't hug my grandchild...can't splurge in the shops...can't see "friends and family" ...can't visit the beach I never knew I wanted to be on until now....etc etc...and then out of the wild blue yonder Leo wrote...I'm using Leo to protect Leo...who'd guess I'd use his real name...

I'm just great he said....best days of my life...at home with my wife...lovely home ...lovely weather...oh how lucky am I ...no visitors...no annoyances...just sheer bliss...I'm so lucky but not unaware that this may not be the same for everyone...the less fortunate...

Leo put an end to the communal whine when in fact life for lots of us is just a breeze.

I responded that his attitude was mirrored by old Epictetus yonks ago when he said..."Life is not about what happens....but how we view what happens".

So now I'm slightly sad as these halcyon (for me) days are coming to an inevitable end...life will revert back to normality where we'll once again be getting and spending....etc

A few gems to brighten your days.....

## The World Is Too Much With Us

BY [WILLIAM WORDSWORTH](#)

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!  
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

You got it before..and now again...such a treat...Willie at his superb best.

The unbeckonable bird...ah here now....am I spoiling you?

## John Keats

### O Solitude!

O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell,  
Let it not be among the jumbled heap  
Of murky buildings; climb with me the steep,—  
Nature's observatory—whence the dell,  
Its flowery slopes, its river's crystal swell,  
May seem a span; let me thy vigils keep

'Mongst boughs pavillion'd, where the deer's swift leap  
Startles the wild bee from the fox-glove bell.  
But though I'll gladly trace these scenes with thee,  
Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind,  
Whose words are images of thoughts refin'd,  
Is my soul's pleasure; and it sure must be  
Almost the highest bliss of human-kind,  
When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee.

Now I know you're being rightly spoiled....



## Hedging our Bets by Terry Foley

Hedge laying is a country craft which has been practised in one form or other for thousands of years. In 57 BC, Julius Caesar writes in his *Commentaries on the Gallic War* of the Nervii tribe in Northern Europe and their use of hedges. He described how the tribe had constructed and manipulated hedges by cutting and laying small trees and then binding them with brambles and thorn to make an impenetrable barrier to keep their livestock safe from marauding tribes. As a military tool, hedges were also particularly useful in thwarting Roman cavalry as Caesar noted (much to his annoyance no doubt). It would be reasonable to say that our Celtic tribes of the same era in the Tara and Skryne valley here practised similar hedge laying techniques to keep their precious cattle and livestock safe.

Over the millennia, hedge laying developed as a way of containing livestock and demarcating fields. Looking at our hedgerows in the fields gives us a glimpse back in time. Small square shaped fields tended to suit the *ard* plough used in Gaelic Ireland. This was because this primitive relatively light plough only really scratched the surface of the soil, so cross ploughing was needed to break up the earth effectively. Consequently, the square shaped field plot suited this process better. The Normans introduced the larger, heavy plough to Ireland in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This plough favoured long rectangular fields so field shapes of that ilk are likely to be from after the Norman Invasion.

Later, many of our present system of fields and hedgerows were further developed from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The planting of the hedgerows then generally consisted of the hawthorn, sycamore and beech that we see on our field boundaries today.

Hedge laying is generally done between October and March when trees and shrubs are dormant and the birds are finished nesting. The hedge is prepared for laying by removing some of the lower branches on each stem. This allows light into the base of the hedge to encourage growth and also clears the way for accessing the base of the hedge stem for cutting.

The traditional method of hedge laying involves the process of bending and partially cutting through the stems of a line of hawthorn, sycamore or beech trees or shrubs. This partial cutting is termed *pleaching* or *plashing* and the cut stems are called *pleachers*. These words are interesting in themselves and echo something of the antiquity of hedge laying to me. *To pleach* or *to plash* comes from the latin *plectere*, to plait or weave. Shakespeare used the word *pleached* to mean fenced or overarched with intertwined boughs.

The cutting consists of a long, quite deep clean cut, as close to the ground as possible. The cut is made about 3/4 of the way through the stem on the side away from where you intend to lay down the pleacher. The cut allows the stem to bend over easily but great care must be taken not to slice all the way through! The cutting is carried out with a traditional sharp bill hook (or saw or axe on larger stems). For ease of work with these tools of the trade, it is recommended to lay a line of hedge from left to right if you are right handed, and vice versa if you are left handed.

The pleachers are gently layed down as they are cut. They should never be layed completely horizontally flat but at an angle so the sap can rise through the plant.

Stakes are carefully set in place, roughly every three feet, to support the layed pleachers. Softwood stakes, or whatever is readily available, will suffice, once they can support the layed hedge for a couple of years until it is established. The

cut sections are, of course, very fragile at this stage so the stakes help provide stability and strength. The pleachers are weaved into each other and in and around the stakes like a lattice work.

In some parts of rural England it was customary to use long thin flexible hazel rods to plait around the tops of the stakes for additional strength.

Finally, the cleft stump (this is the pointed angled bit of stump left at the base of the pleacher when you bend the stem over) should be cut carefully, cleanly and neatly, This will enable rain to drain away from the cut base and also encourage regrowth.

It is customary to lay the hedge away from the prevailing wind if possible and also to lay the pleachers uphill rather than downhill if the hedge happens to be on a slope. This helps the sap to rise easily and provide life to the plant. The layed hedge will over the course of a few seasons develop new growth and shoots from where it has been cut. I have also noticed that bare bent branches, newly exposed to the sun, develop shoots. It is very rewarding to the spirit to transform a neglected, gappy hawthorn into a thriving thick living hedge.

The humble hedgerow defines our countryside, not just as field boundaries but as a habitat and a refuge for insects, amphibians, mammals and birds. The network of hedges allows a breathing space for these creatures. Hedges provide corridors for wildlife which are crucial for their movement and the continuation of viable populations. The richness of wildlife that the hedgerows can sustain cannot be overstated nor their importance in preserving our increasingly threatened natural environment.

Modernity hasn't been kind to the Irish hedgerows and wildlife. Nationwide, our hedges and wildlife are declining at an alarming rate, to our great shame. Pesticides, herbicides and other innovations ravage our countryside. Neglected hedges became gappy and tall with sparse growth. Conversely, persistent flaying of hedges without respite destroys their value for wildlife and indeed their purpose. Many hedges are grubbed out to make larger fields that could be more effectively managed by ever larger machinery. Here in Skryne and Tara, we are privileged to live in a beautiful place, rich in history and natural heritage. A sympathetic awareness and a simple appreciation of the countryside around us will benefit not just nature but, ultimately, ourselves and future generations.









## Birdwatching by Tom Bannon

### Jackdaw & Kingfishers

All the garden birds are very busy feeding young at this time of year and will be very visible in the gardens and fields so enjoy watching them and their antics.

One bird in particular, the jackdaw draws the ire of many people at this time of year as they are spotted searching for nests in the hedgerows or on the ground searching for young birds to feed to their young.

Meanwhile on the Hurley river , the kingfishers are also very active. With each chick in the brood eating more than 12 fish a day it's no wonder the poor parents trips up and down the river over the past few weeks are increasing daily . The size of the fish they are bringing back to the young has also increased.

The low river levels due to the lack of rain , the decent size and number fish spotted in the river pools ensures an abundant food supply so the only risk to the chicks at this point is from predators.

Their nest is burrowed into the river bank and as nest housekeeping is not a strong feature of the kingfisher it can attract unwanted attention.

If it remains undetected from rats or mink for another week then the brood should be ready to venture out to the river and fresh air.....









## Gardening

**Clematis "Montana" in full bloom in a thousand gardens around the country !**



This impressive photo was sent in by Norbert Coyle



These beautiful Laburnum and Cherry Blossom photos were taken by Karen Carty









## Poetry Corner

*This poem was written for Margaret Hayes by her father Brian Smyth*

### To Margaret from Dada in a time of great Anguish

(I)

Oh God you've given me a cross to bear alone,  
For past and present failings to atone,  
Oh lighten it dear Lord whene're you please,  
And when your righteous anger, I Appease.

(II)

Dear God you too did bear a cross but sinless thou  
Before your judgement seat, I humbly bow  
So oft' have I refused your saving grace  
The pleading look upon your holy face.

(III)

Your mercy Lord is all I dare now crave  
And pray you Lord my guilty Soul to save  
Oh grant that when your judgement I must meet  
Repentant I will kiss your wounded feet.

(IV)

Dear Margaret you are all the world to me  
A little child took up a mother's load.  
A bright fresh bloom to a withered tree  
Showing an aged man the only road  
God bless and ever keep you in his care  
Oh grant together eternal bliss we share.

*The poem is taken from his book 'Collected Poems'*





## 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:*

Horse drawn mower, used to cut grass in preparation for haymaking

Horse drawn plough, used for breaking ground in preparation for soil cultivation and seed sowing

## 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](mailto: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*

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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

Please send all articles to [jimconroy747@gmail.com](mailto:jimconroy747@gmail.com) or to [patriciaconroy1@hotmail.com](mailto:patriciaconroy1@hotmail.com)