



ICPO NEWS

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Spring 2018



ICPO

It is estimated that at any one time there are in excess of 1,200 Irish people in prison overseas. Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO) has contact with Irish people in prisons in more than twenty five countries, the majority of whom are in the UK, with many more detained throughout the US, Australia, Europe, South and Central America and the Far East.

The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO) was established by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference in 1985 in response to serious concerns regarding the number of Irish men and women in UK prisons. These deeply held concerns related to their trials and subsequent imprisonment.

In recent years ICPO has been able to offer a more comprehensive service to prisoners and to expand our existing services to prisoners' families. ICPO works for all Irish prisoners wherever they are. It makes no distinction in terms of religious faith, the nature of the prison conviction, or of a prisoner's status.

The objectives of the ICPO are to:

- Identify and respond to the needs of Irish prisoners abroad and their families;
- Research and provide relevant information to prisoners on issues such as deportation, repatriation and transfer;
- Focus public attention on issues affecting Irish prisoners (ill-treatment, racist abuse, etc);
- Engage in practical work in aid of justice and human rights for Irish migrants, refugees and prisoners at an international level;
- Visit Irish prisoners abroad where possible both in the UK and elsewhere.

STAFF

Maynooth

Brian Hanley, Eilis Peoples, Claire O'Connell, Ciara Kirrane, Ian Hanna, Catherine Kenny and Bernie Martin

London

Fr. Gerry McFlynn, Liz Power, Breda Power and Declan Ganly

Volunteers

Maynooth: Sr. Agnes Hunt, Eileen Boyle, Joan O'Cléirigh, Sr. Anne Sheehy and Betty Wilson

London: Sr Moira Keane, Sr Agnes Miller, Sara Thompson, Kathleen Walsh and Sally Murphy, Gráinne Carley and Elizabeth Mackle

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How we may be contacted:

ICPO, Columba Centre

Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland
Tel: 01-505-3156 Fax: 01-629-2363
Email: icpo@iecon.ie Web: www.icpo.ie

ICPO, 50-52 Camden Square

London NW1 9XB, England
Tel: 0207-482-4148 Fax: 0207-482-4815
Email: prisoners@irishchaplaincy.org.uk

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Greetings from all in the ICPO.

In this edition of the newsletter we have included a couple of articles dealing with resettlement. The first one, written by Catherine Kenny, includes lots of practical advice for people to consider in the time leading up to their release and what to do when you get out. The second article is written by Eilis Peoples and it deals with resettlement from the viewpoint of families. We have also included an update on prisoner transfers (repatriation), following recent remarks by the Minister for Justice and Equality on this rather vexed issue.

The photo on the front of the newsletter was taken by one of our caseworkers during a recent visit to Donegal. As with other recent editions of the newsletter, we thought some of you might like to put it up on your wall as a nice picture of home.

One of the most popular parts of the newsletter is the stories you send us. We would like to encourage more of you to share your experiences and what things are like in "your part of the world", so we are holding another Day in the Life competition, with a €50 cash prize for the winner. The 2012 winning entry is included here to help get you started. Someone recently told me that hearing about other people going through similar situations makes you feel less alone, so I hope you will be encouraged to enter.

The newsletter also includes a lovely piece by Bernie Martin, as well as one from Breda Power of the London office. My thanks as always to our regular contributors - Caitriona Ní Bhaoill, author of Smidín Gaeilge and Ian Hanna for his popular sports supplement. Lastly, I wish to thank the ICPO staff and volunteers (in particular Eileen Boyle) for their hard work in putting this newsletter together.

Brian Hanley
ICPO Coordinator

Transfer of Prisoners (Repatriation) – Update

It is now over two years since the last Irish prisoner was transferred back to Ireland to serve the remainder of his/her sentence. Since the Supreme Court ruling in *O'Farrell, McDonald, Rafferty v The Governor of Portlaoise Prison* in July 2016, all inward applications have been 'on hold'.

In a recent answer to a Parliamentary Question raised by Mick Wallace TD, the Minister for Justice and Equality, Charles Flanagan TD confirmed that his Department has received detailed advice and an amendment to the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Acts will be required before inward transfers can recommence. Minister Flanagan added that work on drafting the amendment is underway and he intends to bring a proposal to Government as soon as possible. It is unclear, however, when this will actually happen and what the amendment will say. It should be borne in mind that the previous Minister for Justice promised that legislation would be introduced before the end of 2017.

That being said, the Minister was more specific than on previous occasions regarding the main issue arising from the Supreme Court judgment. He explained that this was the considerably different sentencing systems in the UK and Ireland and consideration had to be given to how to adapt and administer a sentence given abroad which contained elements not contained in Irish sentences.

In the UK, determinate custodial sentences handed down by the courts are divided into two parts; the first of these will be served in prison and the second will be served in the community on 'licence'. There is no similar provision in Irish sentencing and while the differences are clear, they are not new. The UK licence system existed prior to the Irish Transfer of Sentenced Persons Acts 1995 and 1997 .

While most applicants for repatriation are in the UK, there are others in different parts of the world (Spain, France and Australia) and the Minister indicated that such applications are being examined as these sentences may not need to be adapted. The ICPO had previously raised this with the Department of Justice and we welcome the Minister's assurance that these cases are now being examined. Given the small number of cases involved, it is to be hoped that they can be processed to completion without further delay.

When the ICPO met senior Department of Justice officials in October 2017, they indicated that changes to the current legislation had to be considered in the context of the transposing of the European Framework Decision 2008/909 (which governs the transfer of prisoners in EU States). This no longer appears to be the case and although the 'Heads' of a bill to transpose the Framework Decision were already approved in 2013, the Minister does not appear to have any immediate plans to proceed with the transposition of this instrument. It is important to note that the Framework Decision provides for speedy transfers which is significant given that prior to the Supreme Court judgment, most applications were taking over 2 years to process .

At the end of 2017, of the prisoners still awaiting transfer, 17 had applied before the end of 2015, two of whom applied during 2010/11. A further 10 applied during 2016 and 9 in 2017. Five prisoners were released in 2017 and 2 withdrew their application. The ICPO knows of others who would apply to transfer their sentence back to Ireland but for the uncertainty regarding when their application would be processed. In addition, we understand many UK prisons are not processing requests for transfer for Irish prisoners given that they do not know when a decision will be made on the Irish side. Most of the families ICPO work with cannot afford to visit their loved one in prison often or in some cases at all. The delay in resolving this issue is causing considerable hardship for both prisoners and their families. Many families have spoken to us about their frustration and despair as yet another year has gone by with no resolution.

The ICPO is heartened that after almost two years, this matter is now being treated with more urgency. Since the Supreme Court judgment, prisoners and their families have been in contact with their local politicians sharing their own personal accounts of how this impasse has affected them. It is important to continue this contact to ensure the necessary amendments are made to permit inward transfers to take place without delay.

Catherine Kenny
Caseworker, Information and Policy Officer

Preparing for Release

The time leading up to release can be challenging for many prisoners. While you may well be looking forward to it, you may also have concerns about returning home and resuming family life, especially if you have been in prison for a long time. Thankfully, there is support and help available.

The ICPO together with our colleagues at Crosscare Migrant Project has put together an information leaflet to assist prisoners returning to Ireland entitled *A Step-by-Step Guide to Returning to Ireland if you are being Deported or Released from Prison Abroad*. This is available on our website (www.icpo.ie) and from the ICPO office. Some of the information below is taken from this Guide. We are also working on a comprehensive Resettlement Guide covering a range of issues including access to medical care, social welfare, work and training. This will be available from ICPO in the Autumn.

Pre-Release Preparation

There are many things you can do while still in prison to prepare for your release and it is advisable to start preparation well in advance of your release date. In the months coming up to your release, your ICPO caseworker will send you a Resettlement Assessment Form. Please complete this and return it to us as it will enable us to assess your post release needs better and refer you to appropriate services. We can also refer you to residential programmes in Ireland that are available to help people who have recently been released from prison. Spaces are always limited but they have been a great support to clients in the past.

The following are some of the practical things you can do before leaving prison:

Contact the Irish Embassy/Consulate, in particular if you are being deported. They can provide you with an emergency travel document for your journey back to Ireland if necessary. You should make a photocopy or ask the Embassy to provide you with a photocopy. The original may be taken from you when you arrive in Ireland and a photocopy will help to verify your identification.

Apply for a passport if your Irish passport has expired. We can help you with putting together documents you might need such as your

birth certificate. In some cases, it may not be possible to apply for or obtain a new passport while in prison, for example it may not be possible to obtain the photographs required to renew your passport while in prison.

Arrange to collect your personal property including any money you may have in your prison account

Ensure that you have clothes to wear on release. This is particularly the case if you must wear a prison uniform and are not allowed your own clothes in prison.

Obtain your medical records or any other official documentation that may be available concerning any health problems, drug or alcohol problems or treatment you may have had. You should also get at least a week's supply of your medication to cover you until you can make an appointment with a GP in Ireland.

Bring any documentation you may have in relation to your imprisonment and deportation (if relevant) with you. This documentation will be helpful if you return to Ireland and wish to access social welfare.

Release and Return to Ireland

Deportation:

In some countries foreign national prisoners are deported by the authorities upon the completion of their sentence. Whether or not you will be deported will depend on the country in which you are detained. Some countries will automatically deport an overseas prisoner if they have served a certain amount of time in prison or if they have any previous criminal convictions. If you were in prison in the UK, you will not be deported to Ireland. If you are not deported but wish to return home, you will need to cover your own travel expenses. The ICPO will not be able to assist with this.

Preparing for Release

Transfer to Ireland while on Licence

If you have been released on licence in the UK it may be possible to apply to have your licence transferred to Ireland. (Please see the ICPO Factsheet *Resettlement outside England, Wales and Northern Ireland while on licence*) This is decided on a case-by-case basis. It is important to note that there may be serious consequences for leaving the UK without permission while on licence. If you have been released on licence or similar in another country, it may be also be possible to transfer your licence to Ireland.

Arriving in Ireland

An ICPO caseworker can meet you when you arrive in Ireland if you wish. This will provide an opportunity for you to sit down with the caseworker and to discuss what will happen over the next few days. In exceptional circumstances we can arrange accommodation for a few nights after you return to Ireland. We may also be able to provide you with a small post-release grant to help you buy some basic necessities after you arrive in Ireland.

Homelessness and Applying for Benefits

Social Welfare

You can apply for a social welfare payment on your return to Ireland at your local social welfare office. You will need a PPS number. If you do not know your PPS number, contact Client Identity Services on 1890 927 999. To qualify for social welfare, you will need to satisfy a means test and the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC). The HRC is a test to see if you have made Ireland your home. If you have lived in Ireland before and are returning for good or if you are being deported to Ireland, you should satisfy the HRC.

Emergency Accommodation

Accommodation in Ireland is both scarce and expensive and if possible you should ask family or friends if you can stay with them for a short

while at least after returning home. If you will be homeless on your return to Ireland, you will need to apply for emergency accommodation and social housing with the Local Authority (i.e. the council) in the area you last lived. For Dublin, contact the Central Placement Service on 1800 707 707 or go to Parkgate Hall, 6-9 Conyngham Road, Dublin 8. For outside Dublin contact the relevant local Authority. ICPO can also refer you to Crosscare for further advice and assistance.

Healthcare

If you return to Ireland to live you will be entitled to access the public health care system. Depending on your income you may also be entitled to a Medical Card which would mean you would generally not be charged for any public health services including GP visits and most prescriptions.

Post Release Support

We invite all former clients to visit our office in Maynooth, Co Kildare after they have been back in Ireland for a few weeks/months. This gives former clients the opportunity to meet our staff and to discuss any issues or problems. We can also speak to former clients on the phone during the first few weeks to provide some additional support and reassurance. We also provide support and information to families of prisoners returning to Ireland. You can call us at: 00353 1 5053156 or email icpo@iecon.ie

Please contact Crosscare Migrant Project if you would like advice about social welfare, healthcare or emergency accommodation. You can call them at 00353 1 8732844 or email migrantproject@crosscare.ie

Catherine Kenny
Caseworker, Information and Policy Officer

Seedlings

Recently I spent a week with my sister and her family in Scotland. The weather was miserable, cold and snowing for the earlier part of the week, unusually cold there for the time of year even for Scotland.

It is a very Irish thing to discuss the weather. Just this morning I was in a local shop and at the checkout the woman started talking about the grey day and how miserable the days have been. She told me that good weather was on the way, "her nephews wife's sister works in the weather office and said there's going to be a heat wave next week" she assured me that her information was correct. Most of us can put on a rain jacket or another layer of clothes and just get on with our lives no matter how bad the weather is. We might grumble and complain but the bad weather is little more than an inconvenience to us. Not so for people like farmers or crop growers or garden workers who really depend on good weather to make a living. There have been many stories over the last week about farmers running out of fodder for their cattle and crop planting being delayed because the ground is so wet. Daffodils bravely pushed their green foliage through the cold winter earth took one look around at the snow and cold and went back down into the soil. They finally emerged a few weeks later and the flowers now, in April, are standing tall and yellow and proud with no apology at all from them for being late.

My sister and brother-in-law in Glasgow have a garden centre which opens through the months of May, June, July and August. These are the main gardening months of the year when people buy their plants and spend a lot of time outdoors planting flower borders and trimming hedges and trying to get their garden ship shape. The work in the garden centre starts earlier in the year or even late the previous year. Seed has to be purchased and potting compost and germinating trays and 6 and 8 cell black trays have to be ordered. A planting plan must be put in place and a list drawn up of all the plants which will be sold in the following year and what amounts of each, for example they would need 159 trays of one variety

of Pansy to be sure they would have enough of each type but still not so many that they would be left with them.

This is a well-planned campaign and has been worked out through years of experience and trial and error.

In February the germinating process starts when a thin layer of compost is put into germinating trays and seed is



A sample of my handiwork

scattered thinly on top and these then lightly sprinkled with more compost. The trays are put into plastic bags and put into a germinating room where a strip light provides heat to encourage the seed to sprout and send up two tiny green leaves to the top of the compost. When the root system is developed enough the seeds are ready to be transplanted or pricked out. The seedlings are planted into a 6 or 8 cell tray filled with compost. This is a tedious job as there could be up to 150 seedlings in each germinating tray and each seedling is picked up by a tiny leaf and placed in a hole in the waiting compost then gently you settle compost about them with a dibber. Then they are labelled and put aside in the greenhouse, watered and left for the little roots to settle into the soil and send up more shoots and leaves. There are thousands of seedlings to be transplanted and hundreds of man hours are spent on the job.

On Saturday evening I offered to help out and my offer was accepted. I was stationed at a high bench with a pile of compost and a pile of 6 cell trays and shown what to do. The leaves on the seedlings were 4 or 5mm in diameter sometimes less and initially it was fiddly and required a bit of concentration but I quickly got used to it and got

into a rhythm with it. There was no traffic noise, the birds were singing their little hearts out and I was happy as Larry. I thought of all the mindfulness exercises that I had done, breathing, meditations and visualisations to name a very few but I don't think I had ever done anything that was so satisfying and relaxing. I worked away late into the evening and got up early the next morning to carry on with my work. I pricked out courgettes, cucumbers on that first day and when I went into the greenhouse the following morning I could have sworn that the courgette seedlings had grown overnight, they certainly seemed bigger than the previous day. I also pricked out several different coloured begonias and 4 different varieties of tomato. I often go to the garden centre and buy plants to put in my garden; I take it for granted that they will grow strong and wonderful with a minimum of care on my part. I am not aware of the amount of preparation and work that went in to producing those plants and will never take it for granted again.

There is a story of a woman who lived in the US. Her daughter kept begging her to come and see the daffodils but she said she had them in her own garden and was happy enough looking out her window at them. After many phone calls and her daughter's pleading she decided to make the two-hour drive to her daughter's house and go and see the daffodils. Her daughter put the two children in the car and the woman sat in the passenger seat. Her daughter was so excited and the woman could not understand what it was all about. After about twenty minutes they came to a sign that said "Daffodil Garden" with an arrow pointing to a pathway nearby. They parked the car and took the two children by their hands and proceeded to walk down the path. When the woman turned the corner she froze to the spot, looked up and gasped. Before her lay the most glorious sight.

It looked as though someone had taken a great vat of gold and poured it over the mountain peak and its surrounding slopes. The flowers were planted in majestic, swirling patterns, great ribbons and swaths of deep orange, creamy white, lemon yellow, salmon pink, and saffron and butter yellow. Each different-

coloured variety was planted in large groups so that it swirled and flowed like its own river with its own unique hue. There were five acres of flowers.

The woman asked her daughter who did it and the daughter replied that the woman who lived in the house on the property right in the middle of the flowers had planted all the daffodils. They walked towards the house and when they came near they saw a poster on the Patio "Answers to the Questions You Are Asking", was the headline. The first answer was a simple one. "50,000 bulbs," it read. The second answer was, "One at a time, by one woman. Two hands, two feet, and one brain." The third answer was, "Began in 1958." This garden is in Running Springs, California

For the woman, that moment was a life-changing experience. She thought of this woman whom she had never met, who, more than forty years before, had begun, one bulb at a time, to bring her vision of beauty and joy to an obscure mountaintop. Planting one bulb at a time, year after year, this unknown woman had forever changed the world in which she lived. One day at a time, she had created something of extraordinary magnificence, beauty, and inspiration. The principle her daffodil garden taught is one of the greatest principles of celebration. That is, learning to move toward our goals and desires one step at a time--often just one baby-step at time--and learning to love the doing, learning to use the accumulation of time. When we multiply tiny pieces of time with small increments of daily effort, we too will find we can accomplish magnificent things. We can change the world.

It's pointless to think of lost hours and worry about things not achieved and all the things we hadn't the time to do. Regret is natural, everyone feels it at some stage but you must move past it positively and build on it to a better future. Like the woman with the daffodils or myself with the tiny seedlings, with care and attention one step at a time we can achieve our goals.

**Bernie Martin
Maynooth**

Update from London ICPO Office

Breda Power, ICPO London

Keeping Well in Prison

More and more often prisons are on 'lockdown'. When a regime is working correctly, lockdown is used for disturbances. For example, if a fight breaks out and someone gets injured or it is a staff training day, etc. However, prisoners are also being subjected to regular lockdowns due to staff shortages and limited resources throughout the prison estate.

Prisoners do not know or are not told when they will be unlocked to go to work, attend healthcare appointments, social visits, Church or the library. This can cause increasing anxiety. Regular lockdowns, lack of movement and controlled opening so a prisoner can be fed, can all lead to an unhealthy and tense environment which can, in turn, cause more lockdown as prisons become more unsafe. If you are in a prison where there are regular lockdowns, don't despair as there are things you can do to help your situation.

Things to do: physical exercise and mental stimulation can ease anxiety and help you to stay as healthy as possible in this environment. Stock up on books, newsletters, magazines and educational materials to occupy your mind. If you have trouble reading, there are adult colouring books for mindfulness and relaxation, picture books and puzzles, which make great alternatives.

In-cell exercise regimes can be challenging, especially if you share a small cell. Mindfulness exercises such as breathing, prayer, meditation, stretching and many varieties of yoga can help take you to another place mentally and keep you physically and mentally stronger.

Doing something positive about your situation can help you through your sentence without jeopardising early release or accumulating IEP's. The 23 hour lockdown may be the most challenging thing you've ever had to deal with but if you focus positively on getting through it, it could be one of your biggest achievements and set you up for life on the outside.

Finally, if you've tried all of the above and you're still not coping, put an application in to see a Chaplain and the Healthcare Department. Whether or not you are into religion, chaplains are there to listen and offer help and support. **Prison Chaplaincy** is a wonderful resource and can make such a difference to prisoners' lives. Make use of it. Remember it's good to stay in touch with family and friends and keep the lines of communication open with those supporting you on the outside too.

Communication

Keep in touch with our offices in London and/or Maynooth and let us know if you are moved to another establishment. You can write to us and return our emails and if you are in a prison with in-cell phones, give us a call. Doing so will help you to keep in touch with us and access our services and it will also benefit us greatly in terms of accurate record-keeping.

Try to make your time in custody as easy and meaningful as you can.

Sr. Mary Feane RSM remembered.

1948 - 2018

Mary was born on the 9th May 1948 in Bruree Co Limerick. She was brought up in a Christian home where God was the bedrock of her life. In her early years she attended a school where she was taught by the Sisters of Mercy, became so impressed by their kindness, prayerfulness and simple lifestyle, that she felt called to the Religious Life.

Mary joined the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy on the 31st August 1966. Having completed her novitiate training in 1971 she attended Digby Stuart Training College qualifying as a teacher; a ministry which she enjoyed for many years.



From 1988 to 1995 Mary worked at Amani Counselling Centre in Nairobi, Kenya. When she came back to England she returned to her teaching profession. Later she became school chaplain at St George's Secondary School, Maida Vale, London, where her good friend and head teacher, Philip Lawrence, was stabbed to death in December 1995.

In 1999 Mary applied for a Roman Catholic Prison Chaplaincy position. In the course of the interview Mary got into a heated argument with a member of the selection panel. A suggestion was made that she might not be able to cope with meeting "evil" people behind bars. Mary was 4 foot 12 inches with a radiant smile. Now the smile vanished and in a raised tone she told the panel that there was no such thing as "an evil person, maybe less good but not evil. We are all children of God". What a surprise to her that she got the post and was appointed to HMP Wymott in Lancashire, where she served for 15 exceedingly happy years.

Mary went way beyond the call of duty to encourage and support prisoners and staff. She was a loyal friend to all she encountered, often attending court in an effort to be present and befriend. As Head of the Care Team she was in a unique position to support staff. Mary spent many hours in the Visitors' Centre with the families, consoling and reassuring them. She loved children and grieved with them as they left the centre without their dads. Brought up as she was in the west of Ireland Mary knew what freedom of spirit meant and her compassionate heart went out to the members of the Irish Travelling Community who were incarcerated and they in turn looked out for her! Mary saw potential in every human being; at the same time struggling with a system that could not work with them as it might.

In 2014 while she was an employee at Wymott Mary's working life came to an abrupt end due to a stroke. She returned to her Congregation to be nursed. She appreciated the support and care that she received and died four years later.

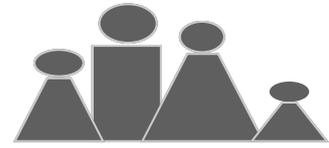
At a beautiful Memorial Service held at Wymott Prison, Governor Nicki Smith, in her tribute to Mary, said "Sister Mary was the heart and soul of Wymott. Equally respected by staff and prisoners, a colleague to many but a friend to many more".

MAY SHE REST IN PEACE

**Sr Moira Keane
ICPO London Volunteer**



FAMILY ISSUES



This section is for families who have a loved one in prison.

Do you have useful information that may be helpful to other families?

Have you a question you would like to see answered on this page in the future?

If so, please contact Eilis Peoples, Caseworker and Family Support Officer, ICPO Maynooth.

Preparing for Release

In our last family article we spoke about trial and sentencing. In this article I will talk about preparing for the release of a loved one. It is common for families and prisoners to experience a range of emotions such as anxiety, excitement and worry prior to release.

Common concerns reported by families to ICPO.

Why is the person in prison stressed just before release?

Will my loved one have changed since being in prison?

Will they adjust to being out of prison? Will they have become institutionalised?

How will they adjust to being back in Ireland?

How will we cope with having them back at home?

How will they cope with returning to their children?

When will they get released/returned to Ireland?

Will they re-offend and return to prison?

What are the answers to these questions?

Answers to these questions can vary for each prisoner. It can depend on how long they have been in prison and their experience in prison. Experiences can differ greatly depending on the country and individuals can respond differently to similar experiences. I have included below a number of things that families could expect coming up to and after release.

Prisoners experiencing increased anxiety. Although they are usually very happy to get released and return home it can be a very anxious time for them due to uncertainty regarding their release.

Someone in prison may have experienced trauma or witnessed traumatic events. This can have a number of effects on them such as anxiety, difficulty sleeping, depression or hyper-vigilance. Although as families this is difficult to think about, people can recover from trauma with the support of their families, friends and professionals if appropriate.

Some people may act in a certain way to cope with prison for example communicating in a different, perhaps more aggressive manner, using different language or not expressing emotions. This can take some time to change upon release.

An extended period of adjustment.

Some people may adjust within a week, others may take a lot longer. This adjustment could include difficulty sleeping, communicating, restlessness, anxiety and confusion.

People in prison may have gotten used to routines and may struggle with not having a structured routine. Walking around in the community could be a challenge as the person has adapted to having restricted movement and being constantly aware of their surroundings and people around them. A common challenge is that people adapt to being locked in a cell at night and sometimes do not feel safe when they are not locked in.

Prisoners may have been happy in the country they were incarcerated in prior to arrest. They may have planned a future there and may take some time to adjust to a new plan for their future in Ireland.

As a family it can take some time to adjust to a loved one being home. They may not have lived with you as an adult so it is normal for it to be a challenge to adjust even though you are very happy to have your loved one at home. There can be a tendency to feel guilty about this but it is perfectly natural for it to be a challenge.

Children will adjust to having a parent in prison. It can take some time to rebuild relationships and for children to adapt to having their parent return home. However children are usually very adaptable and resilient.

People can be held for varying times in immigration detention after release from prison. This varies greatly from country to country. This uncertainty can be a challenge for prisoners and families alike. If you are unsure of your family member's situation regarding this please contact ICPO.

It is up to the individual person if they reoffend. As a family you can provide all the support you can but you cannot decide whether your family member will reoffend or not.

What can I do to help?

Look after yourself. This is so important throughout the entire process of your loved one being incarcerated and is no different in the pre and post release phase. Looking after yourself will help you give the best support to your loved one. This may include a whole range of things such as doing things you love - reading, exercising, spending time with your family, yoga, meditation, as well as getting support from people such as ICPO and counselling services.

Support your family member. At times it can feel like you are helpless and unable to do anything to help your family member. Do not underestimate the power of being on the end of the phone, writing letters or visiting. Having a strong connection with family members can mean better outcomes for the person imprisoned and less likelihood of reoffending.

Hold onto hope for your loved one. At times you may not feel very hopeful about their release. However hope is a powerful thing and can help get your family member through their current situation and build a future.

It may be helpful to make plans for release before the person is released. Some families can find it helpful to set some boundaries such as how long the person can stay with them before seeking employment or not allowing their family member to stay with them if they resume drug use.

Let your family member know there is assistance available in prison in some countries and post release in Ireland such as counselling, peer support, chaplaincy and resettlement support.

Try to maintain strong relationships with children while in prison. This can include writing letters, sending pictures, photos and engaging in Storybook Dads/Mums.

If you have any questions or would like support around the release of your loved one, please do not hesitate to contact ICPO on 01 5053156. We will be talking more about the pre and post release process at our family day on 6th June in Dublin. If you are on our family mailing list you will receive an invitation in the post. We would love to see you there.



Sports Shorts

with Ian Hanna

Greetings readers and we can start off with some good news on the Irish sporting scene. So much to chat about but so little space, so let's get cracking.

RUGBY



Where else to begin but to hail their fantastic achievements of the Irish rugby team in not only winning the championship but securing the Grand Slam as well. Winning the hard way as they had to do away in both Paris and Twickenham. Who will ever forget that 41 phases of controlled play in injury time with the clock in the red as they worked their way towards the French posts to allow Johnny Sexton kick an incredible drop goal all from 45 yards. Italy were then swatted aside with ease followed by the heart stopping moments towards the end of the game against Wales where only an intercept try finally slew the Welsh dragon. Scotland should have caused up some grief but didn't and they were well beaten. Then on St Patrick's Day in London to face the Old Enemy, the defending champions stinging from two dismal losses away to Scotland and France but ready to deny us the glittering prize of only Ireland's third Grand Slam. Last year in Dublin we defeated them in the last game to deny them their Grand Slam so as someone said "revenge is a dish best served cold". We needn't have worried as the team blew England away and comfortably held off any semblance of a revival. The team coached by Joe Schmidt and his 18,yes 18, backroom team did a fantastic job and we can face the World Cup next year with confidence.

In the recent European Cup semi-finals Leinster and Munster had contrasting fortunes with the Blues

winning in most impressive fashion while Munster were blown away by French club Racing 92. It will be an intriguing final as both teams are similar in style, loaded with internationals and with a hunger and desire to win. The final is on 12 May in San Sebastian just across the French border in Spain and you can be sure the Leinster fans will far outnumber their Parisian counterparts. I am going for a Leinster win to crown a fantastic year for Irish rugby.

SOCCER

The disappointment of the World Cup playoff defeat to Denmark is still an open wound but Martin O'Neill and his management team have to introduce fresh players and ideas if we want to qualify for the next European Finals. These preparations started off with a 1-0 away loss to Turkey in a friendly and while the team played well in parts, scoring goals remain a major problem for them. Only a few opportunities were created and it will be difficult to find a solution. Meanwhile if we had qualified for the World Cup in Russia this summer our group would have consisted of: Australia, Peru, France and of course Denmark. It all kicks off on June 14 in Moscow when Russia play Saudi Arabia. One thing is for sure it won't be the same without the boys in green!

GAA

A different format in both codes is being introduced but many supporters say it is like moving the deckchairs on the Titanic; the outcome won't change as the big counties will always rise to the top. The new format is being introduced into both codes on an experimental basis for three years, 2018-2020. In football the All-Ireland quarter-finals have disappeared, replaced by two four-team round robin groups known colloquially as the Super 8 with the top two in each group advancing to the semi-final. Group 1 will be made up of the Munster and Connacht champions, plus the losing Ulster and Leinster finalists or the teams that beat them in round four of the qualifiers.



Summer 2018

Group 2 will contain the Leinster and Ulster champions plus the Munster and Connacht runners-up or the teams that beats them in round four of the qualifiers. The All-Ireland semi-finals and finals will be in August and not as heretofore in September.

In hurling the Leinster and Munster championships will be run off in two five-team round robin groups with every team guaranteed two home games. The top two teams in each provincial group contest the provincial final, with the provincial winners advancing to the All-Ireland semi-finals and the beaten provincial finalists advancing to the two quarter-finals. This means that for the first time in many years playing in the Leinster championship, Galway will have a home game.

There are mixed views on the new format and time will tell. Plenty more games but will the paying public miss the cut and thrust of early winner take all games? The formats diminish the chances of a breakthrough by a less strong county so I predict Dublin again to win the football and Kilkenny to win yet another hurling All-Ireland.

ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP (UFC)

Conor McGregor's recent arrest in New York made worldwide news. He is facing three charges of assault and causing criminal damage in an incident in which two UFC fighters were injured. He is due to appear in court in June. A few weeks ago he was stripped of his world featherweight UFC title. His behaviour has left large numbers of people throughout the world as well as his fans wondering if he is pushing the self-destruct button. Conor is much admired and is a role model for many impressionable young folk as well as adults. He has confirmed that regardless of what life throws at you, by hard work, application and remaining focused, you can succeed. I think we all hope that someone close to him will bring him back to reality and get him doing what he does best, dominating the octagon.

BOXING

Those Irish boxers who turned professional since the last Olympics are continuing to do well but it is to the future we must look. The omens are not good because at the recent Commonwealth Games held in Australia, Northern Ireland boxers failed to win a single gold medal. Many of these boxers fight or aspire to fight for Ireland in the forthcoming European, World, and Olympic competitions so there remains lots of work to be done.

DARTS

I realise that this is a popular sport amongst our readership and first I must record the passing away of a great World Champion, Eric Bristow, the Crafty Cockney, who died aged 60 following a heart attack. He suffered the attack while playing in a darts tournament. He was a truly stylish flamboyant champion who brought the world of darts into millions of living rooms winning 24 major titles including five world championships. In the 2017 World Championship another hero of the game Phil Taylor who is a sixteen time world champion was beaten in the final of his last world championship by Rob Cross, who only turned professional at the start of the year. Talk about a fairy tale year for Rob.

And before I leave many of you know I am a dedicated Wolverhampton Wanderers fan, so after winning the Championship, I look forward to seeing Wolves take on the big clubs in the Premiership next season and winning.



Finally regardless whether or not you are only started or a regular keep up your training regimes and if any of you want some training programmes let me know and I will try and get some sent out to you.

ICPO Writing Competition

ICPO are once again holding the "A Day in My Life" competition. The piece below was the winning entry in 2012 by Peter Groome. I encourage you to try your hand at writing something and entering, you might even win.

A Day in My Life

By Peter Groome (Jazzier), USA

When I read there was a competition going on for ICPO Clients, to write something about 'A Day in My Life', it made me think about something, 'who would want to read such a miserable article?' However, it would be wrong of me not to contribute something about my situation because of my Irish brothers and sisters who are incarcerated around the world have it worse than me and need to know that they are not alone and that I pray for all of 'us' and our loved ones.

My day starts at 6:30am to the sound of whistle that the Correction Officer (Screw) blows, to make sure everyone is standing by their cell door for major count. There are those who are too tired to blow the whistle because they're just waking up from their hard night's work so they just yell at the top of their voice 'count-time' and they do it as loud as they can to let us know who's house we're in. At around 7:20am another whistle to let us know it's chow time. Depending on what they have, I might go down. If they're serving grits, powdered eggs or something they call cream of wheat, I just stay in the cell and make a cup of tea and have something I bought in the canteen.

At 8:30, we have a general movement which means the men sign out with the screw to their destination, ie School (when they have it), work call for those who have a job, (1,500 inmates, 325 jobs). 8:30am is also the time we bring out our mail to the mail officer, where they check the inmates I.D. to make sure that the right person is on the return address.

At 9:15am another whistle to let us know that the medication line is open which I attend every morning with the exception of Tuesdays and Thursdays when I go twice a day for weekly injections and arthritis.

Programs are few and far between in the prison system in the state of Massachusetts and if one is a lifer, like myself, the wait can be seven (7) years to get in as they only allow one us in every new course that begins so if a course starts every (12) months with one lifer in each class, one might kick the bucket before getting a spot.

So, what do I do? I direct the Catholic choir here at MCI, Norfolk and attend prayer groups. The choir practice is on Sunday nights at 6:00pm—8:30pm (after they blow another whistle). We have ten guys in the choir, including two instruments until September when we'll add another two instruments. On Monday night we celebrate Holy Mass where an average of one hundred and twenty men gather. Saturday afternoons I have weekly rosary group with about twenty seven of the other men, it's a nice group where we get to pray together and pray for all those who are in the same situation around the globe. Tuesday afternoon, about eight (8) of us meet in the Catholic Chaplain Office for a group called Themes & Scriptures, we read a book together over a period of months and discuss it in the group. We've had no chaplain here (Catholic) for over a year now but it has made us closer in the community as we go the extra mile to keep things up to scratch. On Wednesday afternoon I go to the music program to play my guitar and sing Irish ballads. Thursday afternoon I sing in a blues band for a couple of hours (if they open the band room). Winter and Fall, I attend Boston University's Metropolitan College Program which has 'Nothing' to do with the prison, except they let the professors teach in the prison. This program is funded by a scholarship that was set up forty years ago by some alumni. The degree offered in a Bachelors Degree in Liberal Studies. I need eight more courses to graduate.

Thoughts on how I found myself in prison? I struggle with these thoughts because they're many. I wish I'd got help with my problems when I was a kid. I feel like I fell through the cracks in the school system and more could have been done to keep me in school. It seems that nobody cared what age a kid fell out of school. School wasn't a good time for me. I wish I had listened to those who cared about me instead of trying to drink my problems away which in the end became my biggest down-fall.

Conditions in the Prison? The prison was built for 800 inmates but the count is 1,500 at the minute, water restrictions are the norm. It seems like every week something else is getting taken away, strip searches are the norm when an inmate goes on a visit, this is very degrading especially when none of the contraband is coming through the visits, the screws do the muling but our visitors pay the price. Suicides in this state are the highest in the United States at 3-4 times the national average in one of the smallest prison populations (11,600). Many of the screws forget that the inmates were sentenced by judge and jury so they like to resentence and punish people all over again, mostly the weak among the inmates, not all are bad but there are many bad eggs. Of course, there are many things for us to do and plenty of yard time during this time of year. Men work out in the gym, go to the library, play guitars, keyboards and attend church services but tension and stress is high most of the time and there is no shortage of informers, sadly, we are our own worst enemy, 'The Good, The Bad and The Ugly'.

Hopes, Dreams and Coping:

Well, like most prisoners, my hopes and dreams are to be home someday. I dream about places that I really would like to spend time at. I think about Glendalough and Antrim, to name but a few. I think of how many people I would like to help before they get into trouble, ie. The importance of staying in school the terrible affects of depression when left untreated and how trying to drink away whatever the problems are in ones life is not the answer. I think about how I would like to visit as many youth clubs, schools, homeless shelters, mental health facilities and so on, where maybe something I say will help some person who might be in the place I was all those years ago. Most of all, I think of how nice it would be to bring some peace to my mother's life by coming home and treating her like a Queen. The dream of meeting my nieces and nephews, who I have never met, because I was in prison when they were born with the exception of two nephews and a niece who were just babies at that time. And, of course, there are my own brothers and sisters who I would like to see and try make up for all the pain I've brought into their lives. I guess all those things are how I cope, the dreams and hopes but then one has to keep it real and face the fact that the chances are slim to none of these things happening. The coping comes in faith and knowing that when everything is said and done Christ will never leave me alone. Believing in something one cannot see is hard for many of us but I say if we look all around us and see anything that is good, well that is where Christ is. It's very hard for men like myself to talk to people on the outside about what it means to be a Catholic because sadly, many people think, 'O here is another one who found religion in prison', I just found there was more than going to Mass on Sunday and understand now that the readings I was half hearing the priest and the readers proclaim, are more than just stories, they are the blueprint for what I should be doing, if I am really a believer in Christ. And yes, there are those who do find faith in prison after being away for a variety of reasons and some for the first time but like I said to some of the screws in here, 'Does it really matter, once they've found Christ, how they found him? We've all got our stuff, unfortunately many in the joint only see others. So I guess this story has went on a little of course and I could keep writing about the sadness in my heart every day for my victim and all those others who are broken-hearted, all I have is my prayers for each of them and if God wills it, maybe I'll see the Island of Ireland one day, where I believe I can make a difference. As one of the great Saints said 'every Saint has a past and every Sinner has a future'.

Farewell my brothers and sisters behind the walls and fences throughout the world, I remember all of you and your loved ones and those who help us every day in prayer.

Peter Groome

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
Some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
Who violently sweep your house
Empty of all its furniture,
Still treat each guest honourably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
Meet them at the door laughing,
And invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
Because each has been sent
As a guide from beyond.

RUMI



ICPO Writing Competition "A Day in My Life"

We know from reading the letters you write to us here in ICPO that you really enjoy reading stories by your fellow Irish prisoners in many countries throughout the world. They help to give you a sense that you are not alone and that many others are going through similar experiences.

With that in mind we have decided to run another competition to encourage more people to share their experience. The title of the article is '**A Day in My Life**' and it should be between 600 and 800 words.

The competition is open to all ICPO clients. A prize of **€50** (or equivalent) will be awarded for the best entry which will be published in the autumn edition of ICPO News. Other entries may be published in future editions.

A good story might include some of the following:

- Some of your thoughts on how you found yourself to be in prison;
- A typical day in your life there;
- Conditions in the prison;
- Refer to the things you do to pass the time - hobbies, courses etc.;



Brush up on your Irish with Caitriona Ní Bhaoill

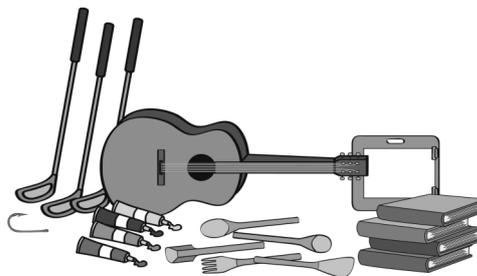
Smídín Gaeilge

Caitheamh Aimsire - Cahiv I'm-shira - Hobbies

I love to...

Is breá liom bheith ag...

Iss bra lum veh egg



Ag snámh

Egg snawv

Swimming

Ag léamh

Egg layv

Reading

Ag rince

Egg ring-ka

Dancing

Ag canadh

Egg conn-a

Singing

Ag imirt peile

Egg imurt pell a

Playing football

Ag imirt rugbaí

Egg imurt rugby

Playing rugby

Ag imirt gailf

Egg imurt golf

Playing golf

Ag imirt leadóga

Egg imurt ladoge- a

Playing tennis

Ag imirt fichille

Egg imurt fih-ila

Playing chess

Ag seinm ceoil

Egg senum Keogh-l

Playing music

Ag cócaireacht

Egg coke-ar-okt

Cooking

Ag rothaíocht

Egg ruh-ee-okt

Cycling

Ag péinteál

Egg paint-awl

Painting

Ag imirt cartaí

Egg imurt cawr-tee

Playing cards

What do you like to do?

Céard go maith leat déanamh?

Care-d gur wah lat day-nuv



I love to read

Is breá liom léamh

Iss bra lum layv

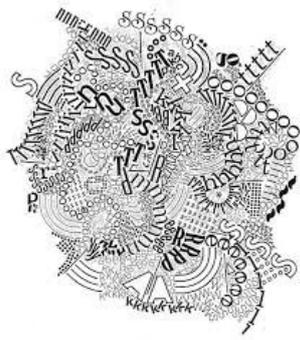


I think playing cards is boring.

Measam go bhfuil imirt cartaí leadránach

Mass-um gu will imurt cawr-tee ladrawnok

Poetry Corner



The Want

Fingers hurt, my throat is sore
Crowd still roaring out for more
Over worked and under paid
Off the bus then back base

Chorus In

See this is how it goes
Just show after show
Travelled all around the world
Meet a song in every word

Chorus Out

Without the singing I'd be gone
To a place I don't belong
Then the playing keeps me strong
See it gives me this want

Chorus In

See this is how it goes
Just show after show
Travelled all around the world
Meet a song in every word

Chorus Out

But it's all about to change
I've upgraded to the stage
It's the big lights now for me
Get more money, chase new dreams

Chorus In

See this is how it goes
Just show after show
Travelled all around
Meet a song in every word.

A Blood Warmed

For over a decade his blood ran cold
From hurt deep inside, a brother he loved.
Knowing he was wrong for what he had done
He just wanted to make right
With his mother's son.

Trying in vain to make things right
Sadly there was no reconciliation in sight
Full with anger, hatred and spite
Knowing he wouldn't win this fight.

Wandering in circles day and night
Trying in his mind to make things right.
Wanting at times just to forget
But this wasn't possible
As he still loved him yet.

Accepting now that only time
Could make this blood warm again
And that was just fine.
God had us walking in a straight line
Knowing twas just a matter of time.

Asking Therese 'The Little Flower',
To bring us together with her God given power
Then it happened on March 7th
God brought us together, guiding from heaven!

All these years, waiting to hear
If he was okay, had he found some cheer?
Now some new hope for this new year, hardly
can wait till next time I hear.

A wound so deep made blood so cold
At last new beginnings of hope unfold.
An e-mail, a letter who knows what's next.
We'll take it slow, like baby steps.

Peter Groome (Jazzier)

SF, NI



Your Letters



An Angel

Many years ago, a very important meeting took place in the highest point in heaven; which was generally reserved for the most special and trusted angels of the Lord our God.

One evening, the Almighty visited one of his female angels and he entrusted her with a very special task. Our Lord God carefully removed her wings promising to keep them safe until her return to him. He then sent her back to earth in order to aid and assist poor unfortunates, incarcerated around the globe; some of whom had no family or friends and for whom the loneliness was devastating.

In the autumn of 2006, our angel eagerly took up her position and she happily began working on the task given to her. She offered love and kindness and words of reassurance to numerous people. She offered aid to those who could see no light at the end of the tunnel; those that believed that only darkness existed. This little lady managed to melt the heart of many a tough man. She broke down walls and dismantled the high fences of those who'd put up barriers refusing to allow anyone in. Yes, our angel worked tirelessly and nothing was too much for her.

In the Holy Book it says, 'When I was in prison, you visited me.' Being an angel on earth to carry out Our Lord's task, she wasted no time in visiting numerous imprisoned people while making no judgement on anyone. The face of our angel was a thing of beauty.

Her eyes sparkled like stars on a winter's night and her radiant smile was one of love and comfort. Her voice WAS the voice of an angel: soft and gentle with an accent. When she spoke, people would listen. When she offered advice, people took it. When she comforted people with her kind, caring words, some shed a tear.

Our angel impeccably carried out the task entrusted to her by the Lord our God for ten long years; helping others less fortunate than most and that included not only those in prison. She never complained and always wore a smile. This did not go unnoticed by the Almighty. From high above, he proudly watched daily as his angel worked endlessly carrying out his work.

One day, our Lord was forced to take the glowing white wings of our angel from storage and dust them down. It was time for him to recall her for he had another very important task he wanted her to attend to. Sadly for those on earth, the Almighty took his angel back to heaven and placed the brilliant white wings on her back. There were many tears and much sadness for those she left behind.

In heaven, the Lord God smiled gently at the angel before him. This angel with the earth name of Kate Jackson, and he welcomed her back into his Kingdom.

Frank Kelly

Sincere Thanks

Dear Fr Gerry,

You came into my life at the Scrubs when I most needed it.

I've often thought that if you hadn't popped up into the prison kitchen and given me hope, I don't know if the person you see today would even be in existence.

Nuala Kelly took over nurturing me by mail. That was taken over by various people until Sister Agnes came along. You then came back into my life after release and I started to meet the lovely people through your good self at the Centre. I will somehow get to see and thank the ones in the country that I have the most affinity to.

God bless you all within ICPO as you are the most important part of my life.

Take care and God bless.

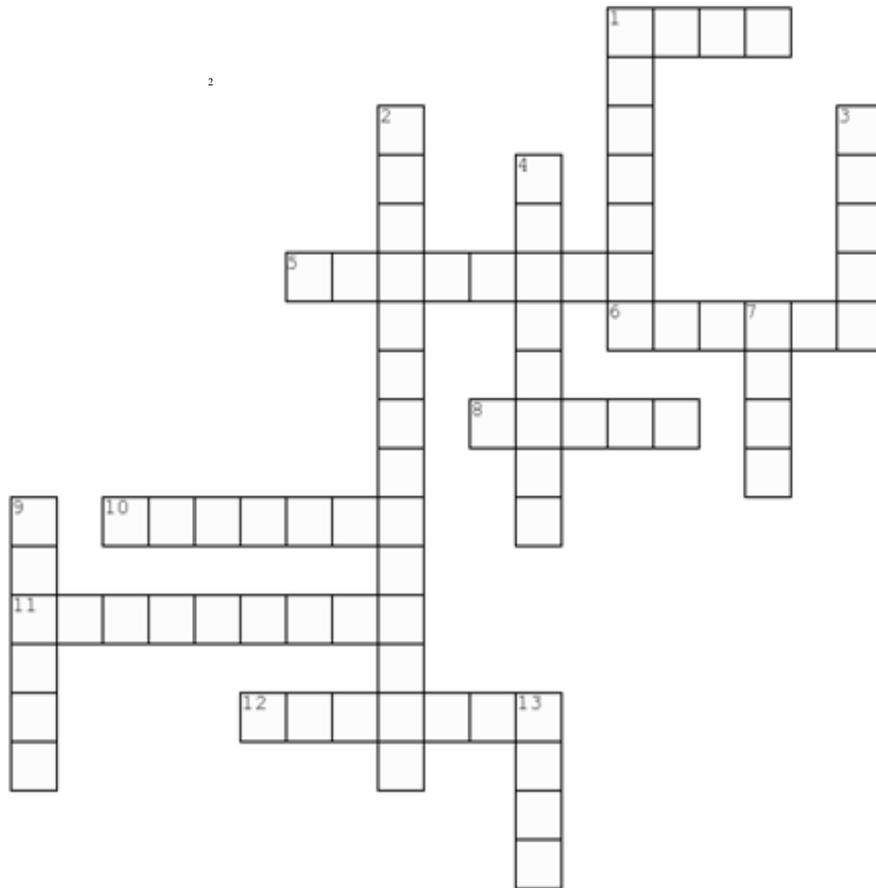
Michael Bennett

challenge yourself!

Irish Towns

All the answers to the clues in this cryptic crossword are towns in Ireland

Complete the Crossword below



Across

1. Bottle Stop
5. Murder a Toilet
6. Old Ambulance sound
8. No tea for Tennis
10. Relatives to be sold
11. Circular Log
12. Ring Quick

Down

1. Sea facing foxes home
2. Where Paddy Reilly went back to
3. Oh Mother
4. South Park Murder
7. Part of a leg
9. Vehicle close to the ground
13. In Shape

Motivational Quotes

"THE WAY TO GET STARTED IS TO QUIT TALKING AND BEGIN DOING." – WALT DISNEY

"DON'T LET YESTERDAY TAKE UP TOO MUCH OF TODAY." – WILL ROGERS

"IMAGINE YOUR LIFE IS PERFECT IN EVERY RESPECT; WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE?" – BRIAN TRACY

challenge yourself!

The Bigger the Better



	S E O T G K M E Y L E L O B E S E U		
Astronomical	M V B M T Y G O L V A G V A S T T S		
	I I M U U R E A N C A A U M O O A Y		
Broad	A S U F A Z T F I S P E X H H U W E		
	Q S J L I V L M A E T W H W N T W M		
Chunky	I A L S C R O E X T D R O Q I R W D	Heavy	Fat
	W M T F Z N B R N E B A O S G M F Z	Huge	Obese
Enormous	C U C C O T R E M E N D O U S M G A	Immense	Outsize
	O G H R H V L U F R E W O P S I Z G	Jumbo	Plump
Epic	F R T E V U K F B S H S D Z G G V E	Large	Powerful
	T S N E P S N R G V O O N A S H O M	Massive	Stout
Monstrous	A F E N J J O K U Q M U N E S T U L	Mega	Super
	G J K O O A D F Y O P T E U M Y E N	Mighty	Tall
Giant	V K T R D T N A I G I L P I V M D O	Vast	Weighty
	A T O M C I P E T C I E U I M L I H		
Gigantic	S D L O V X G B E K R I M M D W B E		
	J D N U W E I G H T Y B N J P V N I		
Tremendous	T N C S T D P E X A J E J I H X V A		

Word Puzzle Pictures

<p>1</p> <p>roforkad</p>	<p>2</p> <p>cover</p> <p>cop</p>	<p>3</p> <p>gra 12" ve</p>	<p>4</p> <p>arrest</p> <p>you're</p>
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Brain Teasers

1. What's this? HIJKLMNO
2. What can you break without touching it?
3. Every day, a cyclist crosses the border between Spain and France carrying a bag. No matter how much custom officials investigate him, they do not know what he is smuggling. Do you?
4. What does not live but can die?



challenge yourself!

Spot the Difference

Can you spot 10 differences between these two pictures?
Robot Lawnmower Runs Amok



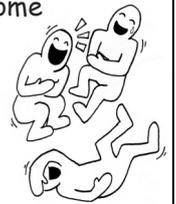
A Spot of Humour

A prisoner in jail receives a letter from his wife: "Dear husband, I have decided to plant some lettuce in the back garden. When is the best time to plant them?"

The prisoner, knowing that the prison guards read all mail, replies in a letter: "Dear wife, whatever you do, do not touch the back garden. That is where I hid all the money."

A week or so later, he receives another letter from his wife. "Dear husband, you wouldn't believe what happened. Some men came with shovels to the house and dug up the back garden."

The prisoner writes back: "Dear wife, now is the best time to plant the lettuce."



Sudoku

				8			4
	8	4		1	6		
			5			1	
1		3	8			9	
6		8				4	3
		2		9		5	1
		7			2		
			7	8		2	6
2			3				

Each Sudoku grid has a unique solution that can be reached logically without guessing. Enter digits from 1 to 9 into the blank spaces. Every row must contain one of each digit. So must every column, as must every 3x3 square.

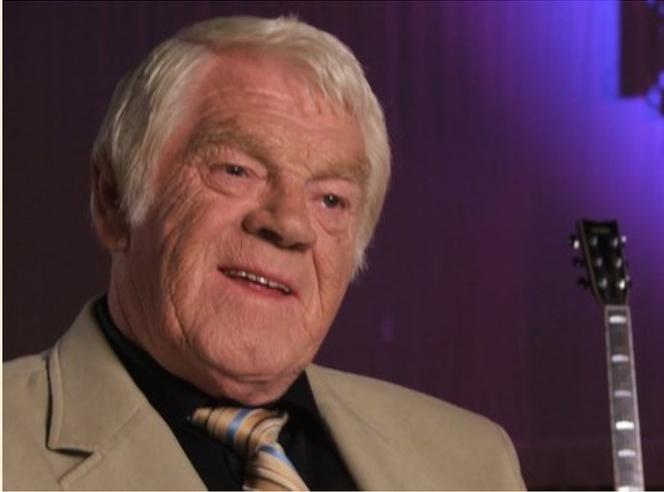
Answers

- Crossword**
Across - 1. Cork, 4. Ennis, 7. Killaloe, 8. Kinsale, 9. Omagh, 10. Athy, 11. Roundwood, 12. Belfast.
Down - 1. Carlow, 2. Kilkenny, 3. Ballyjamesduff, 5. Nenagh, 6. Clifden, 13. Trim.
- Word Puzzle Pictures**
 1. Fork in the road, 2. Undercover cop, 3. One foot in the grave, 4. You're under arrest.
- Brain Teasers**
 1. H2O (Water), 2. A Promise, 3. Bicycles, 4. A Battery.
- Spot the Difference**
 1. Plant pot leaf missing. 2. Wall picture design changes. 3. TV aerial missing. 4. Woman's black hair changes. 5. Dog has larger spot. 6. Robot mower loses line. 7. Far house window missing. 8. Light switch moves. 9. Light bulb missing. 10. Line on chair appears.



RECENT EVENTS IN IRELAND

Irish country singer Big Tom McBride died in April, aged 81



Tom McBride (18 September 1936 - 17 April 2018), known as Big Tom, was an Irish country, traditional, easy listening singer, guitarist, and saxophone player. With a career spanning over five decades, he started his career in 1966 as the frontman of the Irish showband Big Tom and The Mainliners their song *Gentle Mother*, gave the band their first sizeable chart hit. Other hit songs included *Four Country Roads*, *The Old Rustic Bridge*, *Back to Castleblaney*, *Old Log Cabin for Sale* and *Broken Marriage Vows*. His love of music and his passion and skill have enriched Ireland's music scene. Ar dheis Dé do raibh a anam.

The Daffodil Garden

Every year, high in the San Bernardino mountain range of Southern California, five acres of beautiful daffodils burst into bloom. Amazingly, this special spot, known as "The Daffodil Garden," was planted by one person, one bulb at a time, over a period of thirty-five years.

This mountain hillside, which was once a wilderness of poor rocky soil is now drenched with daffodils and is said to be the largest daffodil garden in the world. (See 'Seedlings' by Bernie Martin inside)



World Meeting of Families 2018



Earlier this month Pope Francis confirmed that he will be travelling to Ireland to take part in World Meeting of Families 2018 which is taking place in Dublin from 21 -26 August 2018.

His two day visit will include attendance at the WMOF2018 Festival of Families in Croke Park and celebration of the WMOF2018 Final Mass in the Phoenix Park on Sunday 26th August. Other details of his visit are yet to be confirmed.