



ICPO NEWS

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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 eight countries, the majority of whom are in the UK, with many more detained throughout the USA, Australia, Europe, South and Central America and Asia.

The 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, Orla Dick, Ian Hanna, Catherine Kenny, Bernie Martin and Leslie Alcock

London

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

VOLUNTEERS

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

London: Sr Moira Keane, Sara Thompson and Sally Murphy.

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How we may be contacted:

ICPO, Columba Centre

Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland W23 P6D3

Tel: 01-505-3156 Fax: 01-629-2363

Email: icpo@iecon.ie Web: www.icpo.ie

ICPO, PO Box 75693, London NW1W7ZT, England

Tel: 0207-482-4148 Fax: 0207-482-4815

Email: prisoners@irishchaplaincy.org.uk

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CONGREGATION OF THE
SISTERS OF MERCY



Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme
An Boinn Gníothaí Fachtóra agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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Cover photo of an Irish sunrise.

Greetings from all in the ICPO,

Little did I think a few months ago that I would be writing to you from my living room but so much has happened in the past few months arising from Covid-19. Sadly, more than 400,000 people have died since the pandemic started and everybody throughout the world has been challenged by it. The ICPO has continued to operate albeit in a different way since the shutdown in March. Prison visits have had to be deferred but we continue to respond by letter, phone call and email to hundreds of you. The staff and volunteers in both the London and Maynooth offices are acutely aware of the additional strain you are under at the moment and are here to support you however we can.

The newsletter contains a number of informative articles on Covid-19, repatriation, parole board reviews and new methods of staying in touch with loved ones. There is an entertaining sports feature and mindfulness and yoga exercises for you to try if you wish.

In this edition we announce the winners of the Listowel Writers' Week competitions. The standard of entry was exceptionally high and our warmest congratulations go to the successful entrants, HR and Denis McNamara, and to all who submitted their short stories and poems. Please keep them coming! The winning entry in the short story category was too long to include in this edition but will be included in full later in the year.

Lastly, I wish to thank the ICPO staff and volunteers (in particular Bernie Martin and Eileen Boyle) for their work in putting this newsletter together.

Stay safe and don't hesitate to contact us if we can be of help.

Brian Hanley

Covid 19

The past few months since Covid-19 has spread worldwide have been among the most difficult times many people have experienced and this is particularly so for people in prison. It has been a time of isolation, anxiety, fear and in some cases loss for prisoners. For many the normal day-to-day life in prison has been replaced by almost round the clock lockdown. Family visits have are postponed; chaplaincy services that provide support and comfort are either not available at this time or providing only limited services, classes and courses are on hold and gyms and sports facilities closed. In addition, many prisoners were worried about their loved ones on the outside. For families too this has been a very worrying time.

Some prisoners contracted the virus and sadly some have died. However, the situation is not as bad as was initially feared. In many countries, governments and prison authorities responded quickly and efficiently to challenges presented by the pandemic, in particular by releasing low risk prisoners coming to the end of their sentence; limiting all but necessary staff entering the prison and quarantining for new prisoners and providing staff with masks and other protective clothing which not only protected them but also the prisoners in their care. In some prisons, staff and prisoners worked together to ensure that every prisoner understood what they needed to do to try to stay safe. Additional supports were provided for many prisoners such as video calls with family members and increased access to helplines.

However, some responses to Covid-19 were too slow and ineffective and hampered by existing problems such as overcrowding, understaffing and old prisons with few facilities. In some countries, there is a lack of basic medical care in prisons and limited access to clean water. Some prisons have introduced almost round the clock lockdown which may be effective in the short term in preventing the spread of Covid 19 but can in the longer term lead to depression and other mental health problems.

The picture is beginning to look brighter however. The number of people contracting the virus is decreasing considerably here in Ireland but also in many other countries worldwide including some of those worst hit like Spain and Italy. Efforts are being made to develop a vaccine; according to the World Health Organisation there are currently 124 Covid-19 vaccines under development. Most countries have plans in place to re-open businesses, schools, churches, shops and restaurants gradually and safely.

Some have called for similar plans for prisons to ensure that lockdown is ended and ways are found for prisoners to safely return to religious services, classes, sports and other activities within the prison. As Frances Crooks from the Howard League for Penal Reform said of the situation in the UK, "Tens of thousands of people in prison are being held in overcrowded conditions or extreme isolation. It is neither humane nor sustainable, and it is taking its toll. We need to see a clear plan out of mass solitary confinement, to save lives and give purpose."¹ Covid-19 may also present an opportunity to governments and prison authorities to address issue like overcrowding and poor conditions.

While there are encouraging signs, there is still no room for complacency and it is important for everyone to continue doing what we can to stay safe. Regular thorough handwashing, keeping your cell clean, avoiding touching hard surfaces like handrails and keeping as far from others as you can all help to keep you safe. In addition, it is important to stay mentally and physically active and in cell exercises, prayers, yoga, reading, staying in touch with family and friends, meditation and doing puzzles can all help. Please contact your ICPO caseworker and we can send you a variety of materials.

The ICPO has remained open during the pandemic. Like staff in many other organisations and business, we have been working from home. While we are unable to visit people in prison at this time and our Family Information Day has been postponed until later in the year, we are continuing to provide our other services. If you are in prison overseas or are the family member of a prisoner, do not hesitate to contact us by phone, email or letter.

¹Guardian 28 May 2020

Catherine Kenny,
Casework, Information & Policy Officer

Repatriation Update

It is almost 25 years since the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Act 1995 came into force. It provides the legislative basis for the operation of the Council of Europe Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons between Ireland and other parties to the Convention. The Act provides that Irish prisoners serving sentences in other countries may apply to transfer their sentence to an Irish prison and similarly foreign national prisoners (FNPs) in Ireland may apply to serve their sentences in their home country. From January 1996 to July 2019 (the last date for which figures are available), 154 Irish prisoners were transferred back home to serve the remainder of their sentence in Irish prisons.

A closer look at this figure would appear to indicate that the transfer process has become slower and less efficient over the years in part because of a number of Court cases that put applications on hold for a time. Less than 1 in 3 of all applicants (552) have been transferred. In the first 10 years after the legislation came into force, 112 prisoners were repatriated, however, less than 45 prisoners were transferred in the period 2006 to the present. Since 2006 there have been approximately 260 applications.¹

In 2008, the then Minister for Justice said in answer to a parliamentary question that the average processing time for repatriation applications was 15 months.² However, in recent years, we are not aware of any case being processed in less than two years and some prisoners have been waiting from up to 7 years. This is far too long even allowing for cases being put on hold.

Decisions

We have been informed by the Irish Prison Service (IPS) that a number of decisions have been made recently and more are in the pipeline. We welcome this as the lengthy delay in processing decisions causes considerable stress and anxiety for prisoners and their families. Regrettably, however, it would seem for some prisoners, despite the long wait for a decision, their application has been refused.

One family that contacted us recently told us about their loved one's despair on being informed that his application had been turned down. He was "very disappointed and couldn't take it in that it just wouldn't happen". They went on to tell us that their relative was "feeling very lonely now and it had become more difficult to visit even before Covid 19" because of family circumstances. While there is no right to be transferred under Irish or international law, it is widely understood that prisoners have a better chance of rehabilitation in their own country, close to their family and friends.

UK repatriation cases

The majority of applications for transfer of sentence come from the UK. Events in recent years have resulted in a situation where very few applications for repatriation from the UK would be successful.

Determinate sentences

As a result of Supreme Court decisions in 2014 and 2016, the Irish Government undertook to amend the existing legislation (the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Act 1995, 1997) to address the incompatibility between determinate sentences in England & Wales and Irish sentences. Heads of a Bill to make technical amendments to the existing legislation were agreed in February 2019 and the Office of the Minister for Justice and Equality advised ICPO that it was hoped to bring legislation before the Oireachtas (Parliament) in the Autumn. Disappointingly although this was included in the Autumn 2019 Legislative Programme, it was not among the priority legislation listed and there was no further progress. Bills lapsed when the Dáil and Seanad (Houses of Parliament) were dissolved prior to the general election which took place in February. The ICPO does not anticipate any determinate sentenced prisoners being accepted back to Ireland from the UK before this legislation has been amended.

Life sentences

A life sentence is one that does not have a fixed length of time and no release date is set. Instead the prisoner must serve a minimum period of imprisonment known as a 'tariff' before they can be considered for parole. We are aware of several cases of Irish prisoners serving life in the UK whose applications for repatriation have been refused because the length of their tariff is longer than a life sentence in Ireland which on average is 17-18 years. However many life sentenced prisoners in Ireland serve considerably longer

Repatriation Update

than this. In addition, life sentences in Ireland are subject to review after 12 years although few prisoners are released at this point. It is concerning that decisions are being made dependent on a possibility that prisoners would not serve their full sentence if transferred to Ireland.

Sentences of imprisonment for public protection (IPP)

The IPP sentence is another type of indeterminate sentence and although abolished in 2012, there are over 2,000 prisoners still serving this sentence including people who have been recalled, the majority beyond their tariff expiry date. Applications for repatriation from prisoners serving an IPP sentence in the UK are not being accepted following an Irish Court of Appeal judgment in 2018 which upheld the Minister's decision to refuse applications from IPP prisoners on the basis that no comparable sentence exists in Irish law. This judgment is likely to be relied on for any future decisions involving IPP prisoners seeking repatriation to Ireland.

The type of sentence handed down for particular crimes can be very different in other countries. This is clear from looking at the UK whose criminal justice system is generally similar to ours. Prisoners in the UK who are serving a determinate sentence will serve half in prison and half on licence in the community. This type of sentence does not exist in Irish law. The Transfer of Sentenced Persons Act provides that where the sentence handed down in the other country is not compatible with Irish law in its "legal nature or duration" it may be adapted "to a sentence prescribed by the law of the State or an offence similar to the offence for which the sentence was imposed", but should not aggravate it by its legal nature or duration or exceed the maximum penalty set out in Irish law for a similar offence. A further solution is provided in the Convention known as conversion and involves the imposition of a new sentence based on the factual findings of the court in the sentencing State. This is not provided for in Irish law however.

Conclusion

The most recent report of the Minister for Justice and Equality on the operation of the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Acts notes that it has been a long established Government policy that, whenever possible, prisoners should be permitted to serve their sentences close to their families. However practice in relation to the transfer of prisoners is at variance with this commendable policy, given the paltry number of prisoners being transferred back to Ireland especially in recent year and the lengthy delays in processing applications.

If the long established Government policy is to be reflected in practice, there are a number of steps the new government - when it is formed - can take without delay:

- Bring the bill amending the current legislation before the Oireachtas in Autumn 2020, which would if passed allow for the transfer of prisoners serving determinate sentences in the UK. This only applies to a very small cohort of prisoners and further changes may be necessary to ensure that other categories of prisoners are not precluded from being transferred back to serve their sentence in Ireland.
- Provide sufficient resources to ensure that applications are expeditiously processed going forward - given the small numbers involved, this should not be excessive.

If you have applied for repatriation, you and/or your family may wish to consider contacting your local political representatives (your local TDs) in Ireland. Putting pressure on local politicians can help to bring about policy and legislative change. If you need any assistance with this, please contact your ICPO caseworker.

Catherine Kenny, Casework, Information and Policy Officer

¹ Figures available from Department of Justice (2017) Report by the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality, Charles Flanagan to the Houses of the Oireachtas on the operation of the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Acts, 1995 and 1997 for the period 1 January, 2018 - 31 December 2018 and Response to PQ No.147, 04 July 2019.

² Parliamentary Questions Written Answer 45284/08, 09 December 2008.

³ Transfer of Sentenced Persons Act, 1995.

Parole Board Appearances

Recently, we have had some queries from clients and families around upcoming Parole Board appearances for themselves or loved ones. We recognise that this can be a really stressful time for all involved particularly given the number of variables around being granted parole but we've put together this article to give you more information around Parole Board appearances and some things you may wish to consider in advance of any parole board hearing.

It should be noted that the information included in this article is relevant to very many of our clients, however parole boards are different in every country. It is important that you seek out this information. You should also consider speaking to your legal representative and you can speak to your ICPO Caseworker who will be able to assist you.

Family Support Letters

If you wish to support your family member who is shortly going to appear before the Parole Board by writing a letter of support, here are a number of key points you may wish to consider when writing your letter:

- How long have you known the person? Are you related and if so, how?
- Are you aware of their current offence/s and, or, any previous offending?
- Can you provide accommodation and financial support on release?
- If your family member is to reside with you, how many people live at the property? Is there enough room in your home for them to re-integrate back into family life?
- Would you be able to support them in meeting any release conditions they may have (e.g. reporting to their Probation Officer for appointments)?
- What local professional services are available to support your family member, such as community mental health, addictions counselling or general medical services, if required?
- Will extended family be available to provide support also?
- Are you aware of any employment opportunities that may be available?
- Could the support you are providing be considered pro-social (i.e. a positive influence on your family member)? Are you involved in your community?

The Parole Board is interested in hearing your opinions about your loved one on:

- How do you feel your family member has coped with their sentence?
- What positive changes have you witnessed in them throughout their sentence?
- Have they gained any skills or educational qualifications whilst in custody?
- Do you feel that they pose any risk to the community?
- Would you be prepared to advise the relevant person if your family member was not meeting the conditions of their release?

Are you ready for parole?

In preparation for your parole hearing, it is essential that you put forward a strong case with a robust rehabilitation and release plan.

The purpose of the Parole Board is to assess risk and there needs to be evidence of a significant reduction in someone's risk of re-offending or causing harm to others, so that parole can be considered appropriate. This evidence should be included in your rehabilitation and release plan.

A strong release plan should include support in the following areas - accommodation, addictions, mental health, finances and ongoing support from family, friends and support agencies.

Parole Board Appearances

Parole Board Appearance Timeline:

12 months in advance -

- Have you commenced any rehabilitation programmes?
- Have you gained any additional skills or completed further education?
- Remember to keep a copy of all certificates of completion for any programmes or courses you have done.
- What are your accommodation options? It would help to have a main option and an alternative, just in case.
- Will you need to remain in your sentencing country for a period of time if released on parole? If so, who can support you and where can you stay?
- If returning to Ireland, you should begin discussing referral options with your ICPO caseworker who can suggest appropriate support agencies to assist in your re-integration.

Completing objectives set down in your sentence plan may take some time so it is best to start preparing well in advance of your hearing because I'm sure you've realised by now that programmes, education and employment opportunities in prison don't happen overnight. This is a long term plan that you need to organise.

3-4 months in advance -

- Have you completed the objectives set down in your sentence plan including a recognised rehabilitation programme?
- You need to arrange for letters of support from family, friends and all support agencies that you have engaged with.
- Begin preparing your own letter to the Parole Board outlining the positive aspects of your case for parole but also acknowledging if something negative has occurred and how you have learned from that experience.
- Once you have seen your prepared parole report (this is usually prepared by the Prison Service/Dept of Corrections), ensure that it is correct and keep a copy to reference it when needed. This report should comprehensively detail your release plan and if there are any gaps in the information, you may need to provide an update directly to the Parole Board.

"A knock is not a no, it's a not right now"

It is important to remember that a low number of people are granted parole at their first appearance and you should prepare yourself for this. Your first appearance is an excellent opportunity to show the progress made to date and if further progress is required, they will instruct you around this. If your release plan needs adjustment they will give you sufficient opportunity to complete this and subsequent hearings should achieve a more positive outcome if all objectives have been met.

If you would like further advice or assistance around family support letters or Parole Board preparation, please do not hesitate to contact your ICPO caseworker.

Orla Dick, ICPO Caseworker





FAMILY MATTERS



*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 Leslie Alcock, Casework and Family Support Officer, ICPO
Maynooth. Email: leslie.alcock@iecon.ie or call on +353-1-505-3110.*

Keeping in contact with a loved one in prison overseas during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

These are difficult times for all of us and we are all being affected in different ways. However, we understand that it can be particularly challenging for those of you who have a loved one in prison overseas. We hope you know we are here to help and support you through this difficult time. Feel free to call us on +353 (0)1-505-3156, the London office on +44 207-482-5528 or email our family support worker on leslie.alcock@iecon.ie or your loved ones' caseworker if they have a caseworker already.

Here are a few suggestions as to what you can do to help support your loved one in prison while continuing to look after yourselves during this tough time.

Where possible, maintain regular contact with your loved one. This is as important for you as it is for your family member especially if there is increased lockdown in the prison. Being in regular contact gives you reassurance that you are both doing ok. For instance; write to them regularly and if the prison allows it, send photos, books, puzzles and in cell exercises. We can send both of you some of these if need be. Please note that there are post restrictions so some countries due to flight suspensions as a result of Covid-19. Check out the An Post website for updates on post restrictions; <https://www.anpost.com/Covid-19/Mails-Parcels-services>. If your loved one is in a prison where there is a post restriction and you have good friends or other family members who live in that country, you could email them a note for your loved one that they can post on your behalf to the prison. Otherwise contact the ICPO and we can try to help get a note to them.

If you can, send your loved one funds so they can call you more often. If you have difficulty with this, please call us and we can try to help. Depending on what country they are in, you could also consider renting a Skype number that is local to the country

your loved one is in, which can reduce the cost of an international call. You can find out more information about how to set up a Skype number here; <https://support.skype.com/en/faq/FA256/how-do-i-get-a-skype-number>.

If you are having difficulties with sending funds to your loved one, feel free to contact us or contact the Department of Foreign Affairs headquarters directly; consularassistance@dfa.ie and advise them who you wish to provide funds to. They will link you with a case officer who will then provide you with the account details so you can make an electronic lodgment and they will then contact the appropriate mission (Consulate/Embassy) and arrange for the funds to be sent to your loved one.

You could also try to email your family member in prison. These facilities are usually low cost and for instance; if you have a loved one in the UK or Australia, you can email them using the www.emailprisoner.com (UK) or <https://www.emailprisoner.com.au/> (Australia). Please note, not all prisons have emailprisoner.com in the UK and Australia. If you have a loved one in the U.S. you could try to email them using <https://www.jpays.com/>. Please also note that not all prisons have jpays and in some prisons the prisoners have to buy a tablet to access jpays and in other prisons access to it may be limited for various reasons. Call us and we can discuss other options if these resources are not available in the prison where your loved one is in.

For anyone who has a loved one in a prison in Australia, a number of the prisons have introduced video calls because visits were suspended as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. They are called AVL visits and you can book an AVL visit by calling the visit booking line for the prison. Feel free to call us if you have difficulty with setting this up.

If you have a serious concern in relation to your loved one, consider calling the prison and asking to speak to a welfare officer/social worker or safer custody. Alternatively, if they are struggling encourage them to talk to the chaplain in the prison. Some prisons in an effort to reduce exposure to the virus have reduced the staff numbers where appropriate. If you have difficulty contacting a staff member in the prison, you can also call us or contact the Department of Foreign Affairs.

It is also really important that you keep yourself safe and abide by the restrictions that the Government has introduced as your loved one in prison is also very worried about you and your health in this difficult time. They will feel better knowing you are safe.

We want to reassure you that we are here to help in any way we can. We are here to provide advice, support and information to you and your loved ones. Please don't hesitate to call the Maynooth office on +353 (0)1-505-3156, the London office on +44 207-482-5528 or email our family support worker on leslie.alcock@iecon.ie or your loved ones caseworker if they have a caseworker already.

Here are some additional resources you could also try;

United Kingdom

Prison Calls: <https://prisoncalls.co.uk/about-us/> (allows international phone numbers to sign up)

Prison Voicemail: <https://prisonvoicemail.com/> (allows international phone numbers to sign up)

Cell2Cell: <https://www.cell2celltalk.com/> (requires UK address, phone number or both)

Cell Phone Rocks: <https://cellphone.rocks/> (requires UK address, phone number or both)

Fonesavvy: <https://www.fonesavvy.co.uk/> (requires UK address, phone number or both)

United States

CorrLinks: www.corrlinks.com (email system used by United States Federal Bureau of Prisons)

Getting Out: www.gettingout.com (can send messages and receive video calls)

Connect Network: web.connectnetwork.com (can send messages and receive phone calls)

Australia

Sonetel: www.sonetel.com/ (can purchase phone number local to prison and receive calls)

ICPO Penfriend Scheme

The ICPO operates a popular Penfriend Scheme which involves volunteers corresponding on a regular basis with ICPO clients. The scheme is especially beneficial to those who have little family contact and many prisoners have commented how it has helped to alleviate their sense of loneliness and for others their reading and writing skills improved. ICPO provides post-paid envelopes which are acceptable in some prisons.

If you do not already have a penfriend and would like to maintain a friendly correspondence with one of our volunteers, please contact:

Sr. Anne Sheehy
ICPO, Columba Centre
Maynooth, Co. Kildare.
W23P6D3, Ireland





Sports Shorts

with Ian Hanna

No live sports of any kind since the middle of March due to the COVID-19 pandemic and yet the strange thing throughout the globe is that the sports pages of the daily and weekly newspapers are full, TV programmes are saturated with a multitude of ball game classics, golf's glorious moments are recalled, equine winners abound and we even get repeats of some minority sports that appear every four years at the Olympics. Then there are the sports commentators throwing in their tuppence worth as to how the future may unfold and just how is it possible major sports will survive without packed stadia and multi million TV broadcasting rights zooming all the action into our living rooms and social accommodation areas! It goes on and on...

Well we here in the ICPO Sports Department have decided to bring you some of Ireland's greatest sporting occasions and forgive me if your key sporting moment is not included. The list is huge so we can only bring you a few. A poll conducted within ICPO resulted in Ireland's most favourite sporting moment being..... yes you guessed it... reaching the Soccer World Cup quarter finals in Italia 90!

A hot June night in Genoa, Packie Bonner, the Irish goalkeeper saved that penalty in a penalty shootout but it wasn't over yet. The tension was unbearable, score our next penalty and we were through, miss it and the shootout



agony would continue. Up stepped David O'Leary, cool, suave almost imperial, like another centre half who dominated world soccer in the 70's, Franz Beckenbauer of West Germany, O'Leary was not a favourite with Jack Charlton, the Irish manager but it didn't matter, he slotted the ball home with professional perfection and a deafening roar erupted wherever Irish men, women and children were gathered. Nobody wanted that moment to end. It defined us as an international sporting nation, we could mix with and beat the best, we had arrived by dint of hard work and skill into the living room of world soccer. No more looking backwards, only onwards and

upwards. The 1-0 defeat to the hosts in Rome brought the journey to an end but Ireland exited on a high. That night in Genoa will live forever in Irish sporting history and is unlikely to be eclipsed.

We all know about Katie Taylor's win in London 2012 but how many recall Michael Carruth's welterweight win on 08 August in Barcelona in



1992. Michael, a southpaw from Dublin was a good fighter but not the favourite going into the ring against Juan Hernandez Sierra from Cuba. Cuba was producing gold medal boxers in many weights during the last couple of Olympics and most commentators saw yet another addition to this list. Michael thought differently and stuck to his game plan. Despite Sierra being the better puncher, Michael won Ireland's first gold Olympic medal in 38 years.

Exactly 20 years and one day since that win we were celebrating our next Olympic boxing gold medal with Katie Taylor's hard fought lightweight win over Russian Sofya Ochigava whom she had earlier beaten that year in the World Championship final. How many remember that last round of four when Sofya had Katie on the floor only for Bray's finest to recover and land some vital point winning punches to win on a scoreline of 11-7? Taylor's marvellous performance brought Ireland only the ninth gold medal in its Olympic history and she joins a pantheon of sporting greats that includes Ronnie Delaney from 1956.

Which brings me nicely on to our next great sporting moment, Ronnie Delaney's gold medal triumph in the 1500 metres event at



the 1956 Summer Olympics in Melbourne. In the final, home runner John Landy was the big favourite. At the bell signalling the final lap, Ronnie who had closely



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tracked Landy from the start commenced a crushing final sprint, winning the race in a new Olympic record. Ronnie always believed he had a good chance of winning and he became the first Irishman to win an Olympic gold medal in athletics since 1932. Delany would be Ireland's last Olympic champion for 36 years, until Michael Carruth won his gold medal in 1992. Ronnie was the doyen of Irish sport as he continued his running career in North America, where he was next to unbeatable on indoor tracks over that period, which included a 40-race winning streak. He broke the World Indoor Mile Record on three occasions.

Rugby has plenty of memorable occasions including Leinster, Munster and Ulster winning European Championships, while the national team finally overcame the All Blacks in November 2016 at Soldier Field, Chicago 40-29. That was followed up on 17 November 2018 when Ireland defeated New Zealand 16-9 on home soil for the first time. These wins were in once off games with no real competitive outcome and were grimly put into context when at the Rugby World Cup in Japan in 2019 New Zealand crushed Ireland 41-14 in the white heat of the quarter final stage. For many the standout game involving



Irish rugby was on 16 March 2009 when Ireland travelled to Cardiff for the last game of the 6 Nations championship looking for a win that would bridge a gap of 61 years since 1948 when the Grand Slam was last won by an Irish team. It wasn't easy and it came right down to the final kick of the game. Ronan O'Gara had just edged us in front with a drop-goal, 17-15 with a few minutes remaining on the clock, but the concession of a penalty from 48 metres out from the Irish posts from the centre of the pitch threatened our grip of the Six Nations Championship, Triple Crown and the Grand Slam. The clock had inched its way into the red zone as Stephen Jones lined up the shot. If this went over

Wales would win 18-17; if he missed Ireland was in rugby heaven. And remember he had knocked over a penalty from a similar distance in the first half. The trajectory of the ball as it flew towards the posts looked as if it would go over the crossbar but suddenly it dipped and all watching knew it wasn't going to make it. A nation exhaled. On such slender margins are victories carved out, heroes lauded and unforgettable memories made.

The GAA provides a multitude of superb games in both hurling and football to be worthy of mention but in the end it came down to that team which won All-Ireland crowns when lesser teams would have failed, that team who fought to the bitter end refusing to give up when all appeared lost, that team who stuck to their game plan when others would have panicked, the manager who made an art form of instilling confidence in his players, that team and manager who achieved a feat never achieved before. Of course, I am talking about Dublin, and their All Ireland winning manager Jim Gavin who have put together five perfect seasons - something no other team in men's senior football or hurling has managed before. History made. Their successes included two final replays, against Mayo in 2016 and Kerry in 2019. Two finals were won by the minimum in 2016 and 2017 with Mayo being the losers on both occasions. Will they win six in a row? Were they the best team during those five years? The score lines suggest other teams pushed them close but Dublin certainly knew how to grind out a victory. That is what makes them the history makers.



Another favourite from athletics is the great Sonia O'Sullivan from Cobh, Co Cork who during the 1990's had a stellar career as a middle distance runner and was the queen of Irish and world track and field. Sonia was an incredible ambassador for Irish sport and her achievements include winning a World Championship at 5000m in 1995, an Olympic silver at

Sports Shorts contd.

the same distance at the 2000 Sydney Games, 2 x World Cross Country titles including winning at two different distances in 1998, 3 x European Championships at 3,000m in 1994, 5,000m in 1998 and 10,000m in 1998. For me one of her greatest achievements was setting a world record for 2,000m in 1994 that stood until 2017. Can you imagine holding a world record for nearly 23 years! Her career had its major disappointments as well including losing out on the gold medal in Sydney, missing the final of the 5,000m Atlanta Games in 1996 due to illness and I suppose never setting foot on the podium to claim that elusive Olympic gold.



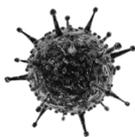
There are so many other sporting achievements and that could have been included. There are only 4

major winners during the golfing season and to become a major winner ensures your place in golfing immortality. Our major tournament golf winners in recent years, Padraig Harrington, Rory McIlroy, Graeme McDowell, Darren Clarke and Shane Lowry continue to represent a golden era of Irish golf.

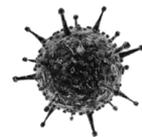
I hope you have enjoyed this look back at some of our greatest sporting moments and why don't you send me some of your favourites and I may be able to include some on them in a later edition of the ICPO News.

An article on the near misses and the oh-so-close moments involving Irish sports teams and individuals is also another possibility but we all need cheering up at the time of COVID-19. Elsewhere in this edition you will find some exercises you can do to help keep your body and mind in good condition. The good thing about these exercises is that you do not need any equipment or very little, just your own body weight.

So take care and be safe.



Covid 19 Stories



ICPO would like to hear from you about your experiences in the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic.

What is helping you get through the day and are there any positive things you or others are doing to watch out for yourselves. Your submission could be in the form of a short story or a poem or even a picture or drawing.

Maynooth Intern



My name is Rachida Chemaou. I am currently doing a masters degree in Comparative Criminology and Criminal Justice and recently finished an internship in the ICPO in Maynooth.

I applied to do the internship because I believed that it would give me invaluable experience. I selected the ICPO as my first preference because I think the work they do is extraordinary. As you will already be aware, the ICPO works to provide information and support to prisoners and their families in relation to a wide range of issues, including repatriation, deportation, legal matters, discrimination and ill-treatment.

I have always been interested in the legal system and how it works in various jurisdictions. Since the ICPO work with prisoners overseas, I believed that I would gain a unique understanding of the legal systems in different countries and the impact it has on the individuals. Notably, the language barrier and lack of awareness regarding the legal process. The ICPO also seeks to provide families with information on the legal system in which their loved one is incarcerated. This is an aspect that I believe is very important as the impact of incarceration on the families is not as well documented as the direct impact on the individual.

During my time in ICPO, I got to work on a number of different projects. I researched reporting requirements for people returning to Ireland with convictions for drug trafficking and separately, different ways for families to communicate with a loved one in prison. I also had the opportunity to help caseworkers research issues for individual clients.

Throughout my time working there I also learned how important it is to keep up with worldwide practices and policies as they may change.

Creating the resettlement pack was important because the ICPO aim to provide support for an individual during and after the time they spend in prison. The resettlement pack will provide those clients returning to Ireland without any support with some essential items they need on their release. Documents in relation

to education, health and so on were important to include. Therefore, I conducted research on the types of organisations that aim to provide educational and employment support for individuals with a conviction. I found organisations that helped with homelessness and mental health and I also came up with a number of essential items that I believed they would need upon their release. It included toiletries such as shampoo, body wash, a toothbrush and so on. It also included a towel, water bottle and a waterproof document holder.

I also worked on sections of a new wellness pack ICPO is currently developing. Its aim is to provide information on how to maintain good physical and mental well-being; alongside information on spiritual wellbeing and personal development. The research I conducted was on mental well-being and physical health. Life in prison presents challenges in countless different ways. Boredom, lack of privacy, reduced contact with loved ones, lack of control and increased time on lock-up are just some of the factors that can affect your sense of wellbeing. This pack hopes to provide some information and tools to help with these things.

Throughout my time there I witnessed the staff going above and beyond for their clients in order to provide the service effectively. They would try to communicate with their clients on a regular basis; help them in financial situations and visit them when it was possible! The ICPO also provide a Penfriend Scheme which I find brilliant!

This placement highlighted how important it is to support individuals in prison since many may feel alone and rely on organisations such as the ICPO for support and communication. Not only did it broaden my perception on what I believe should be done within the criminal justice system, it helped me increase my knowledge on the criminal justice system in various jurisdictions. I enjoyed being a part of the different research projects because I believe that they will make a difference to people - which is something that I think is very important.

Overall, my time working in the ICPO was an amazing experience and the work they do makes a huge difference to people!

Rachida Chemaou
ICPO Intern

Update from London ICPO Office

Fr Gerry McFlynn



The work of the London office has been severely affected by the current Covid-19 crisis. In particular, prison visiting which is the very backbone of our outreach service, has been suspended until further notice. It is this prison visiting that generates so much of our casework.

General Overview

The coronavirus pandemic has shone a shockingly bright light on so much around the world, and prisons are no exception. At the time of writing, cases of the virus have been confirmed in more than half of the prisons in England and Wales, and now totals 341 among prisoners and 364 among staff. Public Health England believes the true number of cases may be up to six times higher.

The virus has made life extremely difficult for prisoners and their families. Prisons are now operating with a skeletal staff which means that prisoners are confined to their cells for 23 hours per day. This is having an adverse effect on their mental health, especially now that family visits have also been discontinued. Many prisoners are finding it very difficult to cope with these restrictions, especially Travellers. Masses and other liturgical services have also been suspended for the foreseeable future. Prisons have never been easy places to live and work in; they are now even more challenging given the absence of any meaningful "distancing" and the potential for unrest.

ICPO's Response

At Easter, we carried out a mass emailing of prisoners apprising them of the current situation and its impact on our service. We have been doing our best to maintain contact with prisoners by email and making phone calls to their families here and in Ireland. We are also sending resource packs containing mindfulness and meditation CDs, puzzles, colouring books, Traveller Early Readers and Soul Sustenance booklets.

In addition, we are also answering letters collected from our office and following up on phone calls made to ICPO and the Traveller Equalities Project (TEP) lines.

All of this is to help prisoners stay safe and well and to help them keep up their spirits in these unprecedented times. This service (in the absence of prison-visiting) is likely to continue for many months to come.

We are very concerned about the long-term effect of the crisis on our client's mental health and general wellbeing. The most we can do at present is help by sending games, puzzles, prayer/reflection booklets, etc., liaising with chaplains about any problems or issues they may have and keeping in touch with their families.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, by rising from the dead you conquered death and offered everyone the gift of eternal life.
Give me the strength to cope with my time inside and keep me safe and healthy in mind and body.
Bless my family and loved ones and keep us all in your care.
Help me to use my time here wisely in preparation for a better life outside.
Teach me to pray, to believe, to hope, to be patient, to forgive and to love.
And may I know the healing, restorative power of your presence in my life.
Amen.

Tribute to Sr. Teresa O'Mahony, Prison Chaplain

Breda Power, ICPO London

Sr. Teresa O'Mahony has retired as a prison Chaplain after 20 years in high security, HMP Belmarsh. She was a wonderful advocate for prisoners. She may be small in stature, but she is fearless and has a big heart. She had an affinity with prisoners that can only be described as 'second to none'. Kind, loving and giving, her qualities go on and on. She had the best banter with prisoners and staff alike and the respect for her was, 'no end'. I can't imagine how HMP Belmarsh is getting on without her. In tribute to Sr. Teresa and her contribution to prisoners over the past few decades, I now hope she now takes some time for herself!

Looking back at the 20 years I spent as Prison Chaplain in H.M.P Belmarsh I really could write a very interesting book.

For many years I was interested in prison ministry. The Sisters of Mercy have had a long history of helping prisoners inside and when released. In the 1840's when women received the death penalty it was a Sister of Mercy that stayed with a woman the night before she was hanged. We read this account in the Limerick annals.

The opportunity came for me when I retired and was discerning a change of ministry. HMP Belmarsh was newly opened and convenient.

For me it was rather daunting at first. Being inside was certainly a very different experience. All prisoners had committed serious crime, or so I used to hear on the news and read in the papers.

I was warmly received by the men who were glad to have someone to listen to them and that they could trust. How very different I felt when I could sit with someone and not be afraid. Gradually I realised what was important and appreciated the men - accepting them as they were. At times it was not easy when their crime made the headlines in the news. How did Jesus receive sinners; no one was turned away, but He said "Go in Peace and do not sin again".

So many come to Mass and to the Chapel to pray, to be free, to talk. Many have said it was the first time anyone listened.

If one expects to do great deeds for prisoners then forget prison ministry.

Sadly today, drugs have taken over people's lives and knife crime also. The age of prisoners is getting younger too. At the end of the day, I trust I turn



them to the heart of Jesus and let's all keep hope alive in our hearts.

If I spent another 20 years as a chaplain I would still say ones' time is best spent as a listening ear, respecting each one as an individual, accepting them as and where they are. This is what's most important.

I will conclude with words from Bishop Pat Lynch at my farewell Mass on Easter Sunday.

"I am writing to express my personal gratitude and that of Archbishop Peter Smith for your tremendous ministry in H.M.P. Belmarsh. I know Fr. Kevin Robinson and Fr. Edward both appreciated your presence and commitment. You will be greatly missed."

Sr. Teresa O'Mahony



WINNER: Poetry
Writing in Prisons Overseas

Prisoner

Do not condemn me for all that I do
Fundamentally, I'm the same as you
Try not to censor all my words
It's only the chatter you've often heard
Do not intrude upon my thoughts
Or in the trap of prejudice you'll be caught.
In every life mistakes occur
In that, I'm just like him or her.
I'm paying the price for what I've done
Once I'm out, let it be gone.
Don't hound me forever for one misdeed
Allow me to truly hereafter be free.
Burn me not with the prison brand
Let me go and simply shake my hand
I am not just the things I've done
Like you, I am a mother's son.
All that I want is a chance to be free

Denis McNamara, U.K.

ICPO London Intern



I spent the first two and a half months of 2020 working as an intern for the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO). I had no experience working for a charity, but I decided that this was the perfect opportunity for me to try something new. I moved from New York to London. Living in a different country was a huge adjustment for me, but everyone I worked with was quick to offer

support and suggestions about how to make the most out of my time in England.

My day-to-day tasks were usually straightforward, like opening new client cases or answering the phone. However, I was able to do something that most people will probably never do: visit a prison. I felt anxious as I walked up to the gate of HMP Pentonville with Breda, not knowing what to expect.

By the end of the day, I left feeling incredibly grounded, with a better idea of the issues that prisoners face and a new respect for what prison visitors do on a regular basis.

While my internship ended early due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I left the ICPO with a heightened understanding of how important it is to be there for one another. Not a day went by that somebody didn't offer a hot drink to everyone in the office. Nobody does this in the States; it's up to you to make your own beverage. When somebody felt stressed, another co-worker always came to their aid to divide work or offer ideas. This message was clearly shown to me at HMP Pentonville by Breda and in the office by Liz, both of whom have an overwhelming amount of compassion for others.

I'm back in New York, but I am incredibly grateful for the time I spent in London and for the people I spent that time with. For now, I'll be turning lemons into lemonade by taking home what I learned at ICPO and supporting my neighbours during this difficult time.

Alana Kent
ICPO London

Mindfulness

Deep Relaxation Exercise

Lie down on your back with your arms at your sides (you may also practice in a sitting position). Make yourself comfortable. Allow your body to relax. Be aware of the floor (or mattress) underneath you and of the contact your body has with the floor. (Pause)

Allow your body to sink into the floor. (Pause)

Become aware of your breathing, in and out. Be aware of your abdomen rising and falling as you breathe in and out...rising...falling...rising...falling. (Pause)

Breathing in, bring your awareness to your eyes. Breathing out, allow your eyes to relax. Allow your eyes to sink back into your head...let go of the tension in all the tiny muscles around your eyes...allow your eyes to rest...send love and gratitude to your eyes. (Pause)

Breathing in, bring your awareness to your mouth. Breathing out, allow your mouth to relax. Release the tension around your mouth, let a gentle smile rest on your lips...smiling releases the tension in the hundreds of muscles in your face...feel the tension release in your cheeks...your jaw...your throat. (Pause)

Breathing in, bring your awareness to your shoulders. Breathing out, allow your shoulders to relax. Let them sink into the floor...let all the accumulated tension flow into the floor... we carry so much with our shoulders...now let them relax as we care for our shoulders. (Pause)

Breathing in, become aware of your arms. Breathing out, relax your arms. Let your arms sink into the floor...your upper arms...your elbows...your lower arms...your wrists...hands...fingers...all the tiny muscles...move your fingers a little if you need to, to help the muscles relax. (Pause)

Breathing in, bring your awareness to your heart. Breathing out, allow your heart to relax. (Pause) Our heart beats for us night and day...embrace your heart with mindfulness and tenderness...reconciling and taking care of your heart. (Pause)

Breathing in, bring your awareness to your legs. Breathing out, allow your legs to relax. Release all the tension in your legs...your thighs...your calves...your ankles...your feet...your toes...all the tiny muscles in your toes...you may want to move your toes a little to help them relax...send your love and care to your toes. (Pause)

Breathing in, breathing out...my whole body feels light...like duck weed floating on the water...I am as free as a cloud floating in the sky. (Pause)

(Music or silence for a few minutes)

Bring your awareness back to your breathing...to your abdomen rising and falling. (Pause)

Following your breathing, become aware of your arms and legs...you may want to move them a little and stretch. (Pause)

When you feel ready, slowly sit up. (Pause)

When you are ready, slowly stand up.

In the above exercise, you can guide awareness to any part of the body—the hair, scalp, brain, ears, neck, lungs, each of the internal organs, the digestive system, pelvis, and any other part of the body that needs healing and attention, embracing each part and sending love, gratitude, and care as we hold it in our awareness and breathe in and out.

Simple Yoga

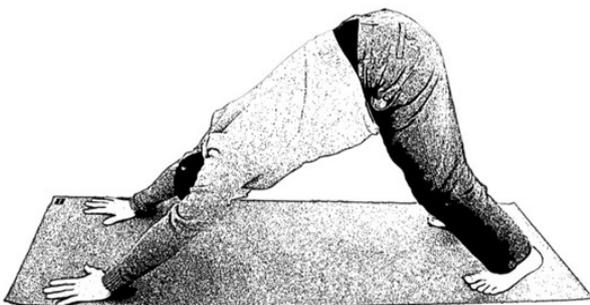


TREE

Look at a spot a few feet away from you to help you balance. If you wobble or fall, don't worry! Just keep trying. Hold for five breaths on each foot.

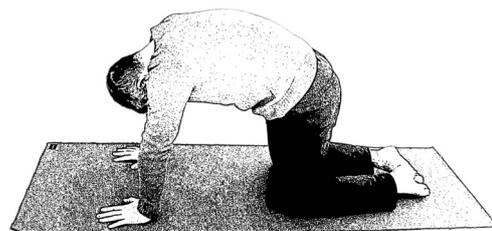
COBBLERS'S POSE

Hold position for 5-7 breaths. Do not curve your back.



DOWN DOG

Five slow breaths.



HAPPY CAT/ANGRY CAT

Breathe in as you lift your head and move your belly downwards; breathe out as you arch your back and drop your chin towards your chest. Repeat ten times.



Smídín Gaeilge

Ag Siopadóireacht

Ollmhargadh	<i>Ull-warga</i>	Supermarket
Cén Costas atá air seo?	<i>Cain custis ataw ar shu?</i>	How much is this?
An Bhfuil tomhas 10 agat?	<i>On will tow-ish deh agut</i>	Do you have this in a size 10?
Ba mhaith liom é seo a thabhairt ar ais.	<i>Bu wah lum ay shu a hoort ar ash.</i>	I'd like to return this
Traláí	<i>Trolley</i>	Trolley
Ciseán	<i>Cish-awn</i>	Basket
Málaí Plaisteacha	<i>Mawlee Plashtock</i>	Plastic bag
Admháil	<i>Ad-vawl</i>	Receipt
Soinséail	<i>Showshawl</i>	Change
Airgid Thirim	<i>Ar-gid Hirim</i>	Cash
Cárta Creidmheasa	<i>Core-ta Cred-vasa</i>	Credit Card



Siopadóireacht ar-line
Shupadooract air leena
Online Shopping



Sladmhargadh	<i>Slog-virgae</i>	Sale
Laghdú praghas	<i>Lie-doo price</i>	Price reduction
Lascaine	<i>Los cine</i>	Discount
Ciseán	<i>Cishawn</i>	Basket

Siopa Spóirt	<i>Shupa Sport</i>	Sport Shop
Siopa Seodóra	<i>Shupa Showdoora</i>	Jewellers
Siopa Crua- Earraí	<i>Shupa Crew a Ar-ee</i>	Hardware Shop
Siopa Rothar	<i>Shupa Ruh-hur</i>	Bicycle Shop
Siopa Leictreach	<i>Shupa Lecktruck</i>	Electrical Shop
Siopa Eadaí	<i>Shupa Aidee</i>	Clothes Shop
Siopa Leabhair	<i>Shupa Low (like cow) ur</i>	Bookshop
Siopa Nuachtáin	<i>Shupa New-ctawn</i>	Newspaper Shop
Siopa Bróg	<i>Shupa Browg</i>	Shoe Shop
Siopa Ceoil	<i>Shupa Ce-owl</i>	Music Shop
Ollmhargadh	<i>Ull-warga</i>	Supermarket
Siopa Poitigéara	<i>Shupa Put-ig-air-a</i>	Pharmacy

Tháinig mé ar mhargadh iontach
Haw-nig may air varga eentock
I came across a great bargain



challenge yourself!

Find my Feelings

AFRAID

ANGRY

BORED

BRAVE

CAUTIOUS

CONFIDENT

CONFUSED

ECSTATIC

EXCITED

FRUSTRATED

HAPPY

HOPELESS

C C Y C Y A B T Q T E D K Y L
 E O H F F P H W N F C E F I C
 I A N R S R P E W S S I Y A C
 D N A F I U D A U H T F R B N
 L I D L U I O O H O A I G R T
 D U L E F S L V H C T R N A B
 W E C N S A E R R K I R A V L
 D V O K E I C D Q E C E D E V
 D C A J Y P R O U D N T E S K
 W O R R I E D P Y H S E T U Y
 D E T A R T S U R F M D I D T
 C A U T I O U S W U E O C L J
 S S E L E P O H S R S R X P K
 Y L E N O L N A O E G B E B M
 Q C N P E K D B E G R M E K W

JEALOUS

LONELY

LUCKY

NERVOUS

PROUD

SAD

SHOCKED

SHY

SURPRISED

TERRIFIED

THRILLED

WORRIED

Brain Teasers

- Can you make 100 by interspersing any number of pluses and minuses within the string of digits 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1? You can't change the order of the digits! So what's the least number of pluses and minuses needed to make 100? (For instance, $98 - 7 - 6 + 54 - 32$ shows one way of interspersing pluses and minuses, but since it equals 107, it's not a solution.)
- A man wanted to encrypt his password but he needed to do it in a way so that he could remember it. He had to use seven characters consisting of letters and numbers only (no symbols like ! or <). In order to remember it, he wrote down "You force heaven to be empty." What is his password?
- A truck is stuck under a bridge and the driver cannot get it out. A man walks by and stops to help. He easily gets the truck unstuck. How did he do it?



Challenge yourself!

Can you guess the name of the flowers?

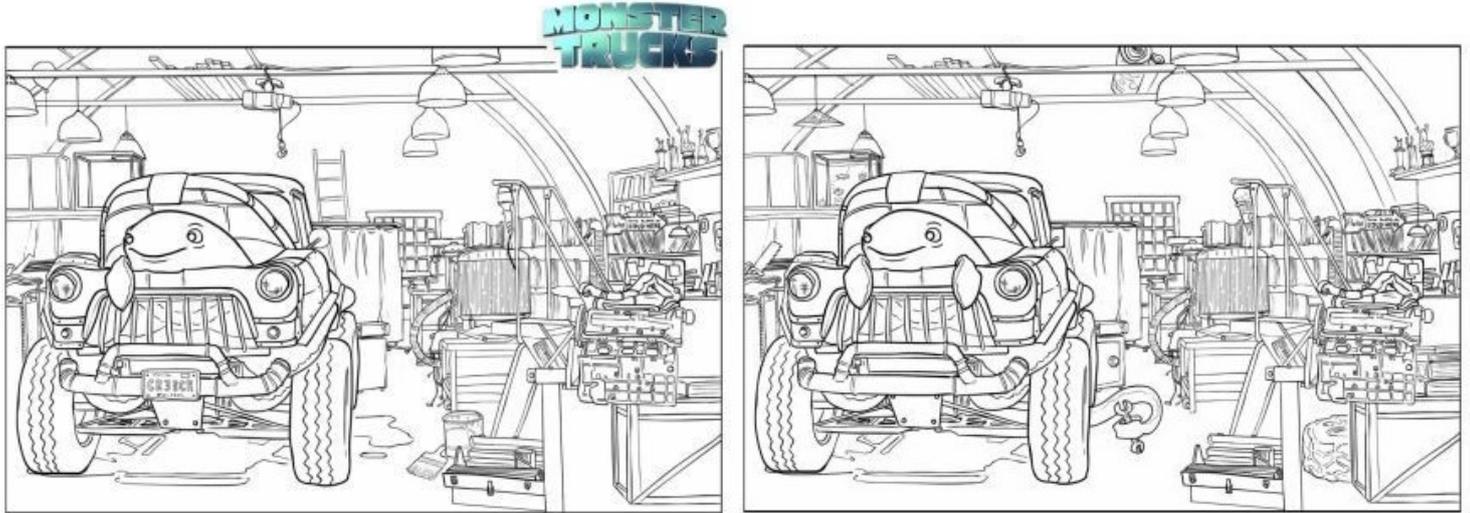
1. Mrs Bulls underwear
2. A dapper animal
3. Best policy
4. Unhappy ringers
5. A proper girl
6. A lover's plea
7. Industrious monarch
8. Country on wheels
9. Watched by shepherds
10. At the ball without a partner
11. For Reynard's paw



Word Puzzle Pictures

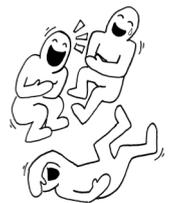
1 I Right I	2 AWAKE	3 JACK	4 1,2,3...38,39 40,LIFE
5 WINEEEE	6 JOBINJOB	7 FUSS ○	8 ORSEMAN
9 NEW LEAF	10 MESNACKALS	11 SLEEPING JOB	12 ENIKAW LOST LOST LOST LOST 

Challenge yourself!



A Spot of Humour

- Q. What kind of shoes do burglars wear?
A. Sneakers
- Q. Have you heard about the restaurant called Karma?
A. There is no menu you get what you deserve
- Q. How do trees get online?
A. They log on.
- Q. What is the tallest building in the entire world?
A. The Library because it has so many stories
- Q. Which is faster HOT or COLD?
A. HOT, you can easily catch COLD



Sudoku

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

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 ever 3x3 square.

Answers

Spot the Difference: 1. Balloon top left corner
2. Different lightshade on left 3. Box on left different
4. Ladder missing 5. Toll of something on top missing
6. Roof beam missing 7. Shelves under missing beam
missing 8. Extra item on top shelf on right 9. Cylinder
missing on left 10. Whale missing a flipper 11. Grid on
back wall higher up 12. Door on press to right of truck
13. Arm with wrench 14. Books missing on right of pic-
ture 15. Tyre on ground missing 16. Paint tin and brush
missing 17. Reg. on truck 18. Nuts on plate under bumper
19. Pool on floor 20 Light on right of truck grill

Word Puzzle Pictures: 1. Right between the eyes
2. Wide awake 3. Jack in the box 4. Life begins at 40 5.
Win with ease 6. In between jobs 7. Fuss over nothing 8.
Headless horseman 9. Turn over a new leaf 10. Snack
between meals 11. Sleeping on the job 12. Making up for
lost time

Guess the Flowers: 1. Cowslip 2. Dandelion 3. Honesty
4. Bluebell 5. Primrose 6. Forget me not 7. Busy Lizzie
8. Carnation 9. Phlox 10. Wallflower 11. Foxglove

Brain Teasers: 1. 98 - 76 + 54 + 3 + 21 2. Try to
pronounce the sentence like these characters: u472bmt
3. He lets the air out of the tires



RECENT EVENTS IN IRELAND



Each year the proclamation is read outside the GPO on Easter Sunday Morning. The image shows the proclamation being read to an empty O'Connell Street on Easter Sunday 2020. There was no public involvement in this years commemoration due to Covid 19.



Since the emergence of the Covid 19 queueing has become a way of life. People queue for hours to enter supermarkets and hardware shops and on Monday, 8th June, IKEA opened their doors to customers, some of whom had been queueing since 5am.



Cars queue up in the tunnel of Croke Park waiting for Covid 19 tests. As championships were postponed during the lockdown the GAA made Croke Park available as a test centre.



The Antonov 225, the worlds largest cargo plane, landed in Shannon on 10th June filled with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) from China. Shannon is the only airport in Ireland with a runway long enough to be able to accommodate the Antonov 225 with a pitch as wide as Croke Park, six engines, 32 wheels and is six stories high. The giant plane was built in 1988 to carry the then Soviet Union's space shuttle between launch and landing sites. The plane carried one million gowns as well as other medical equipment for the Health Service Executive to aid in their fight against the Covid 19. The picture on the right shows the nose of the plane open and the cargo being unloaded.