

# IRELAND'S **BIG** **ISSUE**

Digital Edition  
December 2023  
Is 294 Vol 21

## Wishing all a Peaceful and Happy Christmas

Prizes to be won!

Lots more inside..



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# Going Forward: A New Challenge

The Covid-19 pandemic has taken its toll on us, like it has on many other magazines, organisations and businesses globally.

Unfortunately we are faced with a landscape that has irreversibly changed since the Big Issue first hit the streets in 1995. To meet this challenge Ireland's Big Issue must also change.

We have reluctantly decided, albeit with a heavy heart, to host the magazine digitally only for the foreseeable future.

From now on, Ireland's Big Issue will focus our support on the Irish Homeless Street Leagues. This volunteer-driven, non-profit has been using the power of sport to transform the lives of men and women who've found themselves affected by social exclusion all across Ireland - north and south. By continuing to support the magazine online you'll be helping to develop resilient individuals and stronger communities, connecting people and promoting equality and diversity, inspiring and motivating those affected by social issues.

We will also be adjusting the content to reflect the times we live in whilst endeavoring to provide an informative and enjoyable read.

We thank you for your support to date and ask that you continue to help us. As there is no charge for Ireland's Big Issue we do need your support to continue highlighting the issues that impact our lives and bring you a truthful, balanced view of what is happening in our world.



*For as little as a cup of coffee (€3) you can subscribe.*

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# Contents

## Page 6

### Letter to my Younger Self – Rosemary Mac Cabe

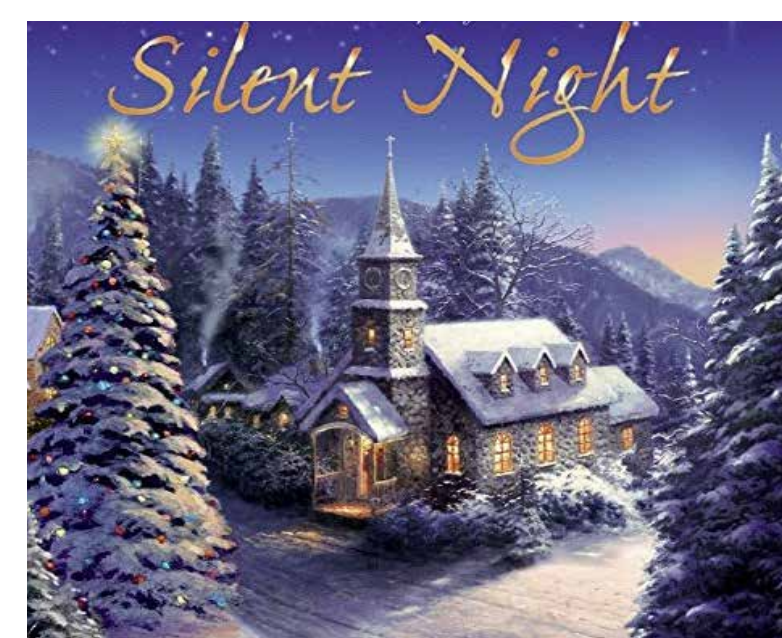
Each issue we ask an interesting person to write a letter to their 16-year-old self. This issue, Dublin-born Rosemary Mac Cabe, a journalist, podcaster and writer now living in Indiana, U.S.A. takes on the challenge. Rosemary has written for publications like the Irish Times, The Guardian, Stellar magazine and more.



## Page 8

### Silent Night

Martin Clarke reveals the story of the carol that paused a war.



## Page 10

### Phil Coulter: Still Going Strong at 81

Sam McMurdock has a chat with Phil Coulter between shows at his current sell-out tour.



## Page 14

### Women’s Shelters: When Home is Not a Place of Safety

Women’s shelters on our island, north and south are struggling. As the economy flounders, donations dwindle and ultimately, women and children suffer. Sineád Dunlop reports.



## Page 18

### Die Hard: A Surprise Christmas Favourite

Now deemed as the trailblazer for modern-day action flicks, Die Hard was a poor bet - a complete underdog that the film industry deemed financial suicide for 20th Century Fox, yet defying all expectations it became a blockbuster, propelling Bruce Willis from mere TV romcom co-star to Hollywood leading man.



## Page 33

### Monsignor Hugh O’Flaherty - Man of Courage

Monsignor Hugh O’Flaherty was one of our country’s greatest men, yet to this day, his story is relatively unknown. Liz Scales takes a look at the life of the Co. Cork man who saved 6,500 Allied soldiers and Jews from the Nazis.

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## Page 38

### The Enduring Appeal of Friends

The enduring appeal of Friends, and why so many of us feel we’ve lost a personal friend in Matthew Perry, Adam Gerace reports.

#### Regulars

- 29/30 – Screen Scene
- 37 - Jokes
- 40/341 - Book Club
- 46 - The Podcast Review



Wishing all a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year

Micheál  
**Martin TD**  
Uachtarán Fhianna Fáil

*Merry  
Christmas  
and a  
prosperous  
and safe  
New Year*

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Peaceful New Year  
to All**





# Editor's Note



It's that time of year again and let's celebrate, if only because we can, but let's celebrate the true meaning of Christmas, not the commercial entity it has become.

It is time as a people to reassert the values that generations of Irish people hold dear. A mindless few in recent times have sought to distort what being Irish really means: generosity of spirit, welcoming and looking out for each other have always been traits that symbolise what it is to be Irish. It's what binds us together that is important.

As John F Kennedy once said and is as relevant today as it was 60 years ago,

*“Our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future.”*

I was in a shop recently, there were plenty of Christmas decorations on sale and I noticed a phone debate between a young woman and I assume her mother on the other end. The subject was outdoor lighting and it revolved around getting this, that and the other relating to quantity, colour etc; the contrast between worlds is hard to escape. Christmas is not about the trappings, it's about getting together with friends and family, being thoughtful of each others needs and enjoying those fleeting moments that make treasured memories of our tomorrows.

As I left the shop I noticed that same woman struggle to get the boxes of lights into her car; a man who had been sitting unnoticed outside on the damp ground with a cup immediately got up and helped her to pack her boxes into her vehicle. She was most grateful, thanked him and gave him some loose change that made his eyes light up. It occurred to me that whatever light comes from her new state of the art lights will hardly shine as bright as the light she switched on in that poor man's eyes, with her kind words and gesture.

Sometimes it is the simple act of kindness that has the greatest impact on individuals and symbolises what is the real spirit of Christmas.

On behalf of Ireland's Big Issue, a very happy and peaceful Christmas to all our readers, home and abroad. Thank you for your support

Sean

**If you are homeless or know someone who is homeless and could benefit from a dinner on Christmas Day**

**In Dublin, contact The Knights of Saint Columbanus on this website  
<http://christmasdaydinner.com>**

**The Order of the Knights of St. Columbanus, CDDC, Ely House, Ely Place,  
Dublin 2, D02 P028**

**In N. Ireland, contact Chris Dalzell to order meals (or if you can help in any way, including deliveries). His details are [chrismdalzell@live.co.uk](mailto:chrismdalzell@live.co.uk) or Mobile: 073 98815367. Chris, a chef from Bangor, Co. Down and also known as Ireland's Most Tattooed Man aims to put a hot meals in the hands of anyone who's homeless or struggling with the cost of living crisis, a task he's been undertaking now for several years.**





# Letter to my Younger Self - Rosemary Mac Cabe

**E**ach issue we ask an interesting person to write a letter to their 16-year-old self. This issue, Dublin-born Rosemary Mac Cabe, a journalist, podcaster and writer now living in Indiana, U.S.A. takes on the challenge. Rosemary has written for publications like the Irish Times, The Guardian, Stellar magazine and more.



There's not a lot I could say to you that you would believe or, even if you did, that you would listen to. In that sense, I haven't really changed. The ideas I held so firmly about who I was, who I would be and how I'd get there, at the age of 16, aren't so different to the ideas I hold on to now. I have the same dreams.

I could tell you, and it would be true, that some of those dreams have come true. I can say, honestly – and I do, as often as I can – that I am a writer. It's how I make my living, along with podcasting, a little journalism, occasional freelance contracting and, very sporadically, advertising products and services on Instagram. You'll learn all about that eventually.

The most important thing that I've learned is that there is no beginning, or end, at least not in the way we've come to understand the words, to anything. I know you feel, a lot of the time, like you're waiting for something, a moment you'll recognise as the start of a new chapter, or the end of the last. Those moments don't exist. What you'll get, instead, is a series of messy situations and occasions and occurrences, and they'll happen with and without you, around and away from you.

The relationships you have with others will come to be the most defining aspects of your life, your decisions and your character. A lot of those relationships will be with men, and most of those relationships will be romantic. It's just the way the cookie crumbled.

I know this will probably leave you with a bad taste in your mouth. It's not very feminist, after all, to define your life in terms of the men you've loved, lost, lusted after. It may not be very feminist, but it's true. I grapple with that reality, too, even now. (Like I said, I haven't really changed.)

I'm not telling you this because I would like to change the outcome, but because I would like to change the feelings you're left with, when the dust settles and you realise that you've been through the wars (with not a single medal to show for it). Your intentions have always been good; remember that. When you hurt people – and, too, when you hurt – your intentions were good.

I know, now, what I'm not sure you do: you're a good person. I'm a good person. It's taken me a while to get here.

You'll make mistakes. A lot of mistakes! In another letter, I'd be telling you that it's okay, because each mistake contained a lesson. That may be true, but if it did, they're lessons you will determinedly ignore.

**It's  
not very feminist,  
after all, to define your life in  
terms of the men you've loved,  
lost, lusted after.**

That's okay, too. You're a good person. Exercise forgiveness when it comes to yourself, just as you do – and will – exercise forgiveness when it comes to other people.



Maybe, actually, if I can change one thing, let it be this: forgive people a bit less. Let go of the whole “forgive and forget” thing; some mistakes, some decisions, some cruelties should not be forgotten. Forgive, because it’s the only way you’ll let go, move on, exorcise the demons of some unforeseen haunting. But don’t forget. Some people don’t deserve it.



Make whatever choices you feel you need to make, in the moment. Make mistakes for love – there are far worse reasons out there, believe me – and make mistakes because you’re hopeful, and optimistic. It’s okay if you end up being wrong. It’s no fun to be right all the time (and yes, I still think I’m right all the time – I mean, who doesn’t? Who goes around thinking, I’m wrong but I’ll say this anyway?).

Write. Read. Every day, even just a little. Love stories, war stories, science fiction, fantasy. Read it all. Write it all. Remember that not all of it will be good, but none of it is a waste of your time.

Stop waiting for the next chapter. Maybe your story is a stream-of-consciousness kind of narrative.

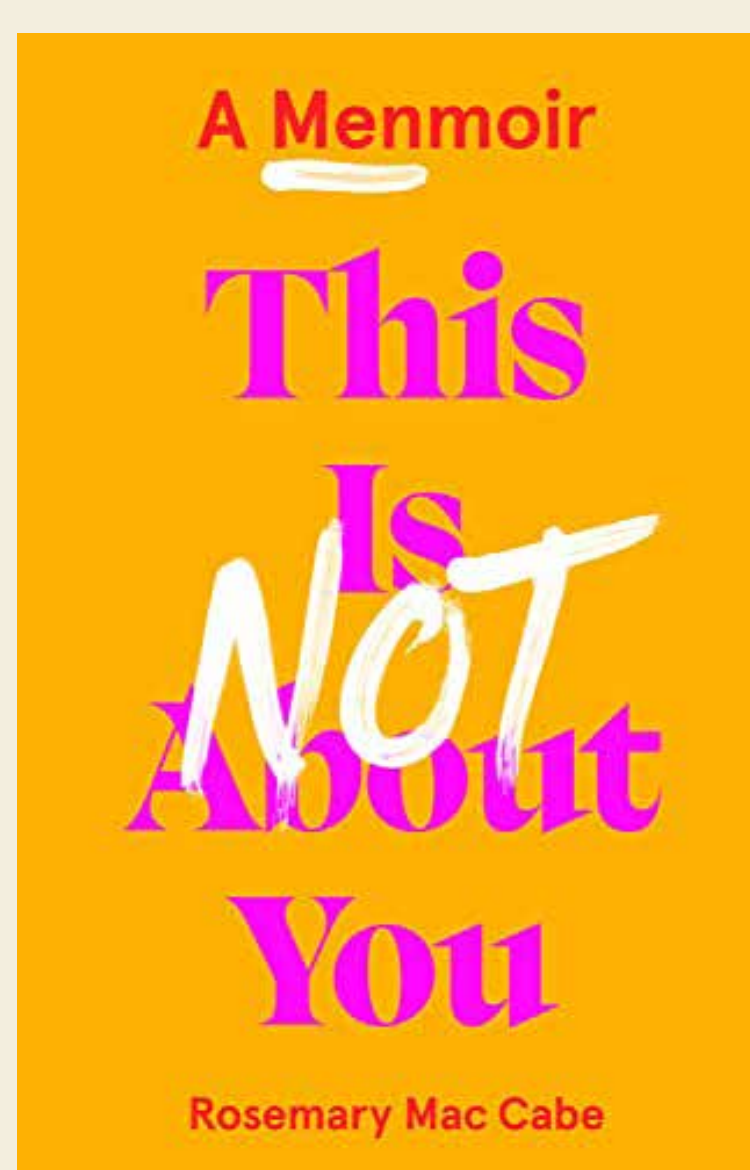
What  
you do matters, even  
if it doesn’t end up being  
some big,  
earth-shattering, time-altering  
thing.

Don’t let life be something that just “happens” to you. Remember, you happened to the world. What you do matters, even if it doesn’t end up being some big, earth-shattering, time-altering thing. I don’t say that with any particular knowledge of it, by the way. I may yet do the big, earth-shattering, time-altering thing. I’m not even halfway through. After all, the best bits come in the second half of the book.

You deserve to be here. Please, remember that in the moments you think you don’t.

Highly recommended reading:

**The Irish no.1 best-seller  
‘This Is Not About You:  
A Menmoir’ (published  
by Unbound) is available  
from all good bookshops  
& online. Also available on  
Audible.**

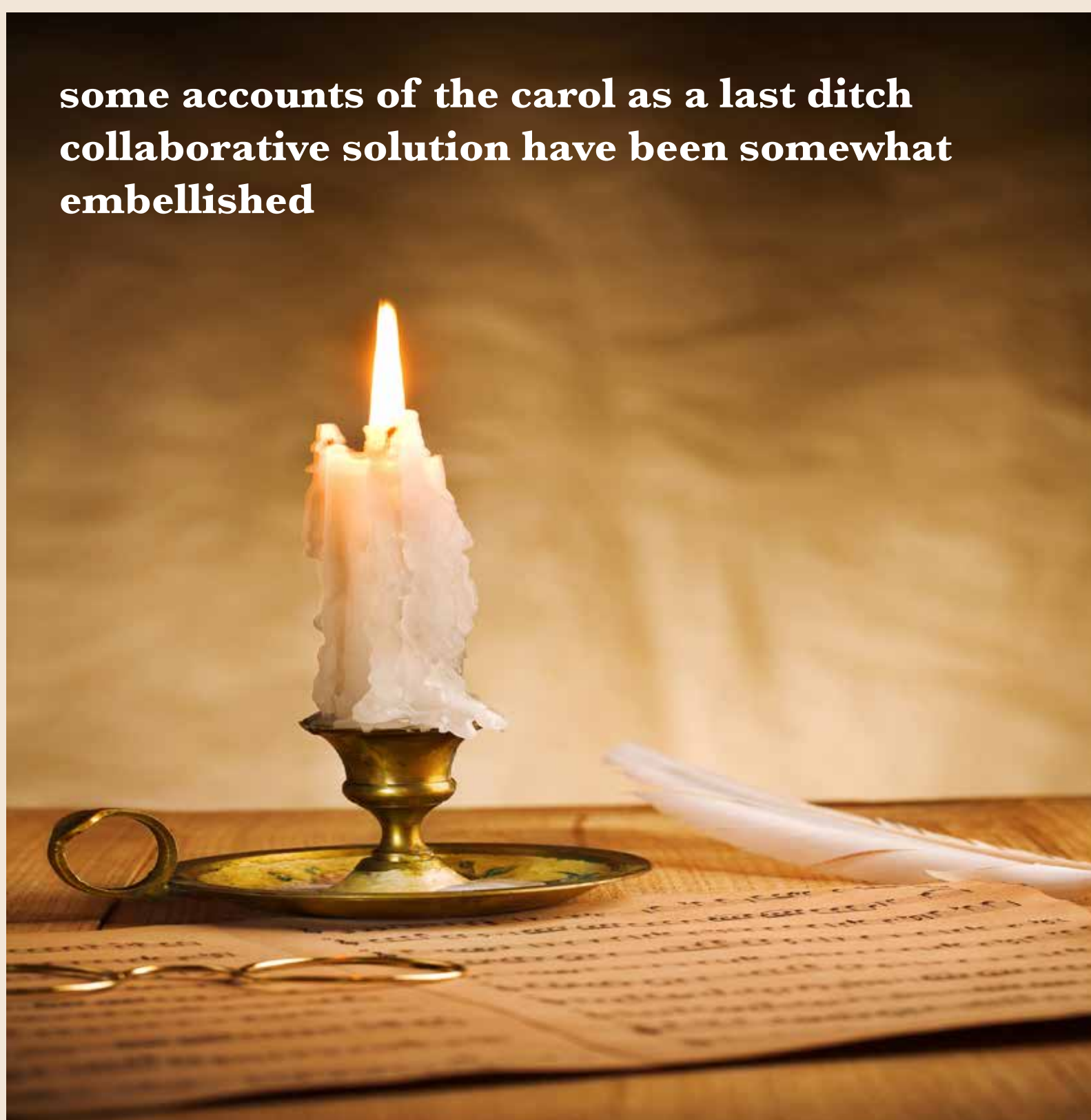




# Silent Night

**M**artin Clarke reveals the story of the carol that paused a war.

**some accounts of the carol as a last ditch collaborative solution have been somewhat embellished**



Few Christmas carols evoke the season of peace and goodwill as readily as Silent Night. Two popular stories contribute to its appeal: one concerning the circumstances of its composition in Oberndorf, near Salzburg in Austria, and the other its role in the Christmas Truce of 1914 when the opposing forces walked out of their trenches to greet their enemies and share food and drink.

But its lyrical and musical content are also important factors in understanding its enduring popularity, and Christmas Eve 2023 marks the 205th anniversary of its performance.

Joseph Mohr (1792-1849), the assistant priest in the parish of Oberndorf, wrote the original German lyrics of *Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!* in 1816. Mohr had previously served in the Napoleonic Wars and his experiences in Austria around the time of the withdrawal of Bavarian troops undoubtedly influenced the composition of the text. The music was subsequently composed by the parish organist in Oberndorf, Franz Xaver Gruber for use at a Christmas Eve service in 1818. The church's organ was apparently out of action, leading Gruber to compose his setting for two voices with guitar accompaniment.

While Gruber may have been responding to an unexpected situation at short notice, the existence of Mohr's text indicates that some accounts of the carol as a last ditch collaborative solution have been somewhat embellished. But the exact historical record of the carol's genesis are not the most important matter here, however. Rather, it is the sense of homely resourcefulness that the story conveys that is important to the way in which Silent Night has subsequently been viewed and appreciated.

Whether there is something about the carol's makeshift origins that resonates with the Nativity story itself, or simply the greater sense of intimacy created by the use of the guitar, a rather more domestic instrument than the church organ, the stories of the carol's origin invest it with a folksy quality that contributes to its popularity.

## Words and music

The content and careful craftsmanship of Mohr's lyrics are important factors too. The same line, "Stille Nacht! heilige Nacht!" (Silent night, holy night) opens each of the six verses, an effective rhetorical device that creates and maintains a tone of quiet mystery throughout the text.

Across the six verses, Mohr juxtaposes traditional imagery of the peaceful newborn baby resting on his mother's breast with simple statements that reflect the profundity of his birth in Christian doctrine. The third stanza meditates on the divinity of the Christ Child and the mystery of the incarnation, while the fifth explores the work of God the Son in bringing salvation from sin.

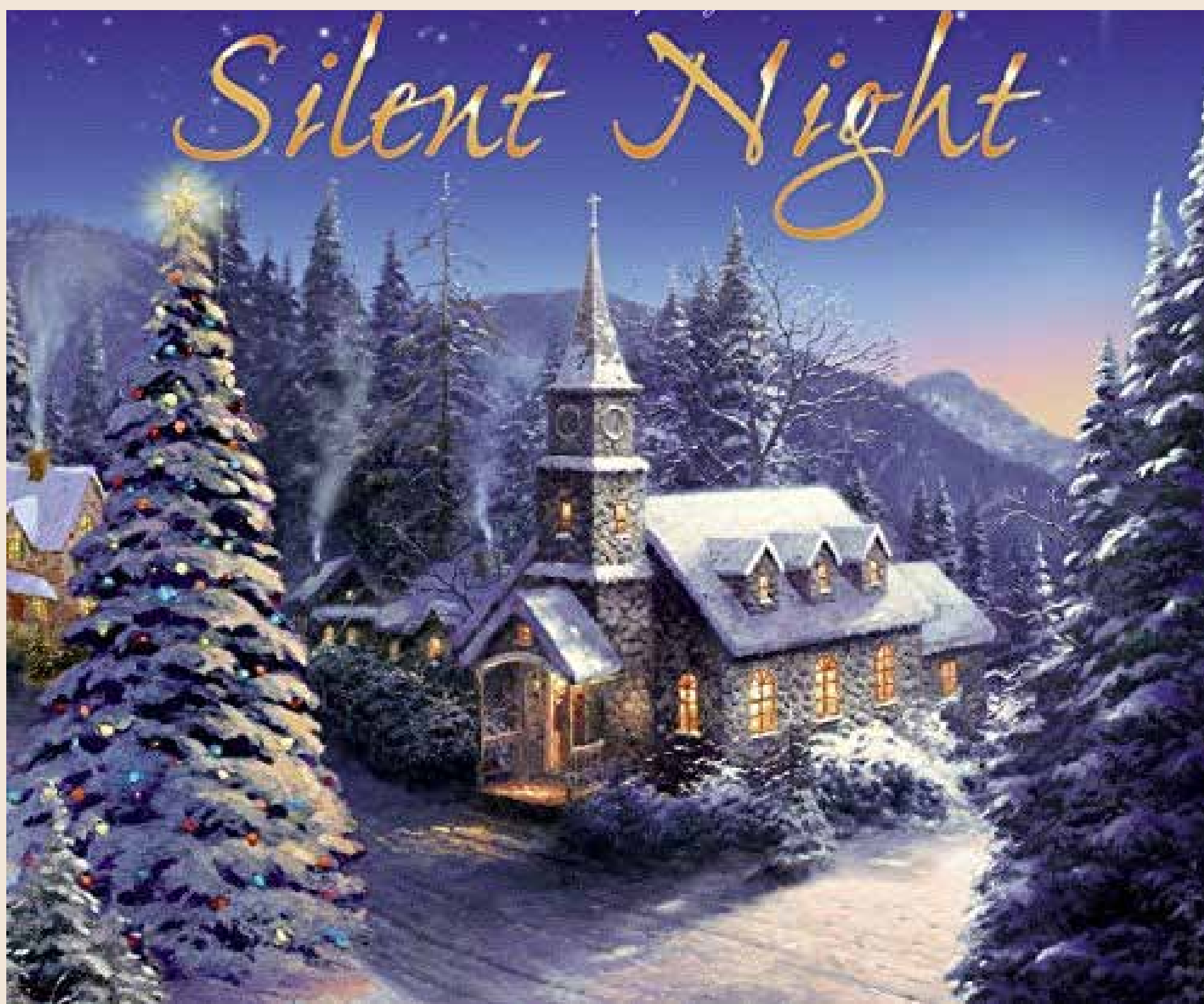
English translations first appeared in the 1850s, and new versions continued to be published well into the 20th century. Most translate only three of Mohr's six stanzas – and this shortened form has also become the standard in German-speaking countries. Modern hymn books continue to use a variety of different translations, but from the many different versions of the opening line, "Silent night! Holy night!" has become the most widely adopted.

Gruber's music enhances the folk-like qualities of the carol. The melody is set in compound time, that is, with each beat subdivided into three parts. This allows for the frequent use of a three-note dotted rhythm pattern (first heard on the first word: "si-i-lent"), which – together with simple and slow-moving harmonies – helps to



create a pastoral atmosphere. These are commonly-used features, often likened to the sound of a shepherd's pipe, and can be found in many compositions associated with Christmas.

Two of the best-known examples are the Pastoral Symphony from Handel's Messiah, which sets the scene for the shepherds, and the Sinfonia at the beginning of Part II of JS Bach's Christmas Oratorio. The gentle downward contours of all but one of the melodic phrases also contribute to the subdued character of the music; the contrasting penultimate phrase responds to the sense of hope and joy in Mohr's text, while the final descent underlines the atmosphere of calm and security of Gruber's musical interpretation.



### **Christmas truce**

At least as famous as the story of the carol's origin is that of its role in the Christmas truce of 1914. In his book on the truce, historian Stanley Weintraub identifies the singer as Walter Kirchhoff, a German Officer and sometime member of the Berlin Opera. Kirchhoff's singing of the carol in both German and English is credited with encouraging the exchange of songs, greetings and gifts between the opposing soldiers.

While there is debate among historians about the nature and scope of the truce, Silent night is firmly established in popular imagination as the soundtrack for this remarkable event, as shown by its use in a supermarket television advert in 2014.

**At  
least as famous as the  
story of the carol's origin is that  
of its role in the Christmas truce of  
1914**

The contrast between the carol's message of tranquillity and hope and the violence of war is obvious and compelling, but the intimacy and simplicity of Gruber's music is important too in providing an antidote to the grimness of trench warfare.

The depth of significance attached to Silent Night is summed up its inclusion on UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list in 2011. Words, music and contextual narratives combine to create its aura and reputation, making it one of the most striking examples of the ways in which musical associations shape our experiences of the Christmas season.





# Phil Coulter:

## Still Going Strong at 81

**Phil Coulter is one of the country's most talented and versatile musicians and has written songs for the likes of Elvis, Sandie Shaw and Cliff Richard. Sam McMurdock recently sat down with the 81-year-old who's currently on the road touring.**



Phil Coulter needs no introduction; an iconic musician from Derry, known for his contribution to the music industry, not only in Ireland, but globally, his fans include well-known faces like Van Morrison, Andrea Bocelli and even the late Mr. Presley himself. At “81 years young” as he describes himself, he continues to captivate audiences with compositions like ‘The Town I Loved So Well’ and throughout his illustrious career has made a significant impact, garnering critical acclaim and a loyal fan base along the way thanks to his music transcending genres.

I catch Phil fresh from a standing ovation.

**Your daddy was a Strangford Lough man.**

“He was and do you know what, I loved listening to his stories about Portaferry, the Lough and the Peninsula. Did you know the largest concentration of Coulters in the whole of the British Isles is actually on the Ards Peninsula.”

**Your shows in the north have been a huge success; I literally overheard a woman saying your sell-out Newry show was magnificent and she was transfixed.**

“That’s what I love to hear. People always ask me in interviews how I stay energetic at 81 ... that is how.... I get my energy from the audiences at my shows; like so far we’ve had three standing ovations and cheers at the end of each sell-out show ... it’s indescribable. When I hear people singing along to my songs, enjoying the night and clapping and cheering .... I just feel so energised.... I feel so great that I’m hyped up for the following night’s show. I love going out to meet the people after the show, hearing their stories....Most people think my fans are ancient geriatrics but I’ve fans of all ages, we’ve had a lot of young couples and very young children who’re learning the piano and I’m constantly surprised by how diverse my audience is.”

**“I never thought I’d make a living from my talent at all. I grew up in a terraced house in Derry and it’s never been lost of me how lucky I’ve been..”**

**As a young man starting out did you never believe you’d still be going from strength to strength at 81.**

“I never thought I’d make a living from my talent at all. I grew up in a terraced house in Derry and it’s never been lost of me how lucky I’ve been. Someone ‘phoned into a radio station I was on recently and asked if I knew I was the only non-American songwriter to write a Top 3 song for Elvis.... ‘When I was a teenager in my attic bedroom listening to Radio Luxembourg on a beat up radio and hearing Elvis Presley changing the face of popular music ... I never once thought, sharing that cramped bedroom with my two brothers that Elvis would one day be singing a song that I wrote.....never in my wildest dreams [laughs]...”

**You’ve had chart entries every decade since the 1960s - not many people can say that.**

“ To still be in the music industry!’ That IS my greatest achievement. Survival is what it’s all about.”

**So many musicians have a couple of good albums and if they’re lucky, they’ll survive 4 or 5**





years, but almost six decades is nearly unheard of today.

“Two things I’ve little control of are my health and whether people will still be interested in my music, but I take care of myself and we send out ‘feelers’ every so often to gauge whether people want more shows, so while I’m still healthy and while the public want me, I will be there.”

**During the pandemic you were a huge hit from your Lockdown Lounge on Facebook.**

“[Laughs] You’re looking at one old dog who had to learn a lot of new tricks. I knew nothing about online, technology... any of that... one of my young team said, ‘Phil, to remain relevant in your fans’ minds, you need to have an online presence, you need to do shows during lockdown. He had to talk me through it all ... it was a difficult one.... The first broadcast I came out sideways... people had to tilt their heads to see me [laughs]. I think it was a great idea... I had to let me believers [fans] know I was alive, that I hadn’t fell off the perch and it was a real education ... would you believe I discovered I had this huge fanbase in Bueno Aires in Argentina, then I realised I had massive audiences in South Africa and even the Far East ..... I’d no idea.”



**You’ve achieved so much: 23 Platinum Discs, 9 Gold Discs, 52 Silver Discs, 5 Ivor Novello Awards and that’s just a tiny handful of the awards you’ve received; but I heard you keep a blank wall in your office for further gongs - would that indicate you’re still very ambitious?**

“One hundred per cent .... Absolutely ambitious! I love looking at my wall of awards, the first one is 1967 for Puppet on a String and the latest one was just last year so I like to know I’m still relevant.”

**That’s a huge achievement in a fast moving, TikTok, disposable world.**

“[Laughs] It’s funny you should mention TikTok... I was actually thinking about that earlier ... these songs on TikTok that are flavour of the week and have disappeared by the following week. I don’t rate those as songs; as a professional song-writer of all these years standing, we talk about a copyright, songs that endure. An American journalist asked me a while back, ‘Can I ask for a short definition of a great song?’ I said, ‘I’ll give you one word - longevity.’ You ain’t going to hear these TikTok songs in twenty years. I wrote Congratulations in 1968 and it’s still played at weddings and such, then there’s Ireland’s Call, which has actually passed into the public domain.

**“I was the only non-American songwriter to write a Top 3 song for Elvis..”**

**On the Shores of the Swilly is one of the most moving songs I’ve ever heard - but it must be difficult writing and performing a track that conjured up such painful memories. [Phil lost his brother and sister in separate incidents on Lough Swilly].**

“It is sad but it’s also cathartic. It features in our show every night but I do tweak the show daily as I never rest on my laurels. Just because a tour sells out, it doesn’t mean I take it for granted ... I’m changing things and keeping abreast of things each night. I know people have spent money, they want to be entertained, they want to be mesmerised, they want a great experience and I am always determined they will receive just that. I would hate people coming to see the show and it being stagnant - they need to know I’m shaking the tree, that I’m working hard to make things new and exciting. I’ve just recently incorporated a whole video element with a huge screen .... People can see anything from Luke Kelly talking about the first time he heard ‘Scorn Not his Simplicity’ [the song is about Phil’s son who was born with Down syndrome and later died, aged 4] and Van Morrison and all these other interesting people talking about our work together.

“But to get back to The Shores of the Swilly, in the show my wife Geraldine [Brannigan] sings it and on the big screen we have a few images of Sineád [O’Connor] and when I turn around to look at it, it moves me



greatly - in it Sineád has her arm around my neck and is smiling up at me and it conjures up how we were with each other.”

**Sineád made no secret of the fact she really trusted you.**

“Yes, she hated working with producers but always said that she only trusted one producer - Phil Coulter.”

**It must have been a huge shock to hear of her passing.**

“Awwww Sam..... [silence] .....you’ve no idea... I always knew she felt safe with me. When I see her visual on the screen I get struck by the tragedy afresh.... She was too young.... Way too young but she’s left the world with the beautiful gift of her voice... that will never die.”

**A lot of the mainstream media could be quite cruel about her.**

“She was a very fragile person... that was part of her beauty ... her fragility, she was like a little bird. I couldn’t bear hearing people speak ill of her because she needed protecting, she really did.”



**Her eccentricity sometimes eclipsed her talent.**

“Tearing up a picture of the pope, going to war over one thing or another or any of the other actions she took should never be allowed to eclipse her talent... we all need to remember her for her musical contributions - the rest were just distractions.”

“**I  
like to know I’m still  
relevant...**”

**Which of your own songs is your favourite?**

“They’re like my children: some don’t live up to my expectations while others surpass them, but at the end of the day I love them all. On a purely personal level there’s songs I’m indebted to, like Puppet on a String that won Eurovision and My Boy by Elvis but if I’m honest, its The Town I Loved So Well.”

As I leave Phil, he’s already waxing lyrical about ideas for the following night’s show. It’s not hard to see how this man’s career has never dipped - he never takes his eye off the ball.



## Phil Coulter: Four Score and Then - Irish Tour

- FRI. 1ST DEC. '23 - BORD GAIS ENERGY THEATRE, DUBLIN 11.  
SAT. 2ND DEC. '23 - MULLINGAR ARTS CENTRE, CO. WESTMEATH  
12. SUN. 3RD DEC. '23 - TLT DROGHEDA, CO. LOUTH  
13. TUES. 5TH DEC. '23 - THEATRE ROYAL, WATERFORD  
14. WED. 6TH DEC. '23 - THE GRAINSTORE, BALLYMALOE, CO. CORK  
15. THURS. 7TH DEC. '23 - VISUAL THEATRE, CARLOW  
16. FRI. 8TH DEC. '23 - SIAMSA TIRE THEATRE, TRALEE, CO. KERRY  
17. SAT. 9TH DEC. '23 - GLOR THEATRE, ENNIS, CO. CLARE  
18. SUN. 10TH DEC. '23 - TOWN HALL THEATRE, GALWAY  
19. TUES. 12TH DEC. '23 - PAVILION THEATRE, DUN LAOGHAIRE  
20. SUN. 17TH DEC. '23 - IONTAS THEATRE, CASTLEBLAYNEY, CO. MONAGHAN  
21. TUES. 19TH DEC. '23 - WESTPORT TOWN HALL THEATRE, WESTPORT, CO. MAYO  
22. SAT. 30TH DEC. '23 - INEC CLUB, KILLARNEY  
23. SUN. 31ST DEC. '23 - THE MARITIME HOTEL, BANTRY, CO. CORK

Wishing all a Happy Christmas and Peaceful New Year



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**Dessie Ellis TD**

*Dublin North West*

Wishing all a Happy Christmas and Peaceful New Year

**Contact Details:**

01 834 7674

086 854 1941

01 618 3006

E: [dessie.ellis@oireachtas.ie](mailto:dessie.ellis@oireachtas.ie)





# Women's Shelters:

## *When Home is Not a Place of Safety*

**W**omen's shelters on our island, north and south are struggling. As the economy flounders, donations dwindle and ultimately, women and children suffer. Sineád Dunlop reports.



Women's shelters have been playing a crucial role in providing a safe haven for women who are victims of domestic violence or abuse both north and south of the border. These havens are essential in ensuring women have a secure environment where they can seek refuge from partners and begin the process of healing and rebuilding their lives. These places of sanctuary are of critical importance here as Ireland has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in Europe, with approximately one in three women having experienced some form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. This alarming figure highlights the urgent need for safe spaces where females can receive the support and assistance they require - and deserve.

### **More than Just Physical Shelter**

It's more than just a roof over women's heads as shelters offer a range of tailored services to address the unique needs and experiences of each individual like providing emotional support, counselling, legal advice, and practical assistance in securing housing, employment, and education. The staff are trained professionals dedicated to helping women regain control of their lives and empower them to break free from the vicious cycle of abuse.

### **Accessibility**

Accessibility is another vital aspect of these ports in the storm. We have many shelters located throughout the country (although, as in many other essential services, we still need more) to ensure women have easy access to support, regardless of their geographic location. This is particularly important in rural areas where resources can be very scarce. Furthermore, many of these places of refuge provide 24/7 helpline services, allowing women to reach out for help at any time (shelters and 'phone numbers are listed below).

**we  
have one of the highest  
rates of domestic violence in  
Europe...**

### **A Catalyst for Change**

Women's shelters act as a catalyst for change. They raise awareness about domestic violence and contribute to the overall effort to eliminate it from society. Additionally, women who have found refuge in these shelters often become advocates and ambassadors, sharing their stories to help break the silence surrounding domestic abuse. However, despite their immeasurable significance, these safe harbours face numerous challenges. Funding is a continuous struggle, with many shelters relying on a combination of government funding and charitable donations to keep their doors open. The demand for their services often exceeds their capacity, resulting in some ladies being turned away due to lack of space.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic presented additional challenges. The lockdown measures and restrictions from the recent past forced many women to stay in close proximity with their abusers, exacerbating the risk of violence. We can never be sure that lockdowns will never be required again - especially now with new variants of Covid, so the need for safe spaces is critically important.

### **Maeve's Story**

It's very easy to look at statistics and forget the women behind them. Sadly there's innumerable women in desperate need of a port in the storm - we will look at a couple of these women, beginning with Maeve (26).



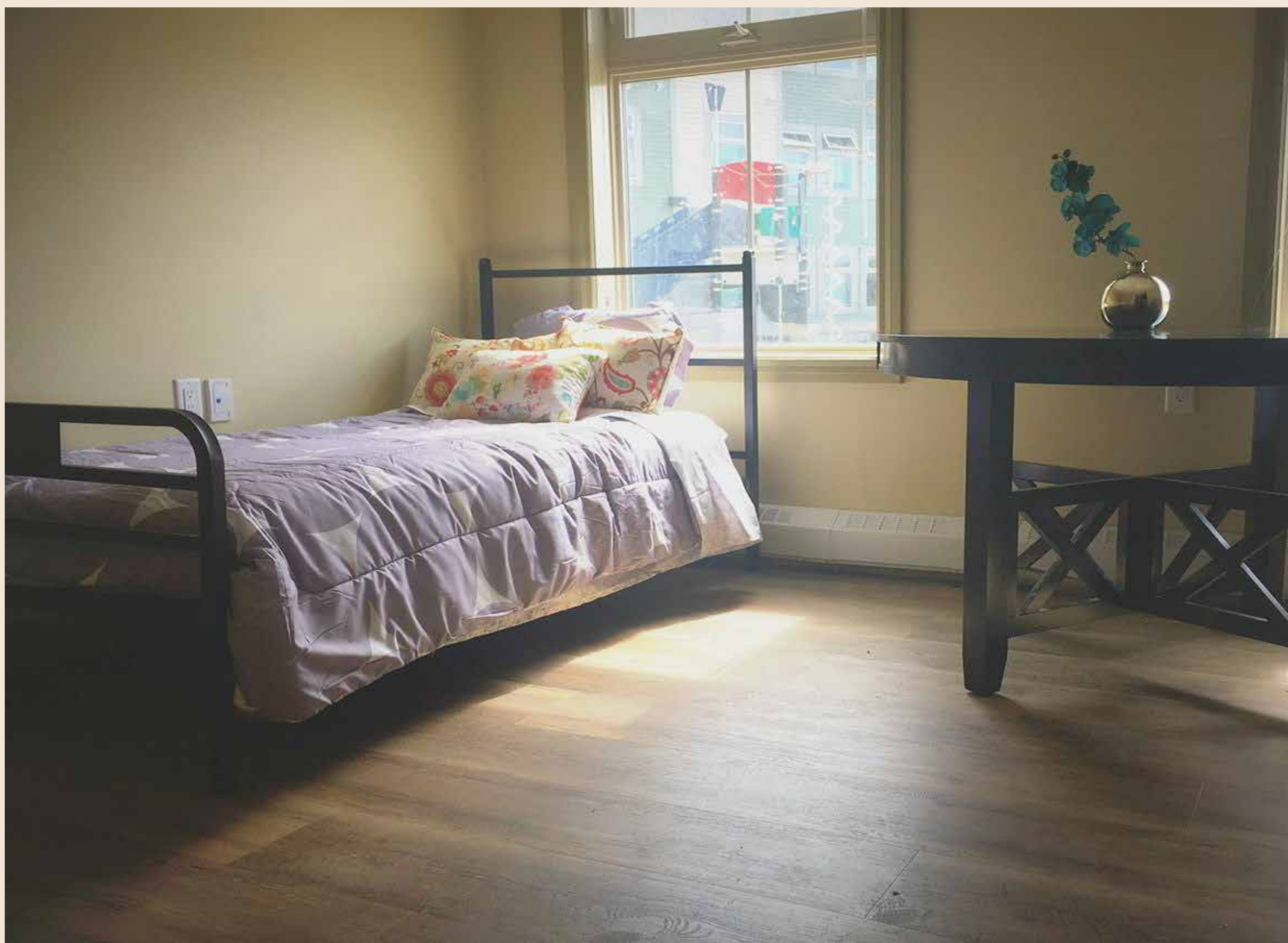
Maeve, a young Traveller woman married to a non-traveller was regularly punched and verbally abused by her husband; this abuse was picked up by maternity services when she went into labour following a beating. The infant was later taken into care by social services. Maeve, broken and demoralised knew she needed to get away from her spouse but was terrified of going to a refuge,

“I didn’t know how to even go about going to one .... I thought I’d be locked away. I was scared to ask for help from the gorja (non-Gypsy) world. I thought they’d judge me or see me as weak.”

Desperate, Maeve eventually found a Traveller support group who found her a place at a refuge. Despite having never lived in a bricks and mortar dwelling she was “glad to feel safe for the first time in a very long time.” Maeve is currently undertaking literacy and numeracy courses alongside one-to-one counselling and self-esteem orientated group therapy and is working towards an independent, settled life with the goal of having her child returned to her care. Despite limited family support, Maeve feels she is “the strongest I’ve been in years” and this is thanks to the great care and support she’s received from a women’s shelter in her county.

### Nathalie’s Story

Nathalie (48) from Dublin’s Northside sought help when her common-law husband “went too far” and broke her nose and ribs. “We’d lived together for two years and looking back there were red flags... Although I worked full-time I had to account for every single purchase until it got to the point I couldn’t buy a coffee ... I justified his behaviour by thinking he was concerned about the future, but then there’d be the comments... ‘That’d look good on you if you lost the weight’, ... I’m a size 8 and people at work already thought I was too thin so it made no sense. I wasn’t allowed to watch TV without him and if I found something funny and he didn’t, he’d call me a ‘stupid, fat sl\*g’ ... I’d had the slaps across the face and I don’t know why I didn’t walk [away] the first time .... Somehow I believed that it was my fault. It was the mental abuse I found the worst yet it would be a physical assault that led me to decide, ‘That’s enough.’ I was looking at houses for rent on my mobile ... I think I knew deep down that I needed to leave, and he asked me to hand the ‘phone over. I refused ... I was trying to buy time until my mobile went to the lock screen but he grabbed me by the hair and shouted, ‘When I ask you to do something, you do it ... or are you too [expletives] stupid for that you ugly, fat sl\*g?’ My ‘phone went to lock screen and he pulled my thumb over to unlock it and saw what I was looking at. He pushed me to the floor, kicked me in the side and as I tried to get up he grabbed me by the hair and slapped my face off the wall. I didn’t even realise I’d been screaming .... someone shouted through the letterbox, ‘Are you alright Nathalie?’ and I yelled, ‘Get help, he’ll kill me.’ He grabbed me by the back of my jumper and threw me out to our neighbour and she phoned the guards.”



Nathalie says that the services offered by the shelter, “Gave me a real 20/20 perspective of the situation. Although I had a relatively short stay, it gave me time to arrange alternative housing, time off work and I’m now receiving counselling the shelter arranged. I’m starting to piece my self-esteem back together and it’s a journey - but I’m getting there.”



## Can YOU Help?

Continued support and investment are crucial to ensure that shelters can continue to play their vital role in our fight against domestic violence.

We would ask that if you're in a position to do so that you make a donation to your local women's refuge - you never know whose life you may change as a result.

### Help in Republic of Ireland

If you need to access help, please reach out and contact the SafeIreland via freephone on 1800 341 900.

You can also contact shelters directly by accessing checking which one is local to you by following this link [www.safeireland.ie/get-help/where-to-find-help/](http://www.safeireland.ie/get-help/where-to-find-help/)

### Help in Northern Ireland

If you're in N. Ireland Women's Aid suggest that in an emergency you contact the PSNI on 999 and speak to the operator if you can, even by whispering. If you can, you can contact Women's Aid shelters directly:

Antrim and district on 028 25632136

Armagh on 028 3025 0765

Belfast & Lisburn on 028 9066 6049,

Causeway & Mid Ulster on 028 8676 9300

Fermanagh on 028 66328898, Foyle on 028 71 416800, North Down on 028 9127319

and Omagh on 028 82241414.



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nationwide.**



# Tallaght Drugs & Alcohol Task Force



Usually at this time of year we would reflect on all our work across the past 12 months. However, following recent events in Dublin, namely the contaminated heroin and overdoses that resulted, it feels only appropriate to focus on the response that followed and the harm reduction support services in our community.

Firstly however, we would like to acknowledge how very sorry we were to learn of related fatalities of some of these drug overdoses and we send our deepest condolences to those grieving families.

In our view, the HSE acted swiftly in their response to this emergency reducing harm and preventing loss of life, this can only be commended. Likewise, more locally, our community drug services were ready to respond and sign post drug users to relevant services and supports.

We have two main community harm reduction services in Tallaght, JADD in Jobstown and CARP in Killinarden; clinic times and contact details included below.

The HSE were quick to engage with frontline community drug services as the increase in overdoses became apparent. We are fortunate that JADD in Jobstown operates an assertive outreach program, supporting the most vulnerable and sometimes isolated or homeless drug users in our community. While CARP runs a homeless drop in, with both services very much working on the frontline and ready to support and sign post clients. Many of our community drug workers are trained in administering Naloxone, which plays a pivotal role in saving lives where an overdose occurs. Recently, JADD has trained 16 service users in the use of naloxone and others can avail of this training just by contacting the JADD service. Peer support is crucial and **those who use heroin are advised to demonstrate extreme caution now and, in the weeks, ahead, and not to use alone. If you suspect someone to be in a state of overdose, call 999 immediately.**

## Contact details:

**CARP (Community Addiction Response Programme)** – A community-based project that supports and responds to the needs of individuals and families impacted by substance misuse.

Killinarden Heights, Tallaght, D/24  
 Project Coordinator: James Kelly  
 Ph. 462 6033 / 085 1399 401  
 Email: [jameskelly@carp.ie](mailto:jameskelly@carp.ie)  
 Website: [www.carp.ie](http://www.carp.ie)

**Charities Registered Number: 12358**

**JADD (Jobstown Assisting Drug Dependency)** – A community drug treatment service that provides low threshold, harm reduction and offers a childcare service.

24 Jobstown Rd, Jobstown, Dublin, D24  
 Project Coordinator: Thomas Gilson  
 Ph. 459 7756 / 087 2397844  
 Email: [info@jadd.ie](mailto:info@jadd.ie) [thomasgilson.jadd@gmail.com](mailto:thomasgilson.jadd@gmail.com)  
 Website: [www.jadd.ie](http://www.jadd.ie)

**Charities Registered Number: 20039127**

Below are the harm reduction services these two projects provide weekly.

DAY	JADD Needle Exchange	JADD Assertive Outreach
Monday	9.00am – 5.00pm	
Tuesday	9.00am – 5.00pm	5pm – 8pm
Wednesday	9.00am – 5.00pm	
Thursday	9.00am – 5.00pm	5pm – 8pm
Friday	9.00am – 5.00pm	10am – 12.30pm
Saturday	9.00am – 11.00am	
Sunday	9.00am – 11.00am	

**The assertive outreach at JADD has returned to the above hours, after two weeks of providing additional hours during the week and weekends, in response to additional overdose risks.**

DAY	JADD Needle Exchange	JADD Assertive Outreach
Monday	9.00am – 5.00pm	
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Wednesday	9.00am – 5.00pm	
Thursday	9.00am – 5.00pm	5pm – 8pm
Friday	9.00am – 5.00pm	10am – 12.30pm
Saturday	9.00am – 11.00am	
Sunday	9.00am – 11.00am	

[www.drugs.ie](http://www.drugs.ie)  
[www.tallaghtdaf.ie](http://www.tallaghtdaf.ie)



# Die Hard

## A SURPRISE CHRISTMAS FAVOURITE

**N**ow deemed as the trailblazer for modern-day action flicks, *Die Hard* was a poor bet - a complete underdog that the film industry deemed financial suicide for 20th Century Fox, yet defying all expectations it became a blockbuster, propelling Bruce Willis from mere TV romcom co-star to Hollywood leading man.



Any action movie fan will tell you that *Die Hard* is one of the best action films ever made, but expectations for the now blockbuster were extremely low - not least because none of the actors were household names and a suitable star to head the cast could not be found as all choices, including Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone immediately rejected the role of John McClane - a part we could now never imagine anyone other than Bruce Willis portraying.

### Plot (without spoilers)

For those who've never watched this alternative Christmas movie (although don't tell Willis - he hates it being termed a festive favourite), *Die Hard* is the 1988 action flick succinctly directed by John McTiernan and based on the 1979 novel *Nothing Lasts Forever* by Roderick Thorp. Starring talent like Willis, Alan Rickman and Bonnie Bedelia, the film (that's now 35 years old!) tells the story of New York City policeman John McClane who is visiting his estranged wife (Bonnie Bedelia) and two daughters on Christmas Eve. After joining her at a holiday party in the headquarters of the Japanese-owned business she works for, the festivities are interrupted by a group of terrorists who take over the exclusive high-rise, and everyone in it. Very soon McClane realises that there's no one to save the hostages - but him.

**the casting directors received a lot of heat prior to the film's release for their financial mismanagement.**

### Die Hard's Genesis

In 1987, 20th Century Fox hired screenwriter Jeb Stuart to adapt Roderick Thorp's novel. Jeb was in dire financial straits as Columbia Pictures had bought his previous script, then abandoned it, and as a contract with Walt Disney was not providing sufficient income and with six weeks to spare until his new contract started, he was delighted when 20th Century Fox asked him to write the screenplay - a task he completed within weeks as he worked 18 hour days; unfortunately this was to the detriment of his mental and physical health and he was diagnosed with exhaustion and anxiety - describing this period as "feeling constantly on edge." Feeling overwhelmed at the beginning of the writing process, Stuart had a blazing row with his wife, went for a drive and almost flew off the road trying to avoid a cardboard box - an experience he described as "leaving my heart pounding." Sitting in his car he conceived the central theme of the story of a man who should have apologised to his wife before a catastrophe. He returned home to reconcile with his better half and wrote 35 pages that night! To shape the McClanes' relationship, he drew upon the marital problems of his friends and family. Interestingly, John McClane was named John Ford initially, but Fox felt this was disrespectful to the deceased director, so Jeb chose McClane as a "good strong Scottish name", based on his own Celtic heritage.



## Casting

As Die Hard was based on the novel sequel to The Detective film, the studio was contractually obligated to offer Frank Sinatra the role. Sinatra, who was 70 at the time, declined.

Fox really wanted Stallone or Schwarzenegger as the prevailing action archetype of the era was a muscle-bound, invincible macho man but Arnold wanted to branch into comedy (choosing Twins instead), Stallone turned the role down because it was “too similar” to his John Rambo character and countless others like Don Johnson, Nick Nolte, Richard Gere, Harrison Ford and others gave a resounding no. Willis, of course was known mainly for his comedic role in the romantic comedy TV show Moonlighting opposite Cybil Shepherd. He initially had to decline the role because of his contractual obligations to Moonlighting, but when Shepherd became pregnant, the show’s production was stopped for eleven weeks, giving Willis enough time to play the part. It should be remembered that at the time, there was a clear distinction between film and television actors, making Willis’ transition all the more impressive (Shelley Long and Bill Cosby had tried to make the leap and failed).



## Financial Mismanagement

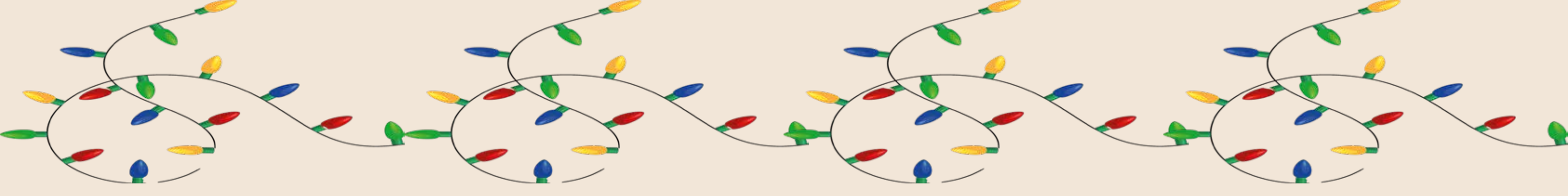
Willis’ agent managed to wrangle a cool \$5m pay cheque for the film and industry professionals thought Fox had lost their marbles - in their minds, this was surely a poor investment and with pressure mounting, the casting directors received a lot of heat prior to the film’s release for their financial mismanagement.

“the most unpopular actor ever to get \$5 million for making a movie”.

## Underdog

Expectations for Die Hard were poor and posters and publicity materials omitted Willis, seemingly because the PR team determined that the setting was as important as McClane - but in fact it was because there were leaks to the press that Willis was “incredibly arrogant” on-set and Fox worried this would dissuade viewers going to see the movie, so his face was removed from the publicity materials, in fact executives were so alarmed by what they perceived as “Willis’ faltering appeal” that movie posters were pulled and changed at





the last minute to focus on Nakatomi Plaza, with Willis's name billed in tiny print.

### **Those Action Scenes**

Director, John McTiernan and Cinematographer, Jan de Bont viewed the action stereotypes of the day as tedious and stagnant, so they met every day to deliberate over upcoming scenes and improvise what aspects would best make the film stand out as a kinetic, fresh action venture. Such ideas involved maintaining McClane's vulnerability and using handheld cameras to enhance tension (a then new technique). The stunt coordinator utilised items already in the building for fight scene props and staged real explosions across the board like rocket launchers, blowing up a SWAT truck, and shattered every window on one floor simultaneously. Frustrated neighbours had their sleep interrupted enough that the city permitted only two hours of helicopter use for the crucial "roof explosion" sequence. De Bont staged twenty-four cameras throughout the city to capture the helicopters swinging past and the effects team contributed miniatures for that particular explosion. Producer Silver couldn't fathom a miniature helicopter as effective. The team was elated to prove him wrong. Willis and Rickman also chose to perform their own stunts for maximum authenticity. Although Willis had the larger amount, Rickman's involved that famed forty-foot drop onto a blue screen tarp below.

**on its  
30th anniversary, 20th  
Century Fox said it was "the greatest  
Christmas story ever told"**

The shocked expression on the actor's face was real fear because the crew let him go early (on the count of two instead of three) but keeping that face in focus was the tricky part. Given how fast a body falls, a human focus puller simply couldn't manually adjust in real-time, especially on slow-motion analog film, so de Bont asked a small electronics company running tests for the military to adapt one of their automated devices into a camera rig.



### **Mixed Reviews**

On its release date in July of 1988 the initial reviews were quite mixed: critics lambasted the violence, felt the plot needed work and slated Willis as lead; on the other hand McTiernan's direction and Alan Rickman's performances were widely praised. Fox executives had resigned themselves to a loss - but it swiftly became apparent that the public loved the film and had fallen in love with Willis - in fact, defying predictions, the film totalled more than \$140m at the box office, making it the highest grossing action movie that year! Defying expectations, this underdog received four Academy Award nominations and catapulting Willis to leading man status. Willis, obtaining \$5m for a role now had a salary comparable to more successful, established film actors like Robert Redford, Dustin Hoffman and Warren Beatty. During the film's hype and Willis' ascent it became common knowledge that Bruce Willis was only offered the role because Fox couldn't secure anyone else and that he was overpaid. Willis retorted,

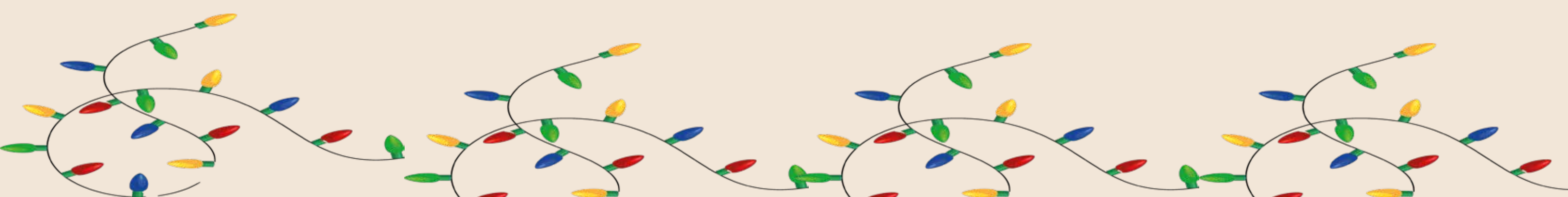
"They paid me what I was worth for the film, and for them."

Willis, who's never been known to lack self-belief said he was the perfect candidate for the role because,

"...unlike the larger-than-life characters portrayed by Stallone or Schwarzenegger, McClane is an ordinary guy who's been thrown into extraordinary circumstances and is a hero..... I could offer that attitude, that disrespect for authority, that gallows sense of humour... the reluctant hero."

Unfortunately, the press took a real dislike to Bruce Willis when he was reluctant to appear on daytime shows and refused to answer personal questions in interviews. It wasn't long until he was labelled "difficult" and described by Newsweek's David Ansen as,

"the most unpopular actor ever to get \$5 million for making a movie".







The Roman Catholic Church labelled the film “morally objectionable” upon release.



### **Die Hard’s Influence on the Film Industry**

Before Die Hard hit the big screen, action movies usually featured muscle-men like Stallone, who portrayed unyielding, unerring heroes in unrealistic settings. Willis’ depiction of John McClane redefined this genre, presenting an average Joe with a typical physique completely counter to that stereotype. He is failing, personally and professionally, and is a vulnerable hero we can all identify with - one who openly cried, admits his fears and suffers lasting damage.

**Willis  
has repeatedly stated that the  
film is not a Christmas one**

Alan Rickman’s depiction of Hans Gruber redefined action villains who had previously been insipid figures or unconventional madmen. Gruber ushered in the clever nemesis; he is a well-read, sharp villain, who serves as the antithesis of the hero. Empire magazine called Gruber one of the finest villains since Darth Vader.

### **The Box Office**

With a budget of \$25m, Die Hard made almost \$142m at the box office alone. The film is credited with revitalising 20th Century Fox, which had had few successes in preceding years.

### **But Is it really a Christmas Movie?**

There has been a lot of debates over whether Die Hard is a Christmas film. Many argue that its Christmas setting is sufficient to qualify it as a Christmas film. Those opposed argue that it is an action film whose events happen to take place at Christmas. In 2018, on its 30th anniversary, 20th Century Fox said it was “the greatest Christmas story ever told”, releasing a re-edited Die Hard trailer that portrays it as a traditional Christmas film, however, Willis has repeatedly stated that the film is not a Christmas one - but really, that’s up to the audience ... we all have festive favourites and if Die Hard is yours - put your feet up and enjoy!



**Got a favourite alternative Christmas movie?**

**Drop us a line on X (formerly Twitter)  
@BigIssueIreland**





# Old Ireland in Colour

**John Breslin and Sarah-Anne Buckley are back with the third installment of their record-breaking Old Ireland in Colour series.**

Beloved by Irish readers at home and abroad, for this new volume the authors have uncovered yet more photographic gems and breathed new life into them in glorious colour. All of Irish life is here – from an eviction in Clare in 1888 to devastating floods in Strabane and a snapshot of working life in Dublin. Famous faces from politics and the arts appear alongside hard-working labourers and farmers, and mischievous children from all corners of the island light up this book's glorious pages.

With endless surprising details to pore over in every picture, along with illuminating captions, Old Ireland in Colour 3 is a stunning addition to this wonderful series of unique books.

Ireland's Big Issue with the permission of Merrion Press are delighted to be able to give our readers a view of just some of the many brilliant photographs that appear in the Book.

John Breslin & Sarah-Anne Buckley  
**OLD IRELAND  
IN COLOUR 3**



**Harvest Scene, Wilton ,Cork, 1947**





## CYCLING TO WORK

1952, Westmoreland Street, Dublin

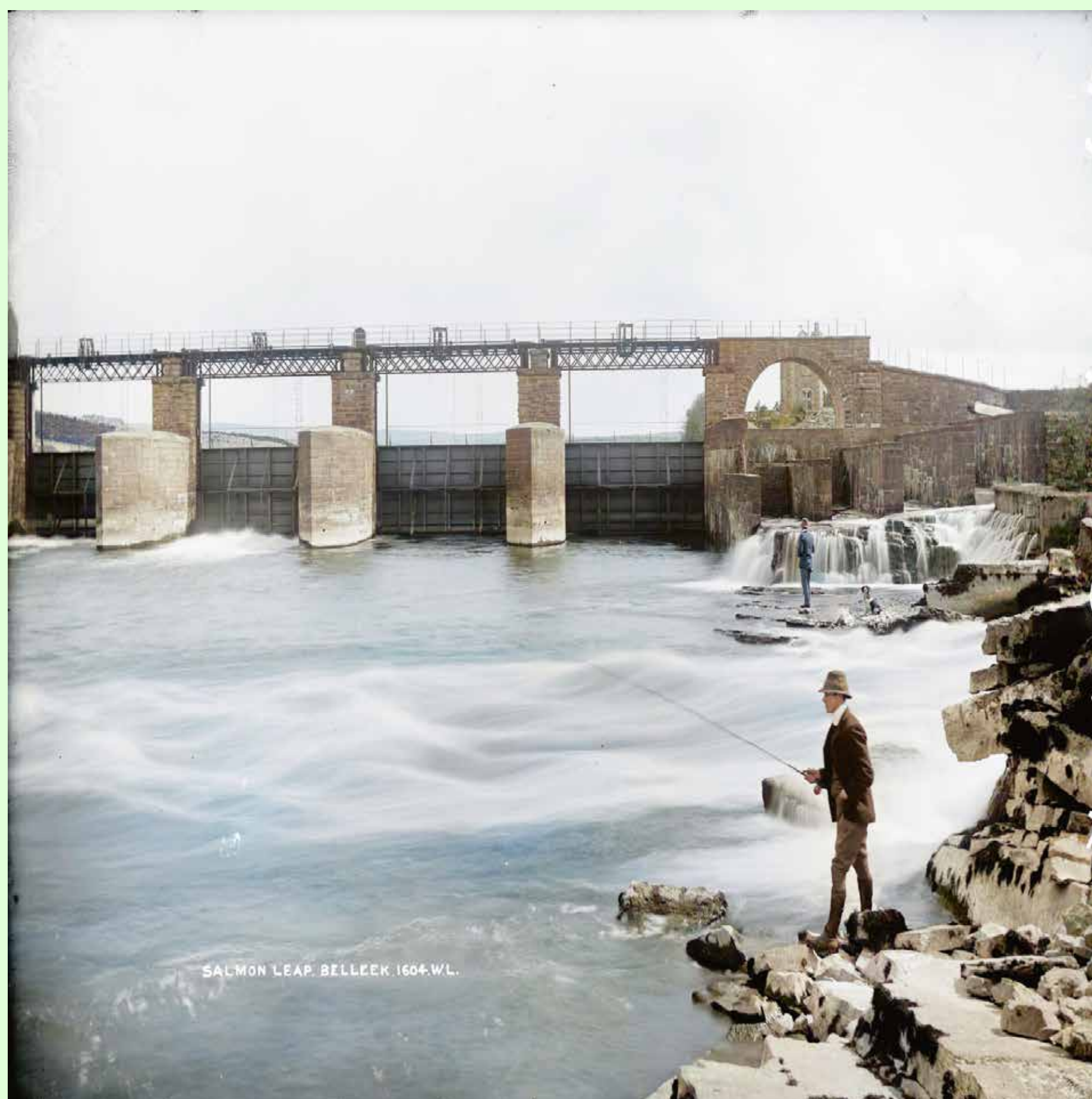
By the 1950s almost every Irish household had a bicycle and cyclists commuting to work in Dublin were a regular sight. The first pedal-driven bicycle, the boneshaker, arrived in Ireland in the 1860s, but in the late nineteenth century the cost of bicycles meant that cycling was an activity mainly for the wealthy classes. However, as the price reduced, this changed, and the bicycle opened up many lives – particularly those of women and of people in rural areas before motor cars were common. While the number of cars increased dramatically from the 1950s on, the use of the bicycle to commute to work in a city remained a popular and affordable option in that decade. Helmets, however, were a later development, not appearing until 1975.

The buses in this image would have been run by CIÉ, created from an amalgamation of the Dublin United Tramways Company and the Great Southern Railway Company in 1945 to bring all bus and railway services under one company. Green was the colour used for their buses throughout the 1950s.

Photographer: George Pickow; Source: Ritchie-Pickow Archive, University of Galway Library Archives;

## SALMON LEAP

c.1897, Belleek, Co. Fermanagh



Two men and their dogs fishing at the Salmon Leap on the River Erne at Belleek, Co. Fermanagh. Written in the 1920s, *The Angler's Guide to the Irish Fisheries* by Joseph Adams describes fishing the Erne's Ballyshannon pools. As William Ferres recounts, Adams 'caught the first spring salmon of the year, a fish of over 16 pounds in weight, which took 95 minutes to land'. According to Adams it was a 'beautiful fish with small head and deep shoulders, the sea parasites clinging to the silver sides ... Spring salmon differ from grilse (i.e. one sea-winter fish) in the greater freedom with which they take the fly and their indomitable strength as fighters.' This image also shows the floodgates that were built in the nineteenth century to prevent flooding in the area. In the late 1940s a hydro-electric system with twin dams was built below Belleek and above Ballyshannon, and the eight miles of salmon fishing became two newly created lakes.

Photographer: Robert French; Source: National Library of Ireland







## BLARNEY CASTLE, OF THE STONE ELOQUENT

1926, Blarney, Co. Cork

The building shown here represents the third castle on this site. The first was a timber construction built during the tenth century. It was replaced by a stone structure in 1210, the entrance of which was about 20 feet above the ground at the northern face. The current keep was added atop the thirteenth-century structure in 1446. The castle was once occupied by Cormac MacCarthy, King of Munster. It is alleged that Robert the Bruce gave half of the Stone of Scone to MacCarthy in appreciation for troop support sent to Scotland. The stone eventually became known as the Blarney Stone; it is still located below the battlements of Blarney Castle and has long been a major tourist attraction, as those who kiss it are deemed to be given the 'gift of the gab'. The National Geographic described this practice in 1927: "The powerful talisman which, when kissed, bestows the gift of pleasant "deluderin" speech, is set in the parapet of the keep, above the top window. Though the feat is difficult of accomplishment, it is worthwhile, as is attested by many visitors with the proud title of "pilgrim from the Blarney Stone"."



## CROSS THE FOYLE

c.1863–1930, Derry

A young girl looks towards St Columb's, a Church of Ireland cathedral built in Derry City after the reformation. It was the first non-Roman Catholic cathedral to be built in Western Europe. The old walled city lies on the west bank of the River Foyle, which is spanned here by Carlisle Bridge, which was replaced in the 1930s by Craigavon Bridge. Derry was one of the main emigration ports from Ulster to the USA in the nineteenth century.

Photographer: Underwood & Underwood; Source: Library of Congress;





# BOARD GAMES

## WHY THE RESURGENCE

**B**oard games are nothing new, there's one called Senet from 3,500 BC buried in Egypt among the mummified remains of the pharaohs. Globally, we spent \$7b on board games in 2022 - so what is it about them that has us all hooked? Liz Scales reports.



I'm lucky to have grown up before video games were ubiquitous, the generation when a board game was brought out on a winter's evening to pass the time before bed. Like everyone else, modern technology and life has taken over and those halcyon evenings balancing Scrabble tiles in hand or trying (cheating!) to land on Mayfair on Monopoly seem like another life.

Board games have been out of favour for years now, with gaming consoles being at the top of kids' letters to Santa but since last Christmas, sales have risen by 11% (during the first lockdown sales rose by a staggering 200%) and this year many 'old' games are flying off our toy shop shelves. So, what is it about humble board games that people are (re) falling in love with?

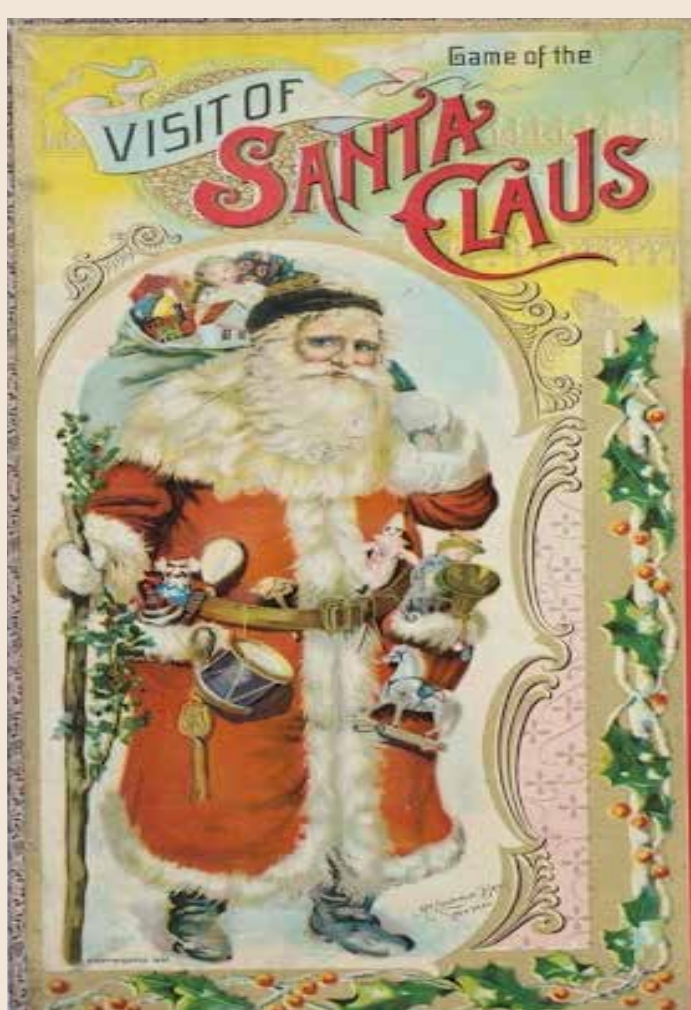
Nostalgia plays a huge part of it. We all want our children to experience the fun (and feuds) that made our own childhoods fun. I say feuds, because, let's face it, part of the fun of whipping out Trivial Pursuit is the discord - often leading to the inevitable flipping the board and stomping away!

**the  
competition between the Parker  
and McLoughlin Brothers was responsible  
for the games we have in our homes to this  
day**

Christmas is the most popular time for playing games, so let's take a look at some of the best loved ones from days long past.

### **New Technology creates New Opportunity**

With the creation of chromolithograph, this process ushered in a wonderful plethora of brightly coloured print material for board games, puzzles and books, and thanks to this technology, American toy and game manufacturer the Parker Brothers (which became Hasbro in 1991) decided to design a game for families, and so 'A Christmas Dinner' was released for the Christmas market in 1897. The Parkers knew that the modern, secular celebration of Christmas had crystallised in recent times, and among these customs was preparing a special holiday dinner, so the brothers capitalised on this popular tradition, creating the game 'A Christmas Dinner.' In the game, players spin a spinner and then move their counters around the board, hoping to land back on their original plate.



### **The Competition**

McLoughlin Brothers (who made some of the earliest and most valuable board games) were not greatly impressed by the Parkers' offering and designed their own called 'Visit of Santa Claus' for the following Christmas. The game was designed so that players received gifts from Santa as he flew in his sleigh around the board. The winner would be the player who amassed the most gifts while having Santa skip over their opponents. This game celebrated the growing consumerism of the holiday and also surreptitiously conveyed Santa's seal of approval for McLoughlin Brothers products, many of which were, not surprisingly, featured as the gifts delivered by Mr. Claus during the game!



## McLoughlin's Realise that Board Games are Money-Spinners

Capturing the Christmas market with 'Visit of Santa Claus', the McLoughlin's released their (hotly anticipated) follow up, 'Game of Tobogganing' which featured the outdoor sport of tobogganing, which was all the rage at the time. The game was a version of the popular Snakes & Ladders, but instead of slipping down a reptile, you're sliding down a toboggan run! Despite great sales - they could have been better ... it seems that children were disappointed that Santa was not on the box or on the game! Just proves - Santa sells!



## Santa Back Where he Belongs

As the world fell in love with these new games, the McLoughlin Bros, keen to capitalise on the popularity of their previous Santa focused game released 'Automobile Race Game' which was essentially a game of checkers, but the brothers realised that just about any game could be released in Autumn/Winter period and yield great profits as long as Santa was front and centre.

Those early board games and the competition between the Parker and McLoughlin Brothers were really responsible for a lot of the games we have in our homes to this day: Monopoly, Cluedo, Sorry!, Risk, Trivial Pursuit and Scrabble would be just some of the games that would materialise from the Parkers (although would be marketed under Hasbro Gaming). McLoughlin Bros (and if you have any of their games, you're worth a small fortune) went on to create games such as 'Pilgrim's Progress' and 'Jack Straws.'

**Christmas  
is not Christmas without  
playing a game with friends...**

## Resurgence in Popularity

We have looked at a number of old board games from bygone years, but why the resurgence in popularity in 2023? In an age of super fast broadband gaming, it seems absurd that a simple cardboard game would become so welcomed again - but I think we all learned the importance of spending time with family and friends after the lockdowns and this was the rebirth of the humble board game. So, once restrictions eased and we could actually spend time together again physically, I believe we realised how much we actually crave social interaction.

## Digital Overload

Many parents are concerned these days about the impact of digital media on their families and are seeking alternatives to decrease screen time and encourage social interaction. There's no doubt that board games provide healthy family interactions, fostering stronger connections.

## Bonding and Teamwork

As a board game lover, something I adore is the opportunity this pursuit creates for bonding, teamwork and learning good sportsmanship. There's evidence to suggest that parents who initiate board game time have children who have a strong sense of belonging, not to mention greater cognitive and social development and greater problem-solving and conversational skills.

For me, the most important part of the whole board game experience is the cherished memories that come from time spent on the board with family and friends and cherishing those unique moments that make Christmas so special.





**Jim O'CALLAGHAN TD** 



**WORKING FOR YOU LOCALLY**

Please contact me if I can assist you in any way.  
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Weekly Advice Clinics - Tuesday  
St. Andrews Resource Centre: 6pm-7pm      Ringsend Community Centre: 7pm-8pm  
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 **Sinn Féin**

*Best Wishes and Happy Christmas to all involved in The Irish Homeless Street Leagues*



I am always happy to help, should you need me.  
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Email: [john.mythen@oir.ie](mailto:john.mythen@oir.ie)



# Happy Christmas Everybody



Thank you for your support



From all at

**The Irish Homeless Street Leagues**

*Every morning you have two choices:  
To Sleep With your Dreams  
Or Wake up and Chase them*



Ireland's Street League Nations Cup team, who finished runners up in Scotland in September 2023.



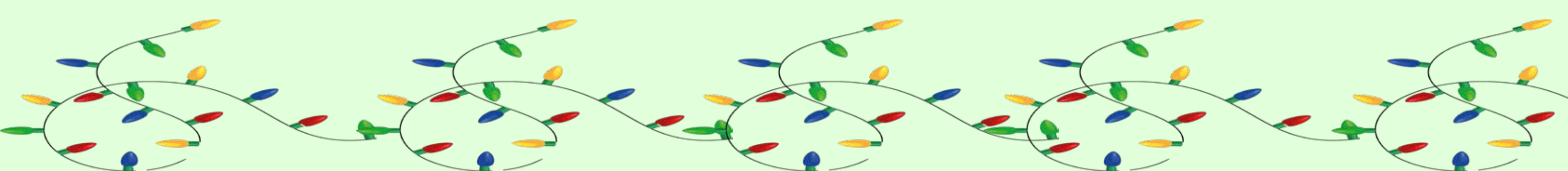
Longford winners of the All Ireland Street Soccer finals with Stephen Kenny in April 2023



Ireland women's team who came 4th in the Homeless World Cup in USA, August 2023.



Ireland ladies team celebrate victory.





**S****C****R****E****E****N****S****C****E****N****E**

## **May December \*\*\***

**Starring: Natalie Portman, Julianne Moore**

**Run Time: 113 mins**

**Watch: Netflix**

**Available: From 1st December**

Academy Award winners Natalie Portman and Julianne Moore team up for the black dramedy Netflix movie *May December*, which earned critical praise upon its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival. *Riverdale* star Charles Melton also stars in the film about a married couple with a large age gap experiencing renewed pressure from an actress 20 years after their relationship hit the tabloids. It's already getting Oscar buzz, so don't miss *May December* when it hits Netflix on 1st December.





## **Wonka \*\*\*\***

**Starring: Timothée Chalamet, Hugh Grant**

**Run Time: 116 mins**

**Watch: Cinemas across Ireland**

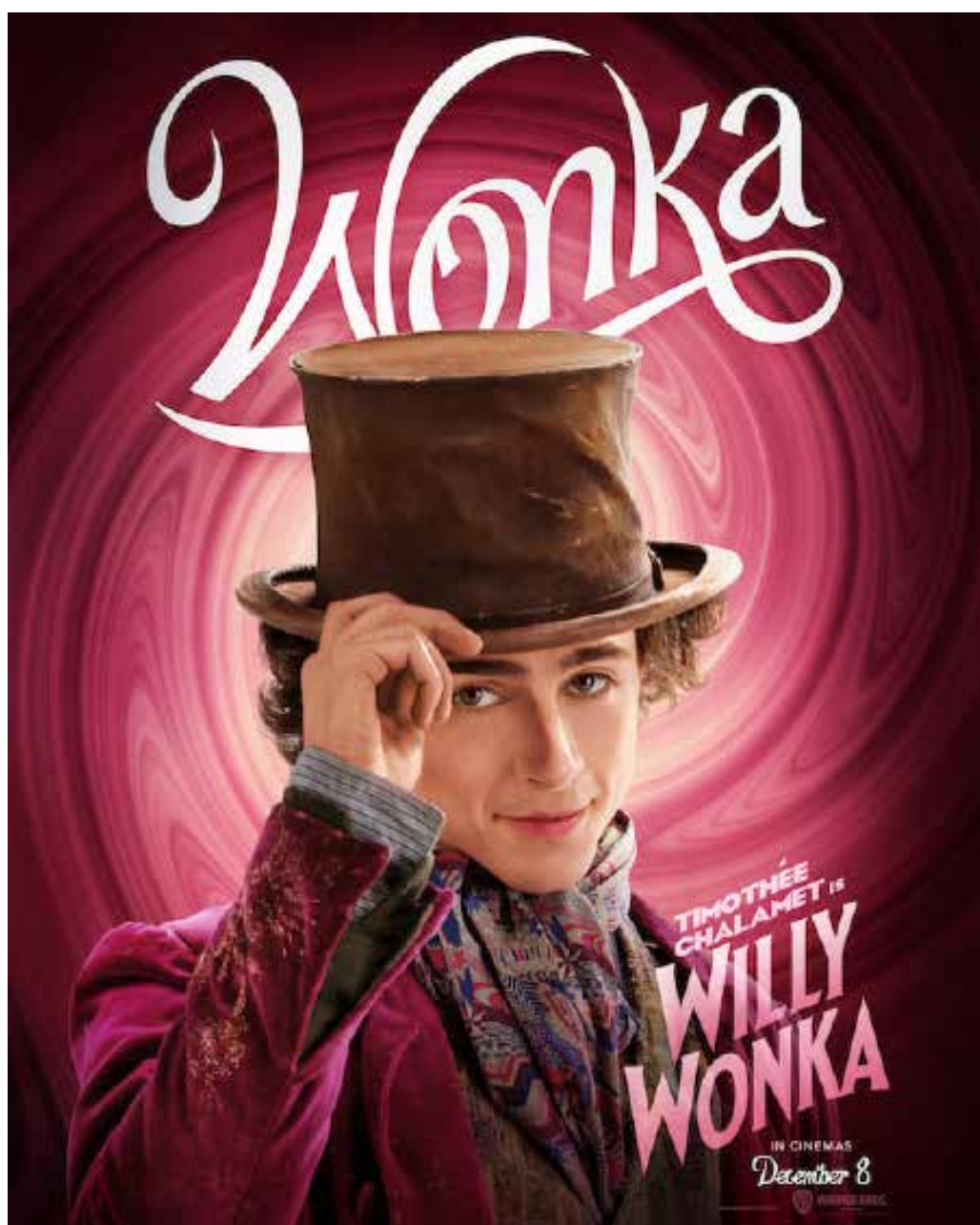
**Available from: 8th December**

We're not short of movie adaptations of Roald Dahl's sweetly macabre 1964 children's book. But while Gene Wilder and Johnny Depp brought the adult character off the page, Timothée Chalamet's tenure in the top hat could be even more tantalising,



diving into the origin story of the boy who became the world's oddest chocolatier, and leading a stellar cast that includes Rowan Atkinson, Olivia Colman, Matt Lucas, Sally Hawkins – and Hugh Grant as an Oompa Loompa.

Book your golden tickets now.







## Dashing Through the Snow \*\*

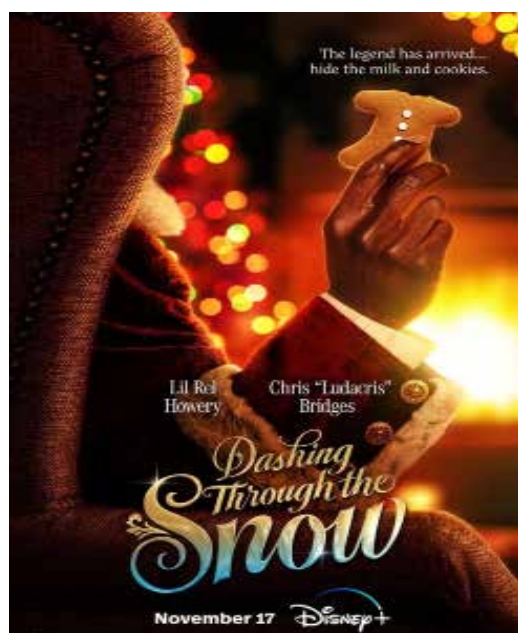
**Starring: Chris Bridges, Teyonah Parris**

**Streaming: Disney+**

**Run Time: 92 mins**

**Available to stream: Currently**

Chris Bridges (Ludacris to us!) stars in this original Disney+ movie about a social worker for the Atlanta police department and the Christmas Eve journey he goes on with his estranged daughter. The adventure ultimately helps him remember the magic of the season, so though it's billed as a comedy - get the tissues ready!







## Candy Cane Lane \*\*

**Starring: Eddie Murphy, Tracee Ellis Ross**

**Streaming: Prime**

**Run Time: 115**

**Available to watch: 1st December**

Eddie Murphy, Tracee Ellis Ross, and Nick Offerman. Need we say more? No! But we will: Murphy stars as a man determined to win his neighbourhood's annual Christmas home decoration contest. Standard, you say? Well, this one ups the ante by adding a magical spin: Murphy makes a deal with a witch, and suddenly, the "12 Days of Christmas" are brought to actual life!







**Hannah Waddingham:  
Home for Christmas \*\*\***

**Starring: Hannah Waddingham**

**Streaming: Apple TV+**

**Run Time: 44 mins**

**Available to stream: Currently**

Ted Lasso star Hannah Waddingham presents this musical extravaganza at the London Coliseum. Featuring special guests, the show was recorded in front of a live audience, and sees Waddingham perform festive classics accompanied by a big band, to ring in the festive period.







## The Sacrifice Game \*\*

**Starring: Mena Massoud, Chloe Levine**

**Streaming: Shudder**

**Run Time: 118 mins**

**Available to stream: 8th December**

Now, to be fair, not everyone loves a traditional, feel-good Christmas movie. If that's you, add this one to your list. It's about two boarding school students who can't go home for the holidays - and to make matters worse, a murderous gang shows up...just in time for Christmas. (We'll be hiding behind our pillows for this one!)





# Feeling like a winner?

*Enter one our great competitions below.*



## Fancy a nice cuppa?

Barry's Tea is offering 24 packs of Gold Blend 80s teabags to a lucky reader. To be in with a chance of winning, answer the following question by email:

What is Barry's Tea's website?

**SanDisk**  
www.westerndigital.com

## Give me space!



Fancy winning the Sandisk Portable SSD 1TB hard-drive? Life's best moments happen fast. To make sure you don't miss them, you need portable, reliable storage. With the SanDisk Portable SSD you can store your content and memories on a fast drive that fits seamlessly into your mobile lifestyle. Thanks to Western Digital you will probably never need another space solution again. To be in with a chance of winning, answer this questions:

How many GBs are in 1 TB?

## These shoes were made for walking!



Win A £100 Voucher to Spend on Gola.co.uk  
Born in Britain in 1905, Gola holds its British heritage close to its heart. Over the years Gola has been associated with several high-profile sporting legends and was the number one British sportswear brand of the 1960s and '70s. Using the Gola archives as a starting point, today Gola produces some of its most loved classic trainers, while also reimagining designs to give them a fresh and current feel. We're giving one lucky reader the chance to win a £100 voucher to spend at [www.gola.co.uk](http://www.gola.co.uk).

Are Gola based in England or Scotland?



## That's it nailed!

Fancy getting your nails done at Saoirse Ronan's favourite hangout and nail bar? Answer the following question:

What kind of lamp cures gel nails? Is it a UV Lamp or an AA lamp?



## Meet those fitness goals!

At £139.99, Fitbit Charge 6 is designed with fitness tools that motivate you to reach your goals, advanced health sensors, and brand new Google smarts that help your routine run smoothly.

It's the only fitness tracker with Google smarts and helpfulness, plus the Fitbit health and fitness features you need to get a new view on you.

Charge 6 features our most accurate heart rate on a tracker yet, with up to 60% more accurate readings during vigorous activities.

Charge 6 lets you easily DJ your workouts with YouTube Music controls right on your wrist.

Make sense of your wellbeing with helpful advanced health insights, such as Daily Readiness Score, Stress Management Score, and Advanced Sleep tracking.

What is the recommended number of steps per day? Is it 10,000 or 500?

**All answers to be emailed to:  
[info@irelandsbigissue.com](mailto:info@irelandsbigissue.com) by 27th Dec.**

**Please state competition you are entering in the email subject line.**



# Homeless at Christmas

**H**omelessness is a stark reality that cannot be ignored, especially during the Christmas season. Liz Scales reports.



Homelessness is a pressing issue that can't be ignored - and at Christmas, it seems even more pressing. Sometimes it feels like we've all become immune to the needs of others as we get caught up in our own lives.

## **Many Kids Won't Have a Visit from Santa**

To truly understand the gravity of the situation this year, just look at the statistics: according to the most recent data 12,827 people sought emergency accommodation (hostels, family hubs or other temporary accommodation) and of those individuals, 3904 were children, 83 people are sleeping rough in Dublin alone and the number of people accessing emergency accommodation is up by 134 people since last month and a staggering 1,886 more people are accessing emergency accommodation than this time last year. It's heartbreaking to think about young lives being impacted by such instability and uncertainty - almost 4,000 kids will not have a place to call home this Christmas. For some little ones, Santa Claus is the last thing on their parents' minds.

## **Stop the False Narrative on Homelessness**

The causes of homelessness are complex and varied. Let's halt the false narrative that it's down to drink, drugs and misguided living. Many of us adopt this attitude to help anaesthetise ourselves to the disconcerting reality that this could happen to any of us. Any single one of us could experience mental health issues, financial problems due to unemployment or low income levels or develop an addiction. Additionally, rising rents and lack of affordable housing further contribute to this crisis. Efforts are being made to combat homelessness especially during Christmas time when vulnerability is heightened even more than usual, but like always, it is not enough.

It's very sad that the burden falls on countless charities to take up the slack. These charities work tirelessly throughout the year but particularly during Christmas season to provide shelter, support and hope for those experiencing homelessness. When people are desperate, hot meals, warm clothes, distribution drives and emotional support from selfless individuals (quite often) volunteering are like manna from heaven - but until government policies make an impact and do more, many will lie in the streets or in emergency/temporary accommodation this Christmas - and beyond.

## **What You Can Do.**

As an individual, you can make a difference by volunteering your time, donating essential items or contributing financially. These small acts can go a long way towards bringing comfort and dignity back into someone's life this holiday season. If you can help, please contact either of the charities below - or indeed any homeless charity - your help is vital.

### **The Capuchin Day Centre**

The Capuchin Day Centre,  
29 Bow Street, Dublin DO7 FC78.

Email: [info@capuchindaycentre.ie](mailto:info@capuchindaycentre.ie)

For donations by phone (credit cards) contact Bro. Kevin, Alan, Monica or Aideen on (01) 8720770

### **Focus Ireland**

Dublin

9 - 12 High Street Christchurch Dublin 8

Phone: 01 881 5900

Email: [help@focusireland.ie](mailto:help@focusireland.ie)

### **Peter McVerry Trust**

Phone Support Line: 1800 140 244

Fundraising: +353 1 823 0776

National Head Office: +353 1 823 0776

Email: [info@pmvtrust.ie](mailto:info@pmvtrust.ie)

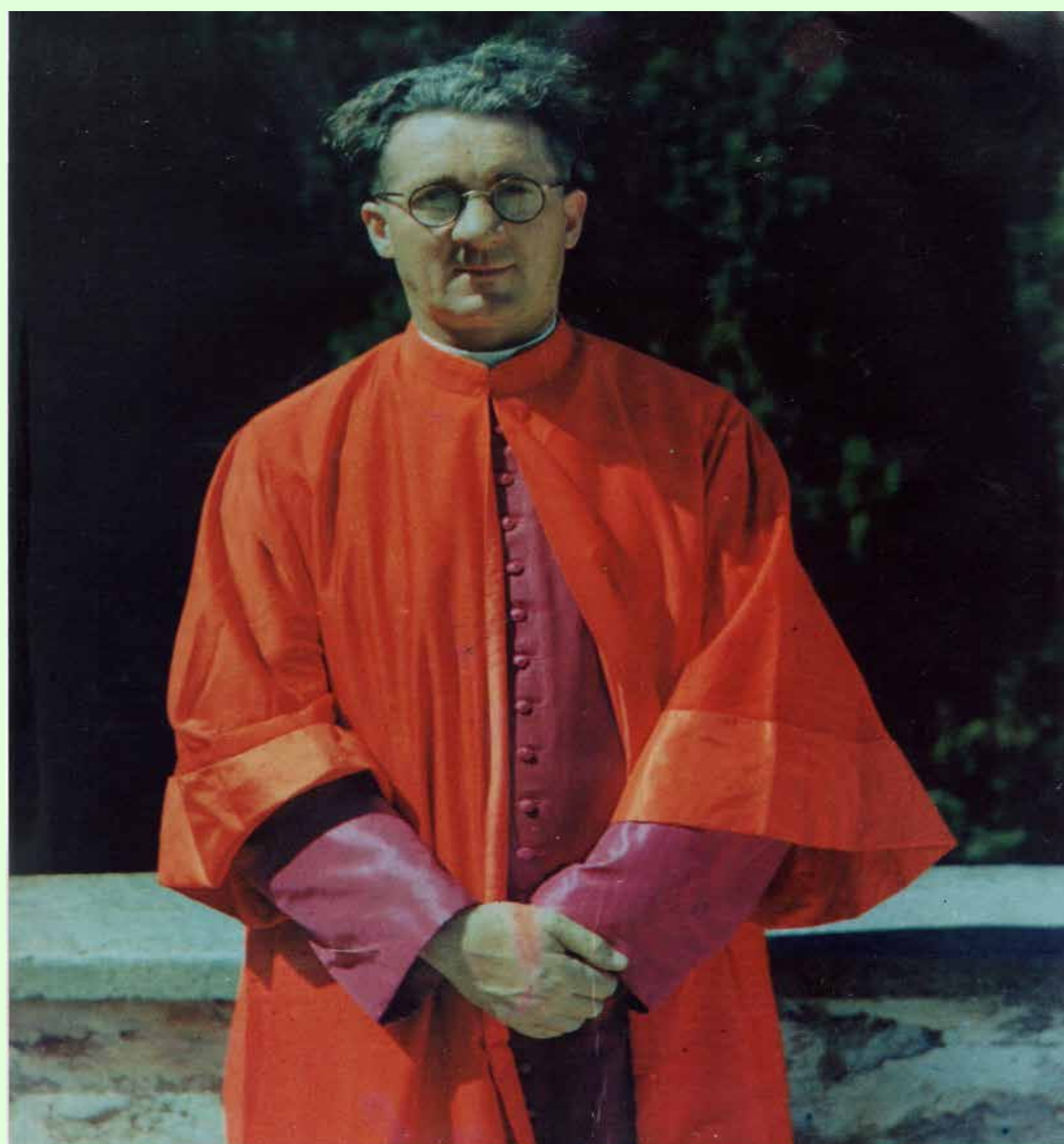
Donate: (01) 823 0776

Direct Debit: <https://pmvtrust.ie/donate/direct-debit/>



## MONSIGNOR HUGH O'FLAHERTY – A MAN OF COURAGE

**M**onsignor Hugh O'Flaherty was one of our country's greatest men, yet to this day, his story is relatively unknown. Liz Scales takes a look at the life of the Co. Cork man who saved 6,500 Allied soldiers and Jews from the Nazis.



Hugh O'Flaherty was born in Kiskeam in north County Cork in 1898 but just after his birth, his parents, James and Margaret, moved the family to Killarney. Living on a golf course (James worked there as a steward), young Hugh played a lot of the game and by the time he'd reach his teens had a scratch handicap! One of the country's top students he won a scholarship to teacher training college, however, by the age of 19 he realised his true calling - to enter the priesthood, and so enrolled at Mungret College near Limerick, a Jesuit college dedicated to training young men for the mission fields. O'Flaherty was a 'mature' student, in that the normal age range was 14-18 year olds but Mungret did occasionally make exceptions for older students if they'd been accepted by a bishop who would cover their fees, and Hugh's sponsor would be the Bishop of Cape Town, Cornelius O'Reilly in whose diocese he would be posted after ordination. This would be a huge undertaking and culture shock for a young lad who'd never set foot outside his province of Munster.

When O'Flaherty was in Mungret, the Irish War of Independence was in progress but in 1922 he was posted to Rome to complete his studies and was ordained just before Christmas of 1925. He never joined his diocese though but stayed to work for the See of Rome and served as a Vatican diplomat in Egypt, Czechoslovakia, Santo Domingo and Haiti.

...  
**he eluded persistent traps  
by Herbert Kappler and Pietro Koch  
giving him the nickname of 'The Scarlett  
Pimpernel of the Vatican.'**

### **The Scarlett Pimpernel of the Vatican**

At the age of 36 Hugh was appointed a papal chamberlain with the title of Monsignor. He was initially ascribed to the Sacred Congregation De Propaganda Fide through which, in partnership with the Cardinal Prefect, H. Em. Pietro of the marquesses Fumasoni Biondi, the Pro-Rector of the Pontifical Urban College De Propaganda Fide, Monsignor Saverio Maria of the Barons Paventi di San Bonaventura, he began to form his invaluable network of helpers with whom he managed to save 6,500 civilians, military personnel and Jews, whom he provided accommodation for in Vatican extraterritorial residences and religious institutes during the German occupation of Rome during WWII. That activity, which was carried out while he eluded persistent traps by Nazis Herbert Kappler and Pietro Koch, resulted in giving him the nickname of 'The Scarlett Pimpernel of the Vatican.'

### **O'Flaherty Summons Helpers**

At the start of WWII Hugh travelled around prisoner-of-war camps in Italy in an attempt to find out about prisoners who'd been reported missing in action and if he found them alive, he did his best to reassure their



kin through Radio Vatican.

In 1943, when Mussolini was removed from power, thousands of Allied prisoners-of-war were freed, but when Germany foisted an occupation over Italy, they were at risk of being recaptured. Some of these people, recalling visits by O'Flaherty, reached Rome and asked for his assistance. Others went to the Holy See-Ireland Relations, the only English-speaking embassy to remain open in Rome during the war. The Irish ambassador, Thomas J. Kiernan's wife, ballad singer Delia Murphy Kiernan was one of Hugh's assistants. O'Flaherty, ever proactive, didn't wait for authorisation from his superiors. He enlisted the assistance of other priests, two agents working for the The French Liberation Army, François de Vial and Yves Debroise, communists and a Swiss Count. One of his aides was British Major Sam Derry, an escapee. Derry along with the British officers and escaped POWs Lieutenants Furman and Simpson, and Captain Byrnes, a Canadian, were responsible for the security and operational organisation. O'Flaherty also kept contact with Sir D'Arcy Osbourne, British Ambassador to the Holy See and his butler, John May, whom O'Flaherty described as "a genius...". O'Flaherty and his allies concealed 4,000 escapees, mainly Allied soldiers and Jews, in flats, farms and convents. Among those housed was Ines Gistron and a Jewish friend whom O'Flaherty placed in a pensione run by Canadian nuns at Monteverde, Rome where they were given false IDs.



### **The Monsignor's Life is Under Threat**

One of the first boltholes was beside the local Schutzstaffel (SS) headquarters. O'Flaherty and Derry organised all of that from his room at the Collegio Teutonico. When outside the Vatican, Hugh had numerous different disguises. The German occupiers tried to stop him and eventually found out that the leader of the network was a priest! SS attempts to execute him failed. It learned his identity but couldn't seize him inside the Vatican. When the German ambassador revealed that to O'Flaherty, he began to meet his contacts on the stairs of St. Peter's Basilica.

Head of the SS Sicherheitsdienst and Gestapo in Rome, Herbert Kappler discovered O'Flaherty's activity and ordered that a white line be painted on the pavement at the opening of St. Peter's Square, which indicated the border between Vatican City and Italy, and threatened that O'Flaherty would be assassinated if he dared cross it. Pietro Koch, the head of the Banda Koch, a special task force assigned with hunting down partisans and rounding up deportees for the Germans, often talked about his resolution to torture Hugh and then to kill him if he ever got the chance.

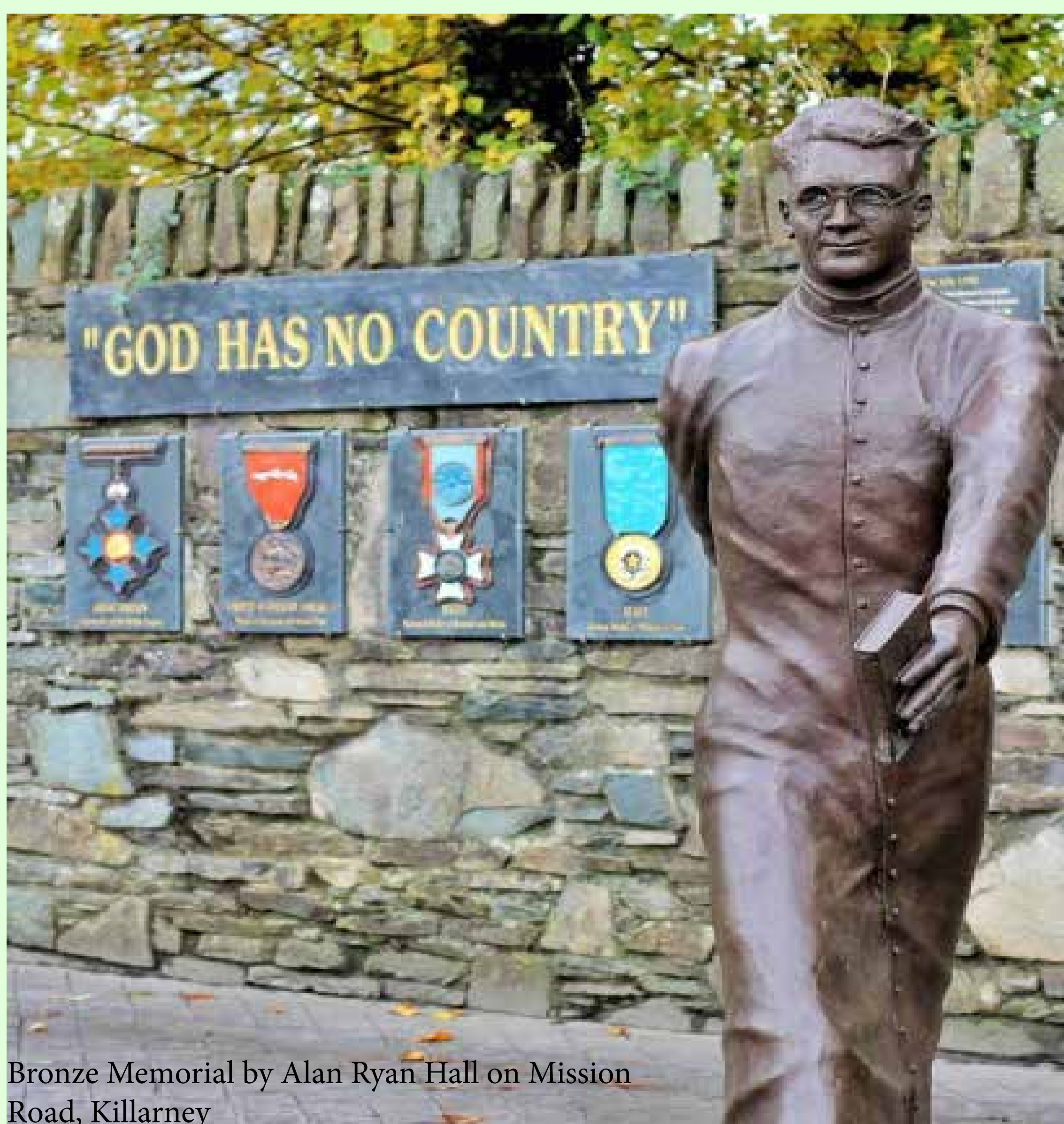
**Gregory Peck would play  
O'Flaherty in the TV movie,  
The Scarlet and the Black**

O'Flaherty had quite the network of helpers including priests, nuns and parishioners all working under top secret conditions with him and Hugh and his team even hid refugees in their own homes around Rome. Among these incredibly selfless people were Augustinian Roman Catholic priests Egidio Galea and Brother Robert Pace of the Institute of the Brothers. Another person who contributed significantly to the operation was Chetta Chevalier (known as Mrs M) who hid many refugees in her house with her own children. Jewish religious meetings were run in the Basilica di San Clemente which was under Irish diplomatic protection.

When the Allies arrived in Rome in June 1944, 6,425 of the escapees were still alive. O'Flaherty flew to South Africa to meet Italian prisoners and to Jerusalem to visit Jewish refugees. Of the 9,700 Jews in Rome, 1,007 had been shipped to Auschwitz. The rest were hidden, over 5,000 of them by the church, 300 in Castel Gandolfo around 400 as members of the Palatine Guard and 1,500 in monasteries, convents and colleges.



The remaining 3,700 were hidden in private homes. During Rome's liberation O'Flaherty and Derry were caring for 3,925 escapees and men who had succeeded in avoiding arrest. Of them, 1,695 were British, 896 South African, 429 Russian, 425 Greek and 185 American. The remainder were from 20 different nations. That doesn't include Jews and various other men and women who were in O'Flaherty's personal care.



Bronze Memorial by Alan Ryan Hall on Mission Road, Killarney

### **After the War**

After the war Hugh O'Flaherty received many awards including the CBE "for services to the Forces in Italy" and the Medal of Freedom, Israel named him as 'Righteous among the Nations', he was also honoured by Australia and Canada. He refused to use the lifetime pension that Italy had given him. In the fifties, the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy in the form proposed by Faustina Kowalska who had been canonised, was under a ban from the Vatican. It was O'Flaherty who, as notary, signed the document that notified Catholics of the ban. He was the first Irishman named Notary of the Holy Office.

O'Flaherty regularly visited his old enemy, Herbert Kappler in prison (he was tried before an Italian court for mass murder and sentenced to life in Gaete Prison) and was Kappler's only visitor. In 1959, Kappler converted to Catholicism and remarkably, was baptised by O'Flaherty!

**O'Flaherty had quite the network of helpers including priests, nuns and parishioners all working under top secret conditions**

### **Ill Health & Death**

At the age of 62 O'Flaherty suffered a bad stroke during Mass and had to return to Ireland. He moved to Cahersiveen to live with his sister at whose house he died on 30 October 1963, aged just 65. He was buried in the graveyard of the Daniel O'Connell Memorial Church in Cahersiveen. There is a monument to him in Killarney Town.

In 1983 Gregory Peck would play O'Flaherty in the TV movie, The Scarlet and the Black which followed the undertakings of the Monsignor from the German occupation of Rome to its liberation .

This year, Joseph O'Connor published 'My Father's House', a novel based on the exploits of O'Flaherty and his resistance group.



Wishing all a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year



**RIGHT 2 CHANGE**  
EQUALITY DEMOCRACY JUSTICE

**Joan Collins TD**  
If you need any assistance  
you can contact me at my constituency office at:  
10A Old County Road.  
Phone: 4540085/4540086.  
You can also phone me at Dail Eireann 01 6183215.

*Wishing all the very best over  
the festive season and New year*

Councillor  
**GUSS O'CONNELL**



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**Sinn Féin**

## Mick Barry TD

Cork North Central

*People before profit – Solidarity*



*Best Wishes to all involved in the Cork Soccer Street Leagues*

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# Because laughter is the best medicine!



The TV game show was really close. One contestant was asked to name two of Santa's reindeers. The contestant gave a sigh thinking that he had finally been given an easy question, "Rudolph and Olive!" The host asked the contestant, "We'll accept Rudolph but can you explain Olive?" The man looked at the host incredulous and said, "Sure everybody knows that, it's in the song, he then proceeds to sing 'Olive' the other reindeer, used to laugh and call him names..."

---

What do you call a kid who doesn't believe in Santa?  
A rebel without a Claus.

What do you call an elf who sings?  
A wrapper!

Why is Santa so jolly?  
Because he knows where all the naughty girls live.

What do you call Santa's helpers?  
Subordinate clauses

Whats the difference between the Christmas alphabet and the ordinary alphabet?  
The Christmas alphabet has Noel.

What is the popular Christmas carol in Desert?  
Camel ye Faithful.

What happened when the snowgirl fell out with the snowboy?  
She gave him the cold shoulder!

What's an ig?  
An eskimo's home without a loo!

---

The 3 stages of man:  
He believes in Santa Claus  
He doesn't believe in Santa Claus.  
He is Santa Claus.

---

Someone has stated that the three phrases that best sum up the Christmas season are:  
Peace on Earth,  
Goodwill to Men  
And Batteries not included

---

THE TOP SIGNS SANTA CLAUS IS ACTUALLY A WOMAN  
Santa 'remembers' it's Christmas. 'Nuf said.

- Despite the closet full of red coats with big black belts, \*still\* insists she has nothing to wear on Christmas Eve.
  - A man simply would not care if you were naughty or nice.
  - Constantly whining about equality until it's time to clean out the reindeer stalls.
  - Matching shoes and belt? Only a woman would accessorize a pantsuit like that!
  - No guy would ever name his animals Dancer and Prancer.
  - Santa never, ever observed peeing off of rooftops.
- 

The Indians asked their Chief in Autumn if the Winter was going to be cold or not. Not really knowing an answer, the chief replies that the Winter was going to be cold with lots of snow and that the members of the village were to collect wood to be prepared. Being a good leader, he then went to the next phone booth and called the National Weather Service and asked, "Is this winter to be cold?" The man on the phone responded, "This Winter is going to be quite cold indeed." So, the Chief went back to speed up his people to collect even more wood to be prepared. A week later he called the National Weather Service again, "Is it going to be a very cold winter?" "Yes", the man replied, "It's going to be a very cold Winter." So, the Chief goes back to his people and orders them to go and find every scrap of wood they can find. Two weeks later he calls the National Weather Service again: "Are you absolutely sure that the Winter is going to be very cold?" "Absolutely," the man replies, "The Indians are collecting wood like crazy!"

---

Two teenagers, Fred and Joe, meet after school and Fred is all excited: "Man I was at the most awesome Christmas party this weekend! We went to this guys house and the guy had toilets made of pure gold!" "No way!" "Yes way," insists Fred, "come with me and check it out for yourself if you don't believe me." Twenty minutes later they're ringing the doorbell at the house. A middle-aged lady opens and Fred eagerly asks her, "Hi! I'm sorry to bother you but there was a party at your house yesterday and my friend doesn't believe that you have toilet bowls of pure gold!" The lady looks at him for a moment and then yells into the inside of the house, "Roger, the Kid that sh\*t in your trombone is here!"





# The Enduring Appeal of

## F.R.I.E.N.D.S



**B**est known for his role as Chandler Bing in the television series Friends, Perry's death has seen an outpouring of grief from fans and the Hollywood community. Adam Gerace reports.



Best known for his role as Chandler Bing in the television series Friends, Perry's death has seen an outpouring of grief from fans and the Hollywood community.

His passing at age 54 has shocked both those who admired his acting work, as well as those who followed his efforts to bring awareness to the pains of addiction.

Tributes to Perry have understandably focused on his star-making turn on the incredibly popular television sitcom. Scenes, catchphrases, and his character's lines have been lovingly repurposed across the internet to memorialise the gifted actor.

Meanwhile, many viewers have situated their recollections of Perry and the series within the context of their own experiences.

Viewers who came of age, or were the characters' ages during the show's original run, have reminisced about what the work of Perry and his co-stars meant to them at formative times in their lives. Newer viewers have similarly shared how important the series has been to them – their relationship with the show often beginning long after production ended. For many, Friends was the television equivalent of the soundtrack to their lives.

To appreciate the staying power of the series for original and newer viewers alike almost 30 years since it debuted, we need to consider what functions television viewing serves and the bonds we form with its characters.

**Friends brought people together. It provided a common connection. It allowed bonding with real friends as much as fictional ones.**

### Enduring appeal

Part of Friends' popularity lies in its timing. The show premiered in 1994, a period when network television was still dominant. By its end a decade later, while the power of the big television networks had eroded, the series had maintained an average of more than 20 million viewers each season.

The 2004 finale brought in a record-breaking 52.5 million viewers in the United States. The series then entered repeats around the world. It hasn't left our screens since.

The late 90s and early 2000s have sometimes been referred to as the end of monoculture. While a contested and controversial idea because of, among other concerns, who was included and excluded on our screens, monoculture meant we watched many of the same things.

One of the most popular shows of its era, Friends brought people together. It was a show we watched with our families or friends, spoke about the next day with colleagues, and it provided a common connection. It allowed bonding with real friends as much as fictional ones.







Friends did not only reflect style of the time; it also frequently created it. Jennifer Aniston's haircut, coined "The Rachel", or Perry's lovable smart-alecky cadence, typified with Chandler's catchphrase of "Could I be any more...", were endlessly imitated. I know I attempted to replicate Chandler's sweater vests and light blue denim look. Participation provided viewers a sense of identity.

As people enter their 30s and 40s, they often gravitate towards the memories made during their formative adolescent and young adult years. So perhaps it's no surprise Friends endures for original viewers as it represents – and was a part of – their lives at this important time.



... many viewers have situated their recollections of Perry and the series within the context of their own experiences

### **Likeable characters**

Television and other fictional media meet our needs for both pleasure and extracting meaning. We get excited, entertained and moved by television.

As part of this, we bond with fictional characters. We cannot help but empathise with them. A series like Friends with its characters and their combinations of breakups, makeups and other mishaps allowed us to safely use our empathy muscles to cheer on and sometimes commiserate with the group of six. It helped that each character was flawed but inherently likeable.

Fictional characters also allow us to experience lifestyles we might not otherwise. In the case of Friends, who didn't want to live in a rent-controlled apartment like Monica's, or regularly meet their supportive and funny pals for coffee at Central Perk? As a teen, I imagined such a world for myself in the not-too-distant future.

Younger generations might be more aware of how out-of-reach that lifestyle was, or find the show's humour sometimes dated. But the idea of what the friends' lifestyle represented – possibility, freedom, a chosen family – evidently still holds appeal.

**Matthew Perry  
wanted his legacy to be awareness  
of addiction and the help he provided  
to people struggling with this disorder.**

### **Fictional relationships, but real sadness.**

In forming relationships with fictional characters, we form bonds with the performers who bring them to life. The lines between character and creator become blurry, both because of the knowledge about actors' lives celebrity culture affords us, but also because their characters seem so real. When the actors pass away, we feel real grief.

It's important for fans of Matthew Perry to acknowledge their loss. Even though his character is fictional, and you didn't know him personally, you can still feel sad. Watching the series may be difficult right now. With time, it will become easier.

Matthew Perry wanted his legacy to be awareness of addiction and the help he provided to people struggling with this disorder. Hopefully what will be felt now, alongside collective sadness, is an empathy for those facing addiction. That may be the power of television, and of a character named Chandler, and the actor who brought him to life, who many considered their friend.

**Author Adam Gerace  
Senior Lecturer and Head of Course - Positive Psychology, CQ University Australia**

**First Published on The Conversation**







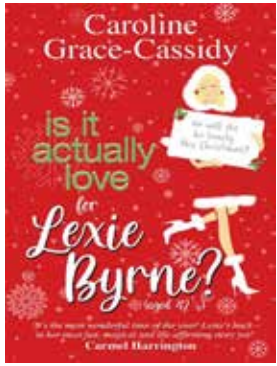
*Patricia  
Scanlan's  
Book Club*



**P**atricia Scanlan was born in Dublin, where she still lives. She is a #1 bestselling author and has sold millions of books worldwide. Her books are translated in many languages. Patricia is the series editor and a contributing author to the award winning Open Door Literacy series.

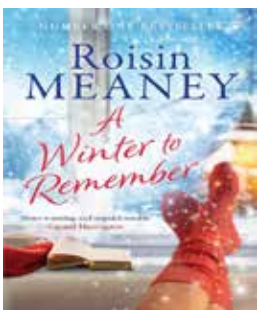
**This issue, Patricia brings her favourite books of the moment.**





Is it Actually Love for  
Lexie Byrne? (aged  
42<sup>1/4</sup>) – Caroline  
Grace-Cassidy – Black  
& White Publishing

This Christmas, Lexie Byrne is about to find out the true meaning of love - and how far she must go to fight for it. And can she perform the greatest miracle of all for her happily ever after?



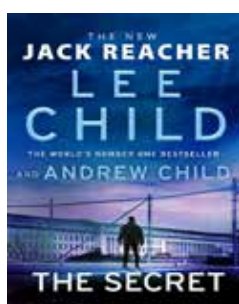
A Winter to Remember  
– Roisin Meaney –  
Hachette Books Ireland

Emily loves the festive season. This year she's hosting a special Christmas lunch at her restaurant to celebrate with family and





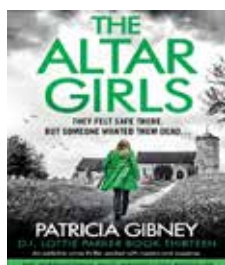
friends. But as the big day draws near, her plans begin to unravel. Emily's best friend Heather is also dealing with the unexpected. As their lives become more and more complicated, will they find their way back to happiness and the people they love in time for Christmas Day?



The Secret: Jack Reacher, Book 28 – Lee Child and Andrew Child – Bantam

Chicago. 1992. A hospital patient wakes to find two strangers by his bed. They show him a list of names and ask a simple but impossible question. Minutes later he falls to his death from his twelfth-floor window - a fall which generates some unexpected attention. Will Reacher bring the bad guys to justice the official way . . . or his way?





## The Altar Girls – Patricia Gibney – Bookouture

The little girl looked like an angel in her thin white robe, her long black hair spread around her head like a dark halo on the snow. Her hands rested on her chest, fingers interlaced as if she had fallen asleep while praying. But she would never wake up again... Can Detective Lottie Parker stop this twisted killer before another precious life is stolen?



## Sunday Miscellany - A Selection 2018–2023 – Sarah Binchy (ed) – New Island Books

RTÉ Radio 1's Sunday Miscellany is an Irish institution, a programme that has provided comfort, joy and entertainment to hundreds of thousands of listeners





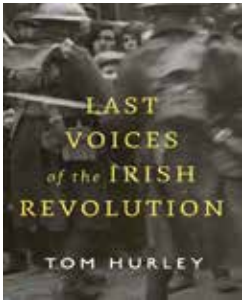
for over half a century. Arranged in calendar months and spanning the seasons of the year, some of the best broadcasts from the last five years are collected here in one volume. This sparkling selection of writing by the best of new, established and household names is sure to amuse, move and delight readers of all ages.



Three Tasks for a Dragon  
– Eoin Colfer (Author) –  
PJ Lynch –  
(Illustrator) – Walker  
Books

Illustrated in a sophisticated muted palette, this is a classic quest story with a modern twist from two Irish Children's Laureates.





Last Voices of the Irish  
Revolution – Tom Hurley  
– Gill Books

The Irish Civil War ended in 1923. Eighty years on, documentary-maker Tom Hurley wondered if there were many people left from across Ireland who experienced the years 1919 to 1923, their prelude and aftermath. 100 years after the Civil War ended, this book weaves a unique chronology of the revolutionary years through the experiences of 20 people. Together, theirs are the last voices of the Irish Revolution.



Dirty Linen – Martin  
Doyle – Merrion Press

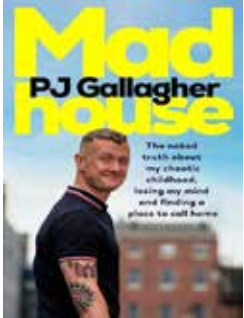
Martin Doyle offers a personal, intimate history of the Troubles seen through the microcosm of a single rural parish, his own, part of both the Linen Trian-





gle – heartland of the North’s defining industry – and the Murder Triangle – the Badlands devastated by paramilitary violence. He lifts the veil of silence drawn over the horrors of the past, recording in heartrending detail the terrible toll the conflict took – more than twenty violent deaths in a few square miles – and the long tail of trauma it has left behind.

Madhouse – PJ Gallagher  
– Sandycove



Madhouse is PJ’s riotous life story. Covering everything from dogs, motorbikes and the art of small talk, to the lessons of mental breakdown and finally figuring out love, this is PJ unbound.

Old Ireland in Colour 3 –  
John Breslin &  
Sarah-Anne Buckley –  
Merrion Press



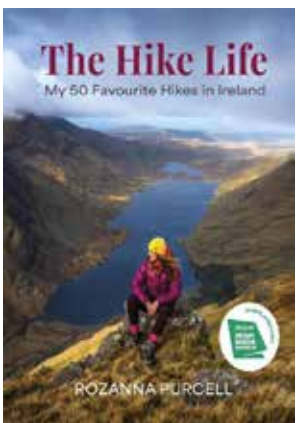




With endless surprising details to pore over in every picture, along with illuminating captions, Old Ireland in Colour is a stunning Colour 3 is a stunning addition to this wonderful series of unique books.

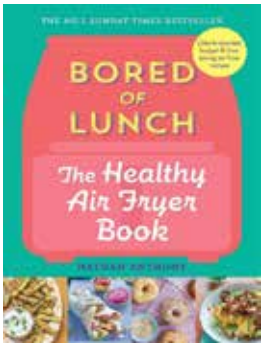
## The Hike Life: My 50 Favourite Hikes in

Ireland – Rozanna Purcell – Black & White .



Roz Purcell has been hiking the length and breadth of Ireland for years with her enthusiastic community The Hike Life, exploring the best of what the island has to offer. This book brings to life the beauty and majesty of hiking in Ireland along





Bored of Lunch: The  
Healthy Air Fryer Book –  
Nathan Anthony – Ebury  
Press

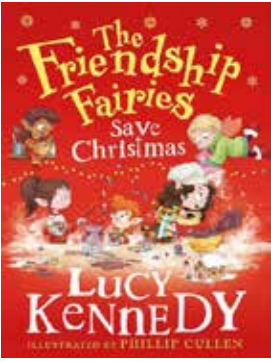
Whether you're an air fryer fanatic or new to these time - and money-saving appliances, hugely popular healthy-eating platform, Bored of Lunch, will revolutionise your cooking packed with recipes that are quick, healthy and completely delicious.



Rowan Tree Stables 1: Ride  
to the Rescue – Nina Car-  
berry Julian Sykes (Authors)  
Nuno  
Alexandre Vieira (Illustrator)  
– Gill Books

In Ride to the Rescue, Grace and Aaron discover something fishy about the local river. It's up to them – and their ponies – to track down who is behind it. But how will they manage when Grace's pony, Daisy, gets injured?

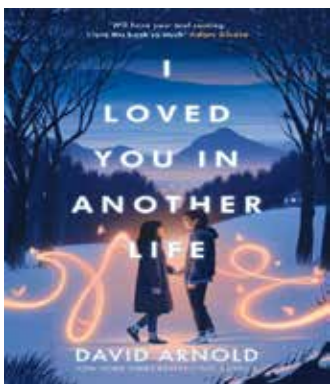




The Friendship Fairies  
Save Christmas – Lucy  
Kennedy (Author) Phillip  
Cullen  
(Illustrator) – Gill Books

The Friendship Fairies' dad has bought his own bakery – and he's planning on opening it just in time for Christmas! But in the magical forest, disaster looms. The elves are normally busy helping Santa prepare for Christmas, But this year, their machines have broken down, and everything has ground to a halt ...

I Loved You In Another Life – Da-  
vid Arnold – Hot Key  
Books



Evan Taft and Shosh  
Bell, both grappling with  
personal hardships, are  
drawn together by a mysterious  
singer's voice in this poignant love





story that transcends time and space. As their connection deepens, the novel explores themes of love, loss, and destiny. David Arnold's lucid prose, convincing characters and unique plotting make *I Loved You In Another Life* one of the best YA stories you're likely to read this year.



**What's your favourite book this year?**

**Why not let us know on X (formerly known as Twitter) @BigIssue Ireland**





## People with COPD Urged to Step Up and Step Out in 2024!

**People with COPD, or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, are being urged to “Step Up and Step Out” this New Year.**



According to Joan Johnston, General Manager of COPD Support Ireland, physical activity is a vital part of maintaining health for people with COPD.

“It is well-documented that maintaining or increasing physical activity levels in day-to-day life can improve the symptoms of COPD,” she says. “That’s why this New Year we are encouraging people with the condition to Step Up and Step Out. The earlier we act, whether it’s in terms of getting symptoms such as breathlessness or an ongoing cough checked out, or managing our condition once diagnosed, the so much better our quality of life will be.”

Latest figures from the National Healthcare Quality Reporting System 2021/2022 estimate that there are 380,000 people living with COPD in Ireland. Yet, less than a third of these have been formally diagnosed.

### **STEPPING UP AND STEPPING OUT – Top Five Tips for People with COPD**

1. Home STRETCH! For a step-by-step guide to exercises such as arm wings, step-ups, sit-to-stand movements, and wall presses, check out COPD Support Ireland’s COPD & Me booklet at [www.copd.ie/copdandme](http://www.copd.ie/copdandme)
2. Class ACT. To help you better manage your COPD, improve your fitness and enhance your quality of life, why not speak to your healthcare professional about being referred to a HSE pulmonary rehabilitation programme in your area?
3. Goal SETTER. A goal gives us focus and helps to keep us motivated. When we achieve a goal, it makes us feel so much better. Plan regular activity into your routine to keep your fitness levels up. Speak to your health professional about the type, frequency and intensity of exercise that is right for you.
4. Energy Efficient YOU. Follow the Four Ps to maximise your energy levels across the day. Prioritise by making a list of tasks in order of importance. Pace yourself by adopting a slow and steady routine, alternating between heavier and lighter tasks. Plan your world by putting frequently-used items where they are easy to reach, or use a bag or basket to carry things. Posture should be considered and you are advised to avoid bending, reaching or twisting, and push or pull rather than lift objects.
5. Pucker UP. Pursed lip breathing exercises help if you are finding it hard to breathe. Simply pucker or purse your lips, breathe in slowly through your nose, counting to two, and then breathe out through your pursed lips while counting to four. Your breathing should soon settle.

**For more information on COPD, supports and services, visit [www.copd.ie](http://www.copd.ie), or telephone the COPD Adviceline on Freephone 1800 832 146 (Mon-Fri, 9am to 5pm).**



# Wishing all a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year

## IMPORTANT CONTACTS



### Important Contacts

- Homeless Freephone Number  
**1800 707 707**  
(10am to 10pm 7 days a week)
- Outreach Team  
**01 872 0185**  
7am to 1am Monday to Friday  
9am to 1am Saturday and Sunday

### Day Services

- Focus Ireland Coffee Shop  
**01 671 2555**
- Capuchin Day Centre  
**01 872 0770**
- Merchants Quay Ireland  
**01 524 0923**
- PMVT - Berkley Street  
**087 247 7117**  
**087 434 1668**
- Alice Leahy Trust  
**01 545 3799**

### Local Authorities

- DCC Central Placement Services  
**01 222 6944**
- Finglas County Council  
**01 890 5090**
- South Dublin County Council  
**01 890 5090**
- Dún Laoghaire - Rathdown County Council  
**01 205 4804**

### Emergency Numbers

If you need the emergency services, including An Garda Síochána, Dublin Fire Brigade or an Ambulance, please call

**122 or 999**



Feidhmeannacht um Dhaoiné ar Easpa  
Didine Réigiún Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin Region Homeless Executive



An Garda Síochána  
Ireland's National Police and Security Service

## Poetry Corner

### HOPE

When you're lost and alone and can see no way out  
Deep in a black hole and wracked with self doubt  
Try to remember there's always someone who cares  
They'll hold out their hand, help you through your despair

A mere speck at the bottom, you stare up at the peak  
And peace of mind is all you now seek  
Take baby steps, that peak will draw near  
In time a quiet calmness will replace all your fear

As each day goes by, the path becomes smooth  
With every deep breath, your thoughts will soon soothe  
Then when you reach the top and quietly look down  
You'll know you've beaten your demons and know you'll no longer drown

So when you're at rock bottom and can no longer cope  
There's a four letter word, that word is called HOPE  
So don't look back at the past, you're not going that way  
Live life in the moment and just live for today

Caoimhín Mac Giobúin  
'For Mom and Dad'

### Coming Home

Every day is hard to complete  
To keep the house tidy and neat  
Cook one's dinner and fix some things  
God how I wish I had my wings

I get up I get dressed  
I try not to stress  
I take it easy and leave the mess  
I'm very grateful for the little things  
God how I wish I had my wings

I'm plodding along living with hope  
To do the things to help me cope  
Oh god how I wish I had my wings.

Tiredness comes so does the night  
I wish I had more in me to fight this fight  
I hear a bell, I hear it ring  
Thank you god for giving me my wings

Gaye Martin  
Portlaoise





Is í ár dteanga féin í.  
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[gaeilge.ie](http://gaeilge.ie)





# A LITTLE BIT OF IRISH

Phrase:	Translations:	Pronunciation:
Sinséar	Gingerbread	Shin-share
Aingeal	Angel	Ang-gil
Stocaireacht	Stocking	Stock-e-doch
Gliondar	Jolly	Glun-dur
Scéal sásta	Glad tidings	Skee-al sauce-ta
Turcai	Turkey	Tur-kee
Séipéal	Church	Shape-ale
Fear Sneachta	Snowman	Far Shnock-ta

## Word Power

**O**ver the next few issues we'll be attempting to increase your word power. Have a look at the words below and afterwards see if you know their meaning.

Word	Pronunciation	Answers
1. Eggnog	Egg-nog	1. A drink made of eggs, milk or cream, sugar, and, usually, rum or wine.
2. Advent	Ad-vehnt	2. The fact of an event happening, an invention being made, or a person arriving.
3. Grandiloquent	Gran-dil-uh-kwuhnt	3. Speaking in a pompous manner.
4. Discombobule	Dis-cum-bob-u-late	4. To confuse someone or make someone feel uncomfortable
5. Tirade	Tahy-reyd	5. A prolonged outburst of bitter, outspoken denunciation.
6. Anecdotal	An-ik-doe-tahl	6. Not based on facts or careful study.
7. Spurious	Spurr-ee-uhs	7. Not genuine, authentic or true.
8. Mirthless	Murth-lyss	8. Not showing real enjoyment or happiness:
9. Emulate	Em-yuh-leyt	9. To try to equal or imitate.
10. Speciously	Speesh-us-lee	10. In a way that seems to be right or true, but is really wrong or false:
11. Nonplussed	Non-pluhst	11. Completely puzzled or perplexed by something unexpected.
12. Effusive	Eff-you-sif	12. Expressing welcome, approval, or pleasure in a way that shows very strong feeling:

How did YOU score?  
 10 or more – Perfection!  
 6-9 Brilliant.  
 3-5 Well done.  
 0-2 Must do better.



# The Podcast Review



**We source the best selection of podcasts each issue. This time we bring you, Murder They Wrote, Life Changing, Bill Gates & Rashida Jones Ask Big Questions and How I Built This.**

## **Murder They Wrote with Laura Whitmore and Iain Stirling (True Crime)**

Laura Whitmore and Iain Stirling dive into some of the world's most jaw-dropping crime stories. Expect murder, mayhem, blackmail and more from this true-crime-obsessed couple.



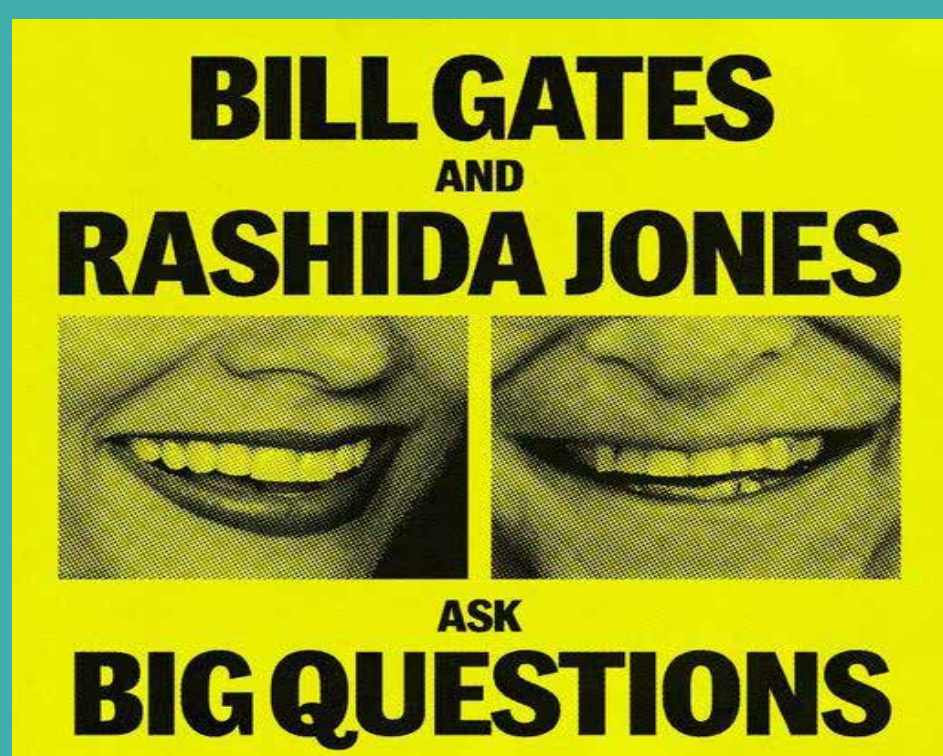
## **Life Changing (Mental Health)**

In August of 2006, Teresa Clark was driving five of her friends back home after a day at a music festival. Several hours into the journey she fell asleep at the wheel of their people carrier and crashed. Three passengers were killed, two others were injured as well as Teresa herself. She was convicted of causing death by dangerous driving and spent time in prison. The guilt and shame of carrying that loss of life almost destroyed her. But in the 17 years since it happened Teresa has rebuilt; she now works in the mental health and wellbeing sector trying to keep the vow she made to live her life for her friends, and do some good in their memory.



## **Bill Gates and Rashida Jones Ask Big Questions (Human Interest)**

In this unlikely pairing, Microsoft founder Bill Gates and actor Rashida Jones come together to address the big questions in life like: Is there an absolute truth? Is inequality inescapable? Is it too late to stop climate change? Listen in as the pair talk through these existential questions with one another and their expert guests. While it might sound like a heavy listen, Gates and Jones break down topics to make them informative and optimistic without being alarmist.



## **How I Built This (Business)**

Ever wondered how some of the world's biggest brands got their start? From Five Guys to Instagram, How I Built This gives listeners a chance to learn about the stories behind now-huge businesses. Speaking to a different creator in each episode, hear origin stories as told by the people who lived it themselves. Through childhood anecdotes, humble beginnings and often unprecedented growth, this podcast peels back some of the mystique surrounding business success, exploring the highs and lows of innovators along the way. Whether you're an entrepreneur looking for advice or simply want to hear the fascinating context behind some of the world's best loved brands, you're in for a treat. Pro tip - be sure to listen to the Ben & Jerry's episode and prepare to be inspired by their feel good story and uncompromising stance on humanitarianism. If you think you love Ben & Jerry's now, wait until you listen to this.



**Got a favourite podcast?**

**Got a favourite podcast or perhaps you are a pod-caster and would like us to review your show? Drop us a line at [info@irelandsbigissue.com](mailto:info@irelandsbigissue.com)**

### **How to:**

Search "Google podcasts" in the Play Store app (if you've an Android phone). iPhones comes with Apple podcasts app installed. Open the app and type in the name of the podcast you want or you can just browse categories whilst there.



**Discount Corner**

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Is í ár dteanga féin í.  
It's our language.

 Foras na Gaeilge

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