

Chris McMorrow: *Taking a Chance on Art*



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Going Forward: A New Challenge

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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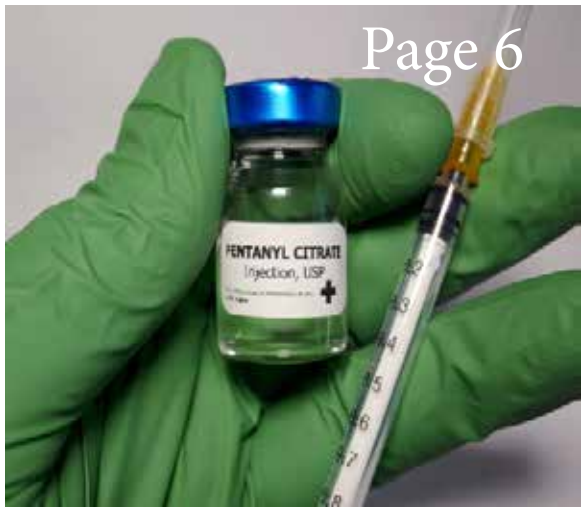
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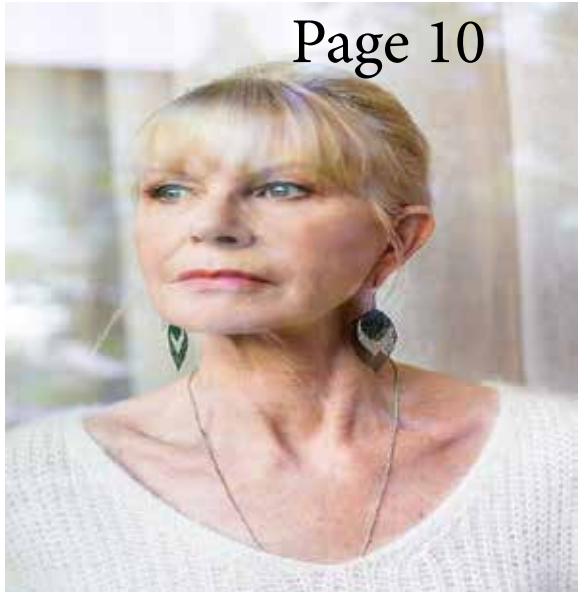
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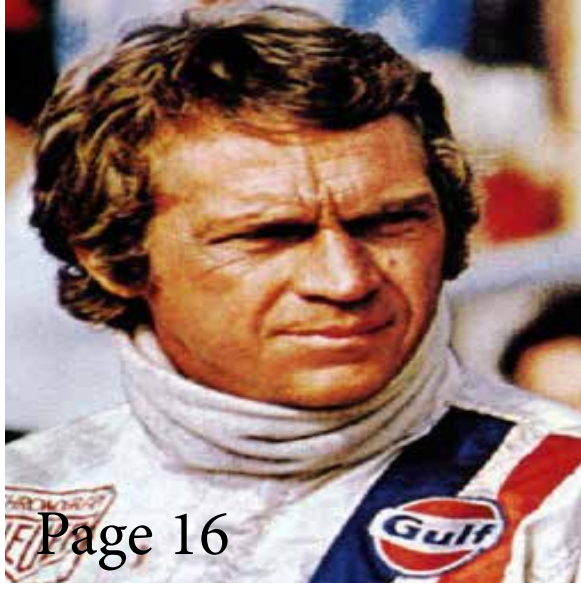
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This issue, Shaun Anthony takes a look at movies that destroyed lives, reputations, communities - and were even tied to tragedy.



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Ladies Nations Cup, Largs, Scotland, August 18-21,2023.

Ireland’s ladies finish runners up in exciting tournament.



Don’t forget to follow us on the socials:

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Six Nations Championship Scotland in Pictures

Photo spread from the Six Nations Championship.

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Chris McMorrow: Taking a Chance on Art

Chris McMorrow is a self-taught artist from Whitehall, Dublin whose paintings are in high-demand around the globe. Sam McMurdock recently had a chat with the Northside artist who specialises in vibrant oil and acrylic paintings of street scenes, cafes and pubs.

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Letter to my Younger Self - Alice Kinsella

Each issue we ask a well-known person to write a letter to their 16-year-old self. This issue, poet Alice Kinsella (30) who was Dublin-born but Mayo-raised takes on the challenge. Alice’s memoir ‘Milk’ is receiving great critical acclaim.



I was a hideously anxious teenager and that anxiety manifested in being a fairly unlikable creature. I studied hard, drank too much, and put my parents through the mill. We lived in Co. Mayo, having moved out there from Dublin when I was small.

I loved nature but didn’t fit in socially. I spent most of my childhood playing pretend games, writing stories, climbing trees. It was idyllic, in retrospect, and gave me a foundation of creativity and care for nature that has sustained me through all difficult times in my life.

I was enamoured with English in school, writing twelve-page essays on poetry, reading everything on the syllabus by Christmas of fifth year. It wasn’t work, it was fun. But I had no intention of studying English in college, because I wanted to change the world.

**You
can’t keep those fears at
bay, it’s like running from your
own shadow.**

I had a hard time in school, probably largely because I was such a self-righteous pain in the proverbial. The only thing I didn’t find difficult was the academic side, and that meant being told I could do anything I wanted after school. But that kind of choice can be paralysing.

I’d tell my younger self that the anxiety you’re hiding like an addiction is going to grow. You can’t keep those fears at bay, it’s like running from your own shadow. I was afraid of getting pregnant. The message for teenage girls was clear: have sex and risk pregnancy, which will ruin your life. But not having sex seemed to be a way of admitting defeat to Catholicism, and at sixteen I was at war with the oppression that ran through both history and the hallways of our school.

At eighteen, I did my Leaving Cert and by some miracle, considering the amount of dossing and panic attacks, did quite well. Part of my anxiety came from a painful empathy for living creatures and a misplaced illusion that I could change the world. I’d had a long time vision of the domineering grey walls of university,

though did not have the finances to allow that. I wanted to study something important. Something that would let me do good. I had Political Science, Philosophy, Economics, and Sociology at the top of my CAO form, largely because four subjects gave the best odds.

A second miracle arrived in the shape of the All-Ireland Scholarship. I’d never heard of it, but one day a letter arrived from the Department of Education informing me I would be a recipient. This allowed me to spend four years studying without working part-time or getting a loan (a loan no bank would have given me anyway.) I was lucky, because being as mentally ill as I was at the time was like having a part-time job in itself.

The college world I was inhabiting was alien to me. I’d gone to an underfunded school in rural Mayo where teachers’ responsibilities were divided between education and trying to get us to stop breaking into the derelict half of the building to smoke.



Trinity was a world of privilege, working class people were purely an academic subject, a factor in a thought experiment. Where did you go to school? I was asked, the speaker waiting for the name of a fee-paying institution.

It was in college that I realised the meritocracy I’d been told we lived in was nonsense, that I embraced feminism and became aware of the class difference between me and my peers. The scope of the world, the potential for failure, how wrong I seemed to have gotten everything, was overwhelming, and the anxiety toppled me. Never being one to do things by half, I committed to the nervous breakdown, and dropped out of college after six months. I spent a summer in bed reading novels, indulging in self-loathing. But the flip side of no expectations meant I was soon able to commit to doing what I actually loved, reading and writing.

With the help of the university mental health team, and my supportive parents, I went back the following September to study English and Philosophy. I was going to be a writer. I was going to read and read and read. I was awkward, often drunk, and generally at odds with the world. But in books I found a compassion and understanding that I didn’t in in-person interactions, and I wanted to be a part of that.

When I graduated, I couldn’t afford to stay in Dublin. I loved Dublin. It was where I wanted to be. But staying meant selling my time, years of my life, to a treadmill that moved too fast for me. Our capital city is not for people, it is for corporations, for landlords, it has become a place to cling to or to mourn. I moved back in with my parents and enrolled in a masters in Galway. I wanted to go abroad, but a grant to study would just cover the cost of living, and if I could live at home and commute, I’d have a year to write. I was lucky to live in Ireland, to receive grants and scholarships that gave me the freedom to make mistakes and still manage to get by.

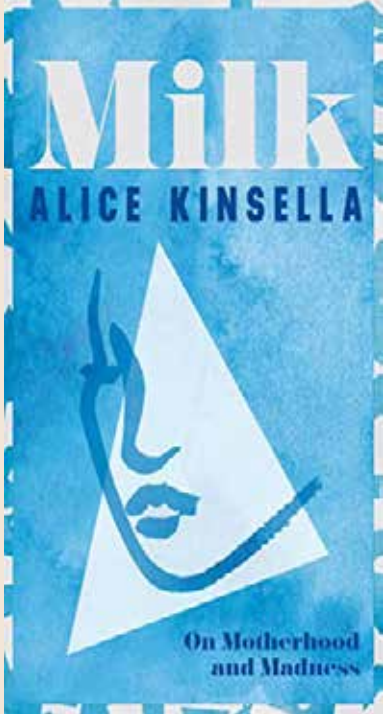
Necessity brought me home to Mayo and I’m glad. It taught me to stay still, to appreciate the land beneath me, to learn more about where I am from. Not where I was born or have blood ties, but where I have chosen to be, where I will raise my family. If I were to proffer some guidance for my sixteen-year-old self. First of all, missus, buy a better bra. I don’t care if the lace ones are what you think assorted boyfriends want, what I want is not to have chronic back pain. While you’re at it, quit smoking. Your body is for you, stop worrying about what others think of it. Well, it’s for you until you get pregnant. Then it’s more like a piece of prime farmland.

And you will get pregnant, but not yet, so stop panicking and learn to be in your body without fear for a while. In ten years you’ll be a mammy, don’t worry though, you still won’t feel like a grown-up.

At sixteen, you think there’s something inherently wrong with you. Writing a memoir, I often get asked about bravery or honesty in my work. For years, I wasn’t honest. I hid parts of myself out of shame. The panic attacks, boyfriends, what I wanted to do with my life. In the country, I was too nerdy. In college, I didn’t understand the social rules. My body, or what I did with it, was wrong. No matter where I was, there was something to mark me out. It felt like everything I did was a reason to be ashamed. There will always be someone that wants you to feel ashamed. That wants to make you smaller. Learn to interrogate your own morality, to keep that close, and forget the rest.

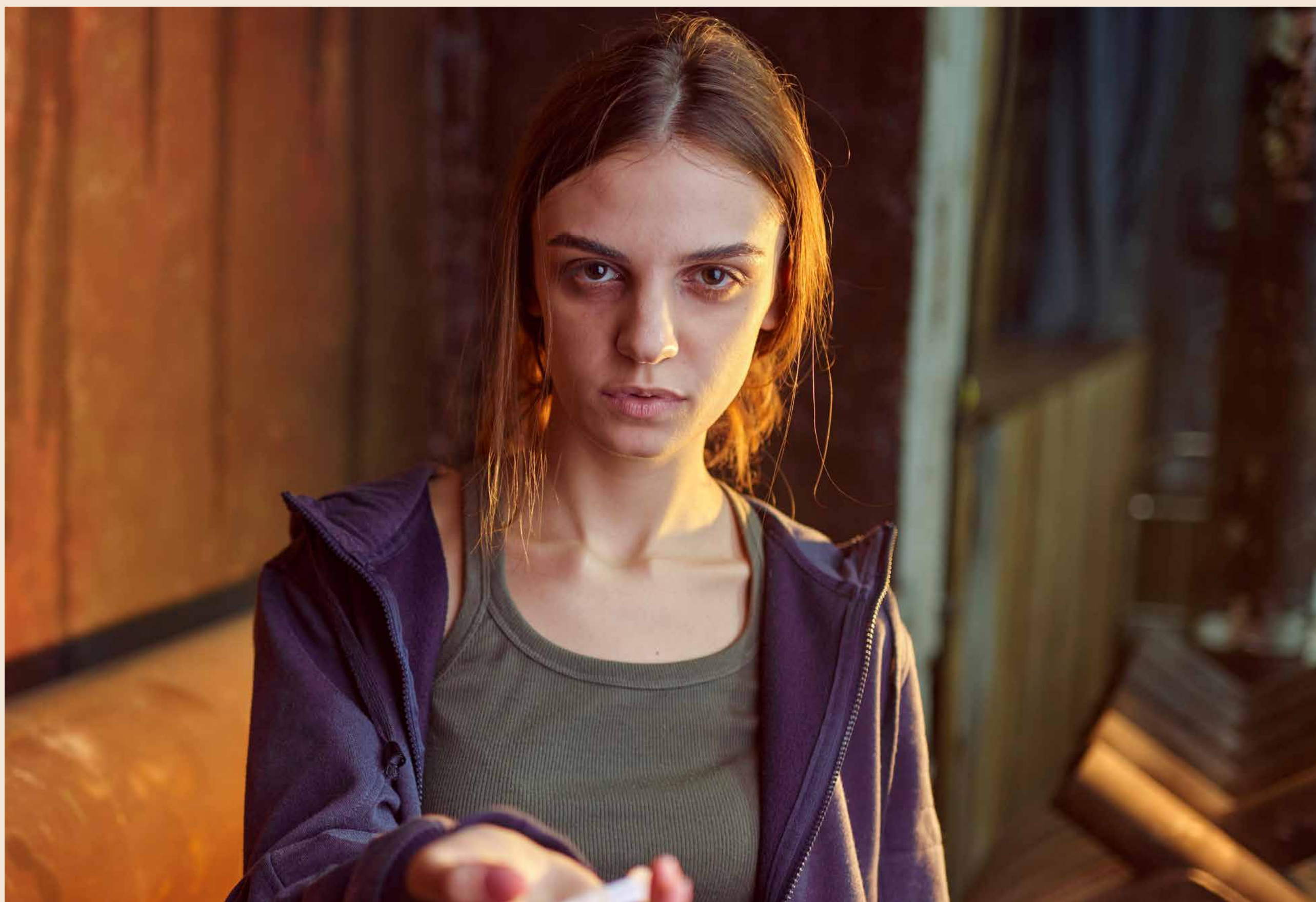
You want a pony for your thirtieth birthday, if I remember correctly, a remarkably odd thing you have in common with our five-year-old younger self. Well, no pony I’m afraid (like our mother before me, I’m not cleaning up after a horse), but you have three cats, a loving partner, and an amazing kid. Man, the kid, he’s the absolute coolest, you’re going to love him so much. I’m not sure how he’d feel about you though, the blue hair might spook him.

Milk: On Motherhood and Madness (Picador) is available in all good bookshops & online.



Belfast Helpless to Fentanyl Problem?

A drug that reduces users to a zombie-like state has taken over the streets of Belfast - but while paramilitaries are the dealers and public services are lacking, there's very little addicts and their families can do. Sineád Dunlop reports.



I was recently in Belfast city centre and watched a man and woman, both no older than 35 I'm told, doubled over, stumbling aimlessly before flopping over railings separating the footpath from the road. I could now understand why people describe them as “the walking dead” and “zombies” as it was incredibly disturbing to witness. I spoke to security at the McDonalds [Donegal Place] they were outside and they explained that the couple were on ‘Apache’, what I'd later learn is the street name for Fentanyl.

‘Is this a regular occurrence?’ I asked, and a female security officer laughed,

“Welcome to my life hun.... I spend more time protecting them ones [Fentanyl users] from the teenagers that wind them up and make a fool of them than what I do in here [in McDonalds]... They are someone's child, someone's mummy or daddy... it could happen to any of us.”

Fentanyl is a synthetic opiate one hundred times more powerful than morphine and it's been causing chaos in many families in the greater Belfast area. Former SDLP councillor Paul McCusker who lobbies on behalf of those facing homelessness, battling addiction and in poverty recently described Belfast as “a city in crisis” as men and women walk around aimlessly, bent over and completely oblivious to the elements. Last year there were 34 deaths in the greater Belfast area and despite drugs of this nature normally being ubiquitous amongst the homeless, none of the Fentanyl deaths were those of no fixed abode (although a few were known to homeless charities).

**A so
called “bit” of Fentanyl
caused Lisa to overdose**

As people continue to die from this opioid in 2023, McCusker begged for action,

“So many people are dying ... something needs to be done to step in and prevent more deaths but also protect our most vulnerable in the city. The city's Fentanyl problem is visible to anyone who lives, works or visits the city. People are struggling to get into the right service, we don't have the right services in place around allowing people to enter into recovery at that early stage of their addiction...better co-ordination is needed between agencies immediately to stop further deaths.”

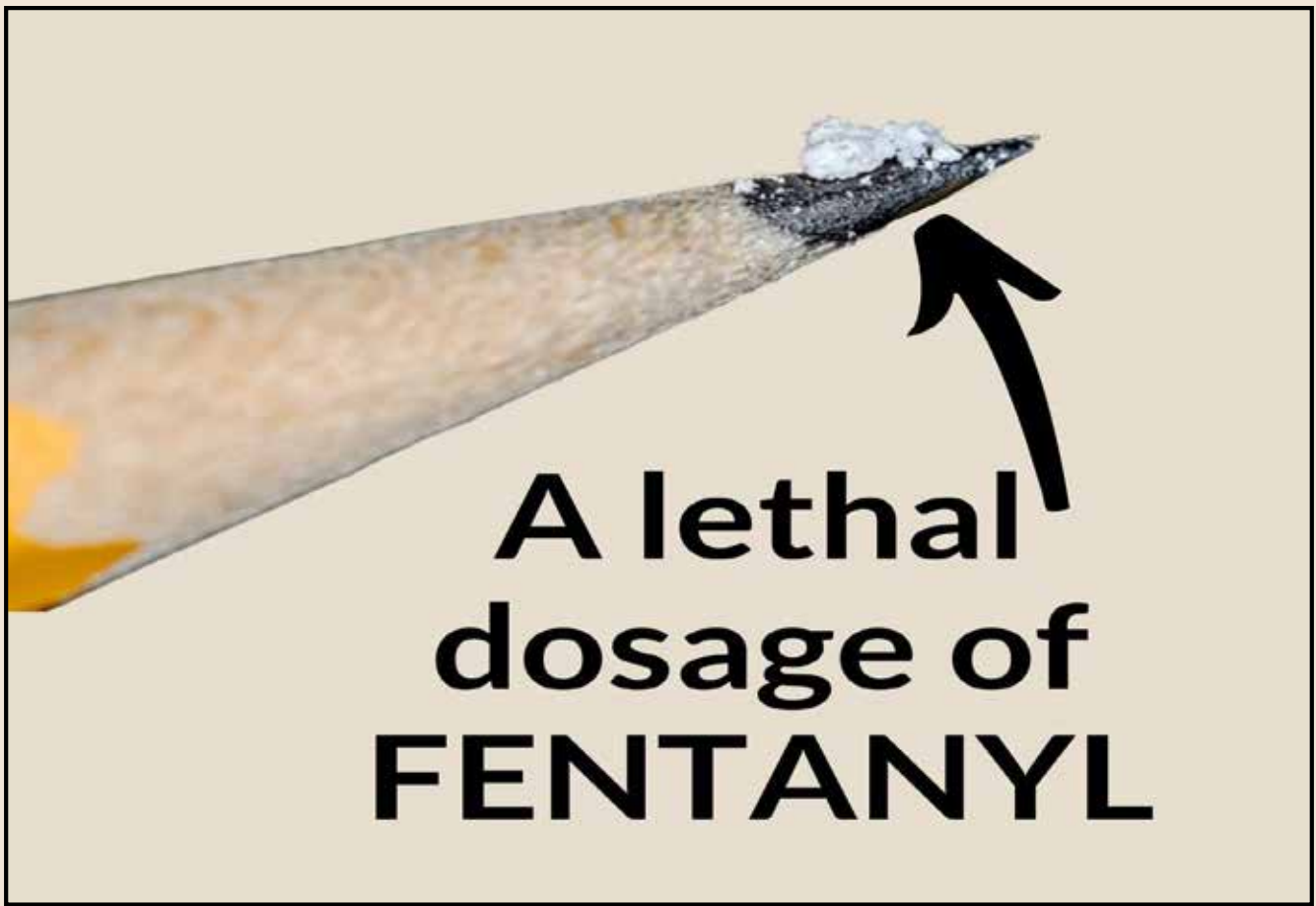
One of the ‘lucky’ ones

I recently reached out to a lady named *Maura in West Belfast whose 22-year-old daughter *Lisa had a very narrow escape after a terrifying experience the first time she used Fentanyl.

*Lisa, a barista in a city centre coffee chain had a car accident three years ago as she filtered onto the motorway. When she was released from hospital with a care plan and pain medication she was hopeful her life would return to normal following six weeks' home rest and weekly physiotherapy, however, her mum says that was not the case,

“Lisa was coming around before work very agitated. She was struggling to sleep. At her eight week hospital

review the doctor said she shouldn't need any more pain killers and he certainly wouldn't recommend anything stronger than Paracetamol. I could tell Lisa was ruffled and when we came out she pushed two pills out of a blister packet and knocked them back with coffee. I asked was that the last of the medication and she told me matter-of-factly that she'd been buying 30/500 Co-codamol outside a well-known nightclub, 'but it's just for the neck pain.' I was shocked, it seemed shady to me and it took me back to a very difficult time when she was 15 and me and her dad discovered her and her friend had been taking E-tablets. She'd been suspended from school around that time for smoking weed and having some in her locker, but she'd grown up since then, we'd never had any more issues like that and we'd even laughed about her being a handful for the teachers in recent years I never suspected she'd buy drugs again, albeit 'just', as she emphasised, prescription drugs. I was really upset and she started to cry and told me she'd never do it again. She begged me not to tell her dad and I didn't. I believed her."



Just under three months later, Maura received a frantic phone call from her daughter's flatmate *Angela; Lisa had been rushed to the Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH). Maura dashed to the hospital and was informed by Angela that Lisa had passed out and was having respiratory problems. Medics would later inform Maura that Angela told them Lisa had "tried a bit of Fentanyl." A so called "bit" of Fentanyl caused Lisa to overdose and only for the fast-thinking (and admission of Angela) that Lisa had taken the opioid, she could have been another one of Northern Ireland's death stats,

"Medics acted swiftly and were able to reverse the drug's affects. The staff at RVH and a miracle drug called Naloxone gave me my daughter back. After Lisa was released from hospital she was referred to different services but I really wondered how it would all come together, how these services would co-ordinate to help our daughter when appointments were weeks apart in different locations and some appointments, like mental health would be phone calls only, so my husband and I paid for her to go to a private live-in addiction treatment facility in Louth for an 8-week stay and this was followed up with weekly Skype sessions. I think we had turned a blind eye to the fact that our daughter had always shown addictive traits... food as a young child, booze, then drugs and prescription pills. I realise we were incredibly lucky in that she was rushed to the hospital, got the Naloxone and the fact we could afford private care



It chills me just thinking what could very easily have happened. If Lisa hadn't got the follow-up care, I don't believe she'd have been the upbeat, driven young woman she is today. The services just aren't there.... People are falling through the cracks unless they can scrape the money together to go private That shouldn't be the case."

....we
all know at least one dealer
and on the pains of death - we would
never utter a word...

Lisa still works as a barista but graduates next June with a HNC in Counselling - she currently gives talks around youth clubs and after school clubs on the dangers of drugs and plans to work in addiction after graduation.

Sadly many Fentanyl users do not have a positive end like this as this drug is especially addictive and fast-acting, and because its high is so intense it makes users even more prone to dependence. Adolescent and young adult Fentanyl users are especially susceptible to developing a Fentanyl addiction. As they develop a tolerance, their bodies will begin to require a higher dose to get the same rush - and even a slightly higher dose of Fentanyl can put a user in A&E, and cause irreparable physical damages.

**So
many people are dying
... something
needs to be done...**

It’s also incredibly unfortunate that Fentanyl is making its way into small towns, villages and hamlets across NI and -possibly the south-, with many young people addicted, in debt and forced by paramilitaries to sign up when they can’t pay. Sickeningly, we all know young men who have racked up “a strap” (a drug bill) and have two options: take the beating (baseball bat with nails) or sign up. And the hopeless thing about it is - we all know at least one dealer and on the pains of death - we would never utter a word, so how will our drug epidemic ever end? Between lack of services and pushers on every housing estate - we’d be forgiven for wondering if Northern Ireland will soon be the new rural America - an opioid abyss.

*Maura and names with asterisk are not real names.

Congratulations to Ireland’s Ladies team on their achievements in the Nations Cup in Langs, Scotland, August 2023



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Brain Wise:

Five Things to Know about Brain Tumours

With International Brain Tumour Awareness Week taking place from October 28 to November 4, latest figures from the National Cancer Registry (2018-2020) show approximately 823 people diagnosed with a brain or other central nervous system (CNS) tumour each year in Ireland.



Brain Tumour Ireland supporters take part in an event to raise awareness and funds for the charity

Symptoms of a brain tumour can include headache, visual problems, speech difficulties, seizures, personality changes, memory loss, nausea and vomiting.

The Registry also notes that brain and CNS tumours have a younger age profile than for most cancer types, representing more than 25 per cent of all childhood cancers in Ireland.

The good news is that the outcomes today, compared with 20 years ago, are much better thanks to the way brain tumours are managed.

Neurosurgeon Stephen MacNally notes,

“In terms of early diagnosis, the majority of brain tumours present with a seizure or deficit, including visual deficits, or perhaps some subtle character changes. However, I would always encourage people to get checked out by their GP for other symptoms such as recurrent early morning headache on awakening, with nausea or vomiting. With so many possible symptoms and signs, the cause is most likely to be something other than a brain tumour, but always best to get seen to.”

Brain Tumour Ireland, the national charity supporting people with a brain tumour, has compiled the following five things we should all know when it comes to brain tumours.

1. Brain tumours are all the same. False. It is estimated that there over 150 types of brain tumour, with a glioblastoma brain tumour being the most common.
2. Not all brain tumours are cancerous. True. Brain tumours can be malignant or benign. A malignant tumour spreads within the brain having started here in the first instance (primary tumour) or having spread from another part of the body (secondary tumour).
3. Benign tumours don't require treatment. False. Even benign tumours can be as serious as those that are malignant, as they can press on the brain causing serious symptoms and be a threat to life.
4. All people with a brain tumour have a family history of the disease. False. According to the American Brain Tumor Association, just 5-10 per cent of people with a brain tumour will have a family history of the disease.
5. Headaches are the most common symptom of a brain tumour. True. The classic headaches associated with brain tumours are often worse on waking in the morning and, for some, headaches wake them from sleep. The vast majority of headaches experienced by people are unrelated to having a brain tumour.

For more information, contact Brain Tumour Ireland
on 085 7219000 (Mon-Thurs, 9am to 5pm)
or visit **www.braintumourireland.com**.

The Mayo Whistle-Blower: *Valour in the Grips of Fear*

Mayo-born Maureen Kearney was gaslighted, attacked and raped for speaking the truth. Liz Scales reports.



For many years, Co. Mayo-born Maureen Kearney couldn't bring herself to talk about the callous attack and vicious rape she endured in her home by a stranger; in fact, for quite a long time she couldn't remember any of it, or in fact much of her life before the savage attack - her mind protecting her from the trauma - a condition known as Dissociative Amnesia.

Eleven years later, Maureen felt ready to talk and her story has been published in a book in France and turned into a film, *La Syndicaliste*, a thriller released in the UK in June.

In the film Maureen is portrayed by French actress, Isabelle Huppert. Sadly when the first screening of the film was shown and the attack scene came on, she had to run out - it was all too real. Despite struggling to watch the film due to its triggering effect, Maureen, now 67 is glad it's been made and is out there,

“If it can help one woman, then it's worth it.”

Indeed the film is an astonishing story of unthinkable trauma and surviving against the odds, yet it's also one of corporate misconduct, government fabrication and the petrifying repercussions of being a whistle-blower. Most people would never believe that Maureen Kearney's ordeal could actual happen in a civilised democracy.

Maureen's traumatic experiences, and the film took place in Paris although Maureen is a Mayo woman. Having always “been drawn to French culture”, Maureen won a grant in the 1970s to study at university in Aix-en-Provence. Soon she would meet and marry a Frenchman named Gilles Hugo. The pair made a good life in Paris, Hugh working as CEO of a sound production firm and Maureen taught English to the employees of Areva, a nuclear engineering company.

.... it
wouldn't be long until she
was one of the most powerful trade
unionists within the nuclear industry in
the country...

Champion of the People

When Kearney, by nature deeply empathetic, started noticing her students were being mistreated under the firm's lay-off scheme she started lobbying on their behalf - in fact, it wouldn't be long until she was one of the most powerful trade unionists within the nuclear industry in the country thanks to her erudite speeches and unshakeable determination.

Maureen Discovers Top-Secret Material

However, it would be in this role in 2011 that Maureen became aware of a strictly confidential contract involving Areva, the state-owned utility company Electricité de France (EDF) and China General Nuclear Power Corporation (CGNPC). If what she'd unearthed was true, it meant huge job losses at Areva as well as the transfer of sensitive nuclear technology from France to China.

Heart beating through her chest and mind ticking over faster than she could process all the information, Maureen was determined to unearth everything that was going on,

“I had extensive networking powers – journalists, politicians – so I started ringing around, trying to investigate.”

Kearney is Gaslighted

In the beginning Kearney was guaranteed by the major bosses and government bigwigs that the deal had been terminated, yet just a few months later she was sent a copy of the very contract with photographic evidence of it being signed, so she swiftly requested a meeting with Areva’s CEO, but found it incredibly difficult to keep her temper under control,

“I was far too direct.... I realise that now”.



The CEO gaslighted Kearney claiming there was no contract and the feisty Mayo native retorted,

“You’re a liar ... I have proof.”

Maureen claims she knew there would be consequences to her (justified) outburst professionally,

“It was a stressful time but you certainly never think you’re in physical danger.”

her assailant whis-
pered against her ear before carv-
ing the
letter A on her tummy

The Intimidation Begins

Almost immediately, Maureen started receiving anonymous phone calls, threatening her to “keep out of it” and mind her own business. Sadly, phone calls were not the extent of the harassment; Kearney’s grown-up children were also targeted; in one instance her daughter was left unnerved after she was followed continually by another car - no matter where the went it followed. Maureen told her not to be ridiculous,

“It didn’t seem possible,” she says but then her son was targeted, closely monitored by individuals in a car outside his house. One evening he’d had enough, ran out to confront them and they sped off.



The Nightmare

On Monday 17th December 2012 Kearney would find herself the target, front and centre. Hugo had a busy day ahead and left for work early, Maureen was brushing her teeth in the downstairs bathroom,

“My mind was elsewhere, I wasn’t alert. Why would I be?”

As she set her toothbrush down a black cover was pulled down over her head and a gun was placed at her back,

“I don’t remember my thoughts at all, but I remember my heart. It was beating so fast that I thought it was going to come out through my chest. I could hear the blood in my ears. It was the weirdest feeling.”

Maureen was pushed in to the living room and bound tight to a chair,

“This is your second warning, there won’t be a third,”

her assailant whispered against her ear before carving the letter A on her tummy (perhaps for Areva). Kearney believed her intestines were sitting on her knee and after that, clearly suffered from dissociative amnesia as she,

“....felt nothing I don’t know where I was but I wasn’t there.”

Six hours later Kearney’s cleaner arrived and found her tied up with a knife inserted into her vagina, handle-first. She was in such a terrible state that the housekeeper believed she was dead. As the cleaner knelt beside her she realised she was still alive but far from coherent.

Discredited by Law Enforcement

Sickeningly, when the assault and rape were reported to police they disbelieved her story. Some weeks later, Maureen and her husband were called into the station and separated. In a statement room Maureen was told, “You’ve made this whole thing up.”



She was repeatedly told she was a liar and then falsely informed that her husband didn’t believe her, nor did her close friends or work colleagues. After 10 hours of interrogation the police left the room. Maureen was exhausted, a mere shell, but in walked a man in civilian clothes. He walked over and stated sternly,

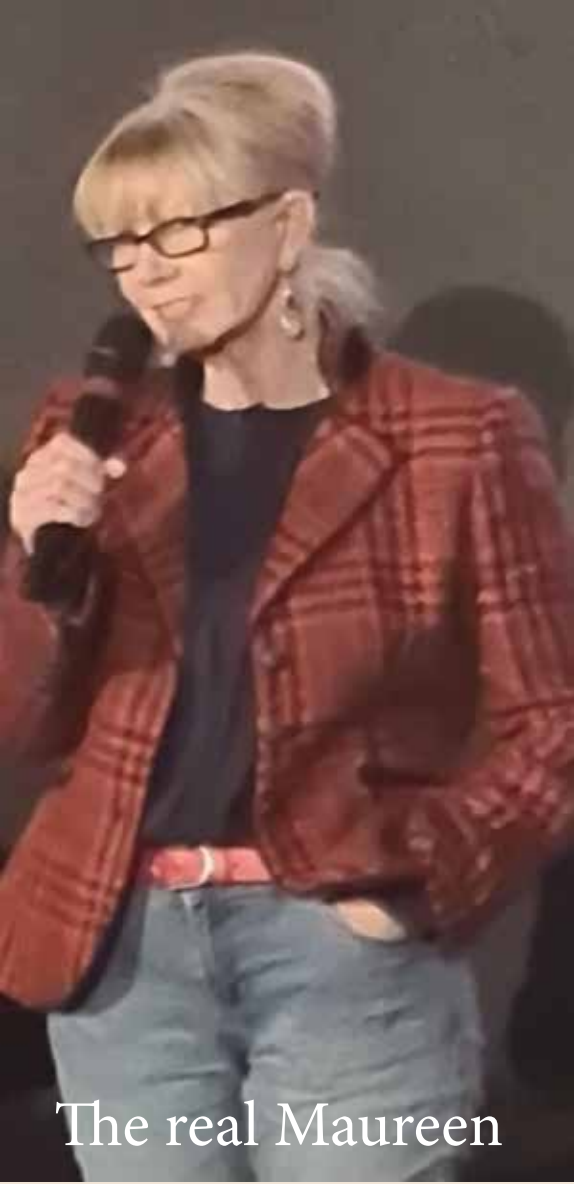
“If you don’t say you made this story up a steamroller will flatten your family and you’ll never get back up.” Terrified, Kearney took his pen and signed the piece of paper saying she’d imagined everything. Only then was she allowed home but was given seven days to write a more detailed admission. When she couldn’t construct one, she was charged with wasting police time. The case took four years to come to court, and Maureen spent every second of those 48 months in perpetual fear and never felt safe,

“I lived in dread, terrified all the time. I hadn’t been protected. I hadn’t been believed. I knew if anything happened again, there was nowhere to go for help.”

... she believes
she’d
discovered more than she realised.

Unsurprisingly Maureen never went back to work - she couldn’t function never mind hold down a job, in fact when her husband was at work or had to run any errands, friends had to stay with her as she couldn’t be left alone,

“I couldn’t eat. I was so bad that the doctor gave me a liquid supplement for anorexic people. I couldn’t sleep for more than an hour. I’d be awake, listening. Any sound I didn’t recognise would panic me. I couldn’t stay in that house.”



In late 2013, Hugo, her ever-devoted husband found a small, quiet town 250 miles away for them to start over, but when they were making their new home together Maureen refused to have any kind of chair she could be tied to in the house - kitchen chairs left her in a state of sheer panic as did any chair resembling one. Post traumatic stress was so severe she couldn't go to the hairdresser as having anyone stand behind her was sent her into a blind panic,

“I was in survival mode, living minute to minute, hour by hour, day by day.”

The Court Case

The case was heard in May of 2017. Maureen could barely utter a word on the stand - she was a mere shell as police falsely claimed there was no DNA or fingerprints at the scene. Kearney was found guilty and handed a five-month suspended sentence and a €5,000 fine.

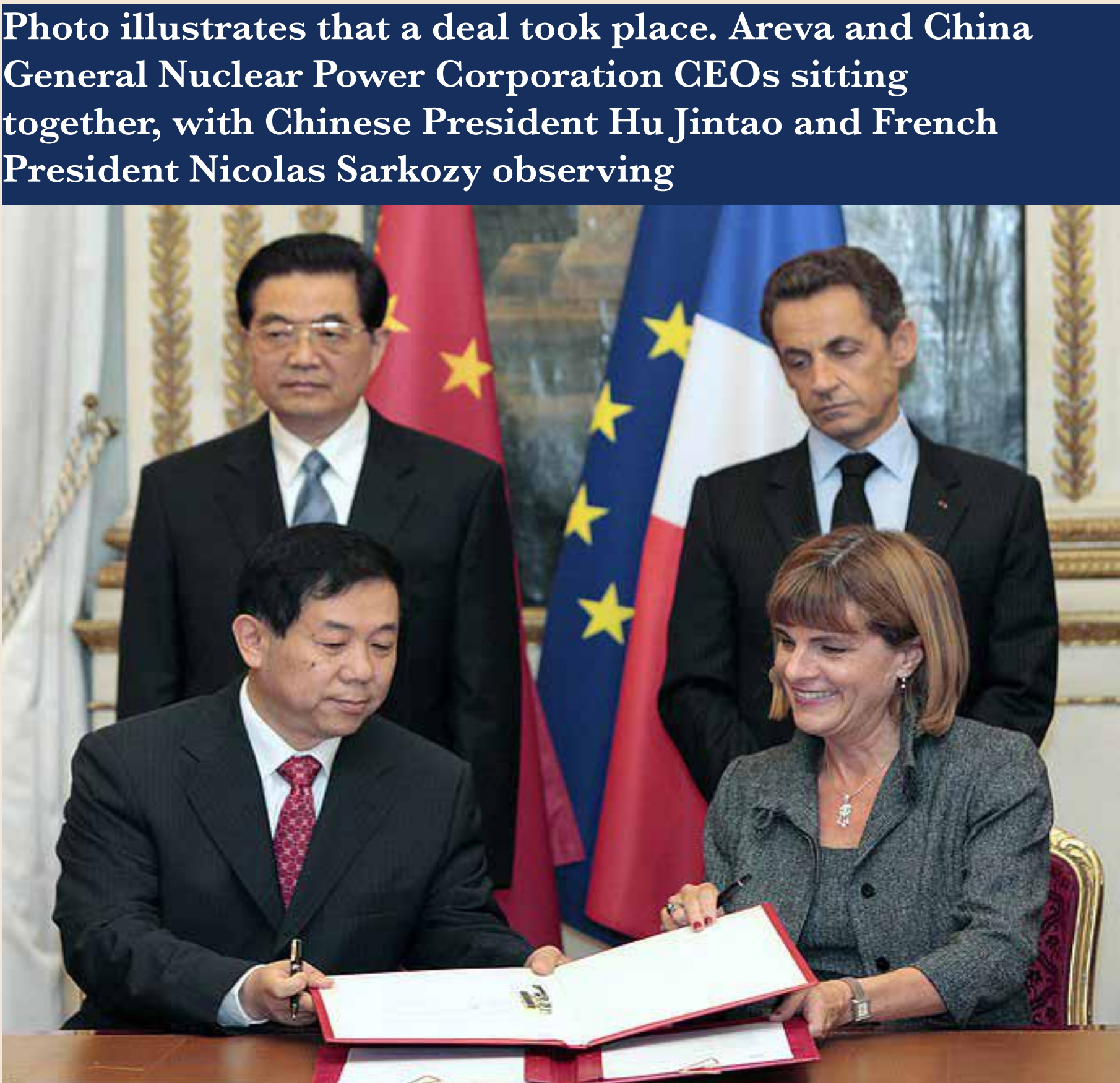
Despite barely functioning, Maureen claims that one thing kept her determined to fight, “I knew I was attacked and I couldn't accept that I was not believed.”

After the case, Maureen, with the help of good friends located a military psychiatrist who specialised in PTSD. He immediately believed Kearney's story and was so moved by it that he offered to testify in court on her behalf.

Not only did this therapist agree to fight for Maureen but he helped her understand what had happened, how complete shutdown and dissociation is a normal response to trauma,

“For the first time, in my sessions with him, I was able to talk about the attack. He got me back.”

Assisted by her union, Maureen appealed her conviction and had gathered lots of powerful evidence to support her case, for instance, her barrister discovered that the DNA taken from the scene had been lost. Neighbours had also reported suspicions to the police regarding a white van outside Kearney's home - but this was ignored. An unsettling revelation was unearthed - an identical attack had been reported six years previous by the wife of another whistleblower in the French energy industry and she had been raped and a coffin was carved into her tummy. This case was investigated by the same office and the file was lost. It never reached trial.



Kearney Fights On

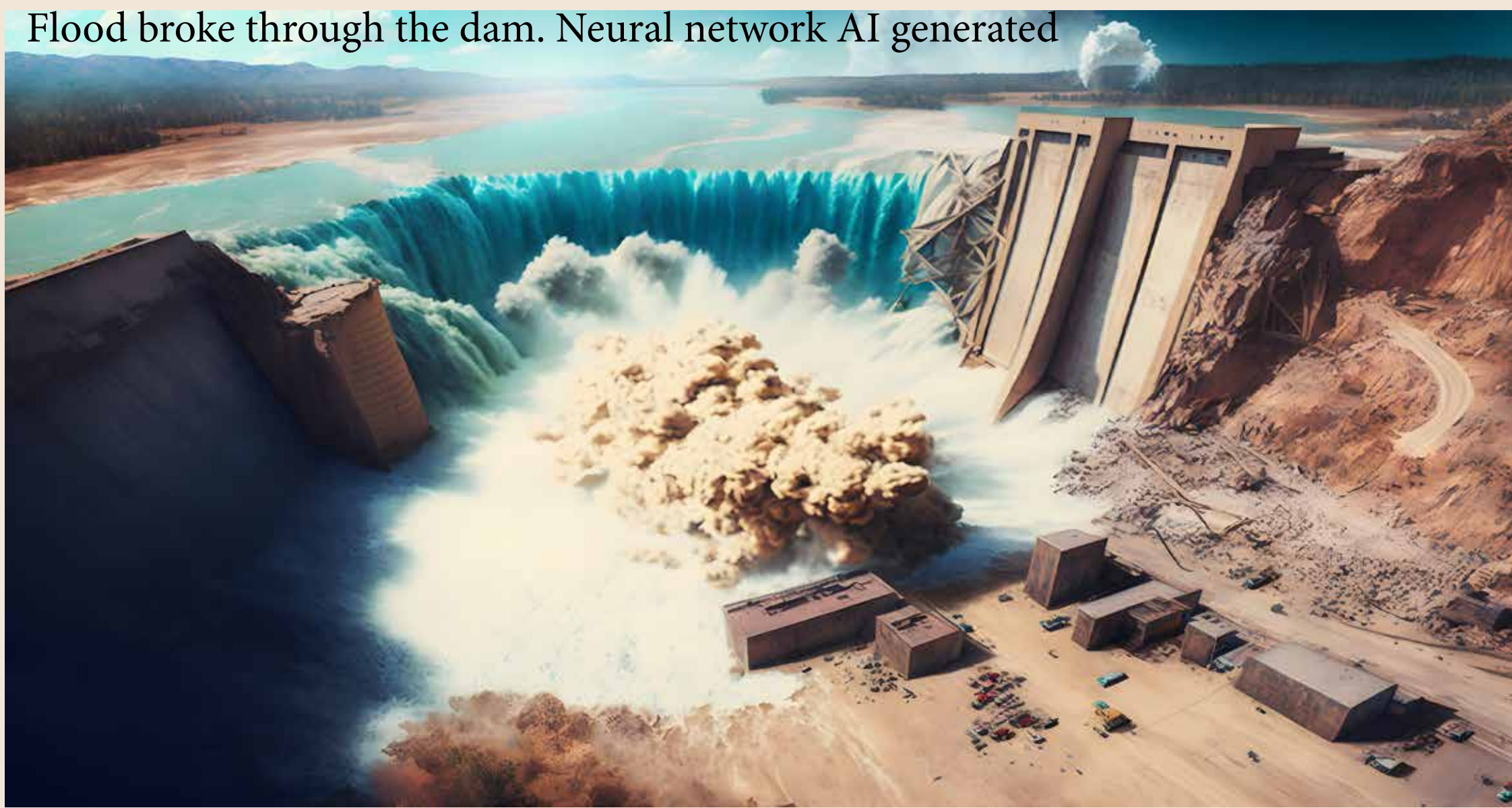
Maureen's appeal was successful. She had proven she was a woman of integrity in telling the truth and this was the beginning of her recovery. Sadly, her attacker has never been found and Kearney does not trust the investigation process as “it would be the same police, the same court area...”

The nuclear deal with China went ahead and 5,000 jobs were lost at Areva. Kearney to this day wonders what she was exposing that could have led to her attack but believes she'd discovered more than she realised. These days Maureen and her family are slowly rebuilding their lives in rural France. She works with small children at a play school “it helps me stay in the moment” and volunteers at a women's refuge centre.

Maureen Kearney is an incredibly brave woman whose valour in the grips of fear will inspire innumerable others for decades to come.

Libya Dam Collapse

Engineering expert Nadhir Al-Ansari Professor, Luleå University of Technology raises questions about management.



More than 11,000 people have been killed and tens of thousands are missing following the catastrophic collapse of two dams in the eastern Libyan city of Derna. The dam collapse came after an extreme storm, Storm Daniel, slammed into the north African country. The Conversation Africa’s Moina Spooner asked water resources and engineering expert Nadhir Al-Ansari, who has researched the design and safety of dams, to provide insights into the disaster.

How does extreme weather affect the stability of dams?

Dams are usually built to withstand heavy rainfall or drought. The design and construction of a dam takes into consideration all possible effects. All factors, including the type of building materials, the design of the foundation and the stability of a dam, as well as expected floods and earthquakes and even military action, are taken into consideration when planning a dam.

**In
Libya’s case, bad
management appears to have been
the cause of the dam’s collapse**

Aside from how the dam is constructed, there should be safety provisions in place. For instance, in cases of storms, the engineers should release the water to ensure that a dam’s maximum carrying capacity is not exceeded.

In the Libyan case, I believe that the management of the dams was not good. The engineer responsible for the dam should have made sure the water did not exceed the dam’s upper carrying capacity. When he noticed that a huge volume of water was entering the reservoir he should have released large quantities of water to keep its level lower than the upper limit.

Research shows that the main causes of dam failure are
foundation problems (40%),
inadequate spillway (23%),
poor construction (12%)
and uneven settlement (10%).

A site for a dam will not always be level because dams are built in mountain areas, but the designers must take that into consideration.

The dam design must suit the topography. Among the rarer causes of dam failures are acts of war (3%), defective material (2%) and earthquakes (1%). In Libya’s case, bad management appears to have been the cause of the dam’s collapse.

Could this tragedy have been avoided?

Yes, if the responsible people operating the dams had opened the gates to release water. When those responsible for the water management of the dam ignore heavy rainfall then one can expect such disasters to occur.

Dam managers should also know each dam’s catchment area and how much rainfall is forecast. This requires coordination between meteorologists and the staff responsible for the management of dams. When

heavy rainfall is expected, the meteorology department should inform dam managers who can then make arrangements for the release of water to keep it within the dam’s operational limits. This is the usual practice in all the dams I’ve studied in Iraq. In this case, there must have been a breakdown in communication between meteorological department and engineers managing the dams.



How do engineers and authorities typically monitor the structural integrity of dams?

Dams should have a regular inspection programme that takes into consideration all parts of the dam. All countries with dams, whether in the US, Iraq or Sweden, have regular inspections. There should be instruments for monitoring cracks in a dam’s walls and any changes in its structure. Once identified, they must be attended to immediately.

In Libya’s case, if they had opened the sluice gates to keep water within the dam’s carrying capacity, the collapse of the dams would have caused less damage.

Are there emerging technologies or innovations to improve safety?

There are a number of models and techniques and each dam has its own model or technique that the designer suggests. Planning for extreme weather events is usually done at the design stage of the dam. The designer is meant to give a thorough report on the stability of the dam against various factors, including weather.

All countries with dams, whether in the US, Iraq or Sweden, have regular inspections

Different scenarios are given according to the water level in the reservoir of the dam to prevent dam failure. The government concerned should know what to do in case of dam failure, guided by the design information. For instance, in my study of Iraq’s Mosul dam, which took place after the dam was constructed, I suggested that a protection dam be built downstream to secure the safety of the downstream area and its population. Safety steps can be taken even after construction of the dam. The other safety measures relate to housing and other developments in areas downstream. In Libya’s case, there was poor planning. The areas downstream from the dams should not have been used for housing.

Ultimately, the dam failure in Libya could have been prevented, or at least the losses could have been minimised, if the engineers on site had released the water from the reservoir once the storm started.

Author: Nadhir Al-Ansari Professor, Luleå University of Technology

First Published on The Conversation

Movies that Negatively Impacted Lives & Communities

This issue, Shaun Anthony takes a look at movies that destroyed lives, reputations, communities - and were even tied to tragedy.



We all love a good movie but some films will forever be remembered for what was left behind in their wake. Let's take a look at a few of those films.

Le Mans (1971) - Leg Amputation & Career Destroyed

Coming from hit movies like Bullitt and The Thomas Crown Affair, Steve McQueen hoped to do something a little different with his next project. He wanted to make the greatest racing movie ever. McQueen's plan was to star in a documentary-style film about the 24 Heures du Mans, an event where drivers compete for 24 hours straight. The event has been called the "world's most famous endurance race," and the King of Cool thought it would be the perfect subject for his new movie.

Unfortunately, things didn't pan out the way McQueen had hoped. The film's original director, John Sturges, who of course is known for The Magnificent Seven and The Great Escape, wanted to make a more conventional narrative film, and the two clashed so hard that Sturges eventually left the project. Soon, the movie had gone so far over budget that McQueen was forced to give up his salary, any future profits, and control of the picture if he wanted to finish the film. Worse still, the making of Le Mans would ultimately cause his company, Solar Productions to collapse. But at the end of the day, at least McQueen made it out of Le Mans in one piece. The same can't be said for David Piper. A Formula One racer working on the film, Piper was driving a Porsche 917 for a scene when one of the tyres deflated. Piper lost control of the car, and in the ensuing accident, the driver suffered a major injury to his leg. Sadly, the wound became infected, and the doctors were forced to amputate. The injury effectively ended his racing career - and it was all for a movie that's largely been forgotten by most moviegoers.

**....the
wound became infected,
and the doctors were forced to
amputate.**

A Clockwork Orange (1971) - Brutal Murders

Stanley Kubrick's examination of psychopathy in modern society is hailed as a masterpiece, but upon its release, A Clockwork Orange was condemned for going too far with its graphic violence. Alleged copycat crimes became so rampant that Kubrick personally had the movie banned from the U.K. in 1973. Nonetheless, the most high-profile case was in '89 and 2002, when Peter Foster murdered his wives Linda Grimm and Linda Wardill. The so-called Clockwork Orange Killer had a history of violence against women, but it escalated after he saw his favourite film. Despite his self-censorship, Kubrick always held that disturbed minds are fundamentally responsible for copycats.

Deliverance (1972) - Stereotyping & Discrimination

Based on the novel by James Dickey, Deliverance is a powerful story about how people react when they're ripped from civilisation and thrust into a world without law and order. Unfortunately, most people remember it as the movie where Ned Beatty gets raped by a hillbilly. Granted, it is the most memorable moment in a film full of toothless woodsmen and decrepit rednecks. In other words, it's easy to understand why the folks of

Rabun County have mixed feelings about this film.

Rabun County, for those who don’t know, is where Deliverance was filmed, and believe it or not, the movie did wonders for the local economy, inspiring quite a few people to try white-water rafting. As a result, adventurers have been flocking to Rabun County ever since, and according to a CNN article back in 2012, tourists bring over \$40 million to the area each year. However, while the money is nice, not everyone is happy with the way Southerners are depicted in the film. Speaking with CNN, one Rabun County resident said,

“There are still a lot of people here locally who have hard feelings about the stereotypes the movie represented.”



As a county commissioner once explained,

“We were portrayed as ignorant, backward, scary, deviant, redneck hillbillies.”

But this goes a whole lot further than just hurt feelings. According to a report by Marketplace magazine, people have reportedly been, “passed up for jobs because they came from Rabun County.”

And when locals planned on celebrating Deliverance’s 40th anniversary, quite a few citizens complained, with one woman going so far as to say that

“the movie ruined my life.”

After all, if you come from a region best known for banjo-playing and pig-squealing, you probably don’t get a lot of respect.

“We
were portrayed as
ignorant, backward, scary,
deviant, redneck hillbillies.”

The Message (1977) - Hostages & Murder

In 1977, a director Moustapha Akkad released The Message, a desert epic in the vein of Lawrence of Arabia. Only instead of focusing on an English adventurer, the film tells the story of the Prophet Muhammad and the rise of Islam. True, you’re not supposed to actually depict Muhammad, but Akkad got around this by having actors speak directly at the audience, as if the camera itself was the prophet. But despite Akkad’s attempts at making a peaceful, inoffensive film, quite a few people took his message the wrong way.

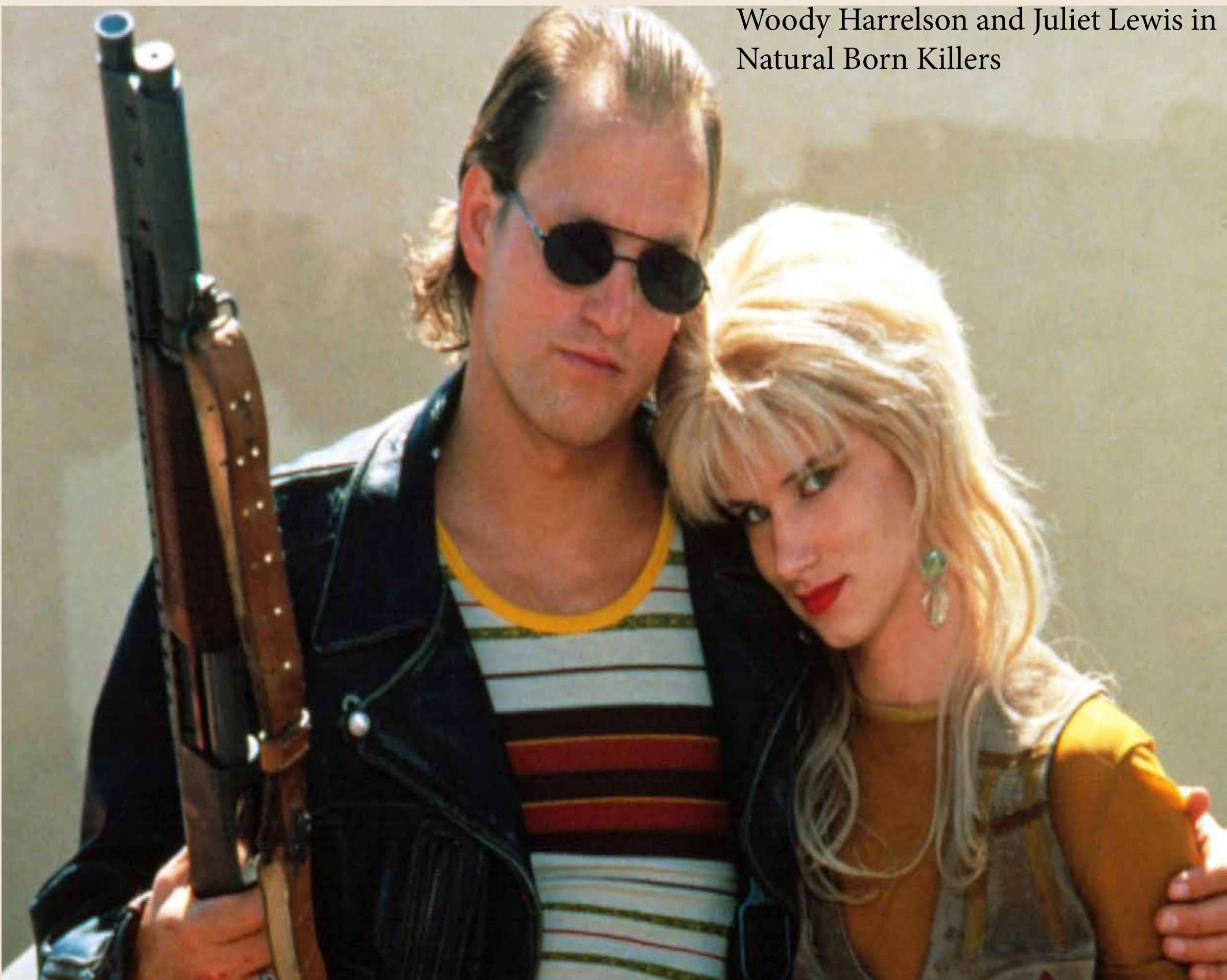
Multiple countries banned the film, but even worse, one guy decided to stage a protest... with swords and shotguns. On 9th March 1977, Hamaas Abdul Khaalis and 11 of his cronies drove to Washington D.C. and took over multiple buildings around the city. Armed

with firearms and all sorts of blades, Khaalis took 149 hostages and made two demands. First, he wanted the government to release a group of prisoners who’d murdered his family years before. (It seems Khaalis wanted to serve his own brand of bloody justice.) Secondly, he demanded that The Message be removed from cinemas. As a result, several New York cinemas put their screening on hold (although, the government declined to follow-up on Khaalis’ first demand). Tragically, this attack wasn’t without casualties. When the group stormed the District Building, since renamed the Wilson Building, Khaalis and his group shot and murdered a security guard named Mack Cantrell and a reporter named Maurice Williams. Fortunately, the rest of the hostages were freed 39 hours later, and Khaalis was sentenced to life in prison, where he died in 2003. As for filmmaker Moustapha Akkad, he went on to have success as a producer, helping create one of the greatest horror franchises of all-time: the Halloween series.

WarGames (1983) - Hacking and Suicide

A genius and online activist who helped create RSS, Reddit, and Creative Commons, Aaron Swartz thought

it was wrong to charge astronomic fees for scientific research and scholarly works. Wanting to make a point, Swartz hacked into the digital library JSTOR and illegally downloaded countless articles, but this stunt didn’t sit well with federal agents, and soon, Swartz found himself facing 35 years in prison. As a result, the internet pioneer committed suicide, ending his life at the age of 26. So what does this have to do with the movies? Well, the law used to prosecute Swartz was directly connected to the 1983 hit WarGames. This Matthew Broderick movie follows a young computer whiz who hacks into NORAD and (accidentally) almost starts World War III.



Woody Harrelson and Juliet Lewis in Natural Born Killers

Evidently, the movie freaked out the folks in Washington DC, with one congressional report claiming WarGames was a “realistic representation” of what hackers could do. Four minutes of the movie were even shown in Congress as a warning about the dangers of the internet.

While it wasn’t the only factor, WarGames played a very real part in inspiring the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA) of 1984. Originally, the law was meant to prosecute people who attacked banks or agencies related to America’s defence system, but over the years, the law was amended so many times that it can now be used to prosecute hackers who steal government secrets as well as hackers who download scholarly articles.

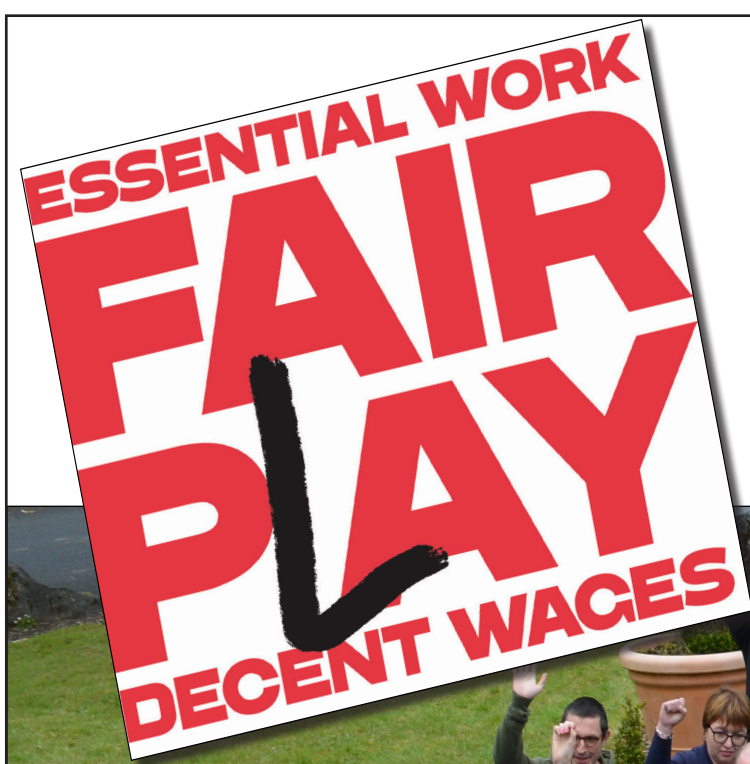
**Natural Born Killers
inspired a
number of violent criminal acts and
murder sprees by copycats**

Natural Born Killers (1994) -‘Inspired’ Columbine Massacre

Oliver Stone didn’t pull any punches in condemning America’s violence culture through the exploits of a serial killer couple. Many critics didn’t completely get the irony. Tragically, neither did some disturbed individuals. Natural Born Killers inspired a number of violent criminal acts and murder sprees by copycats, most of them teenagers. Perhaps the most famous crime was the Columbine High School massacre. Stone and Time Warner were hit with an incitement lawsuit that dragged on for six years, before being dismissed. There are always much deeper catalysts for copycat criminals than where they get their twisted ideas.

It would be too easy to point a wagging finger at film directors - holding them accountable for how unhinged individuals digest their art - however, a movie is merely 90 minutes of entertainment; scapegoating those who create that entertainment is unfair and distracts from who is really to blame - those who do not understand that we are all responsible for our own actions.

Congratulations to Ireland's Ladies team on their achievements in the Nations Cup in Langa, Scotland, August 2023



Mandate members at our Biennial Delegate Conference

THE UNION FOR RETAIL, BAR AND ADMINISTRATIVE WORKERS IN IRELAND

Paul
Murphy TD

 /paulmurphytd  @paulmurphy_td  @tdpaulmurphy



CATHERINE CONNOLLY
Independent TD

Congratulations and Best Wishes
to Ireland's Ladies Team

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Flood Street
Galway



Congratulations to Ireland's Ladies team on their achievements in the Nations Cup in Langs, Scotland, August 2023



The Communications Workers' Union will continue working with the ICTU to ensure that the burden of the cost of living crisis does not disproportionately affect workers & families.

For more information on the work that the CWU does, both as a trade union and within wider society, please visit us at:



www.cwu.ie



CWU Ireland



@CWU

Ladies Nations Cup, Largs, Scotland, August 18-21,2023.

Ireland’s ladies finish runners up in exciting tournament.

Hosted by Street Soccer Scotland, teams from Ireland, England, Sweden, Romania, Northern Ireland and Scotland representing six organisations who use the power of football to change lives took part in a competitive weekend of international football, fun and friendships.

For many players, the journey to the pitch has been a difficult one, overcoming barriers and building confidence along the way.

In what was an exciting tournament, Ireland (Coached by Graham Tucker and Mary Byrne) reached the final with impressive wins over Scotland, England, Sweden and N. Ireland to set up a final against favourites, Romania. In an exciting match the score remained 0-0 until the final minutes when Romania broke the deadlock and ran out winners by 3-0 as Ireland chased the game. It was an unforgettable tournament for all participants and the Girls in Green can be really proud of their performances.

Congratulations to Vanessa Ogbonna who won Player of the Tournament at the Six Nations Women’s Tournament in Largs, Scotland Aug 20/21. Vanessa plays her football in our Pearse Street League and was part of our Street League selection representing Ireland at the tournament.

Congratulations to Street Soccer Scotland who did such a brilliant job hosting the tournament. A big thank you to all followers of Irish Homeless Street Leagues whose support makes it all possible.

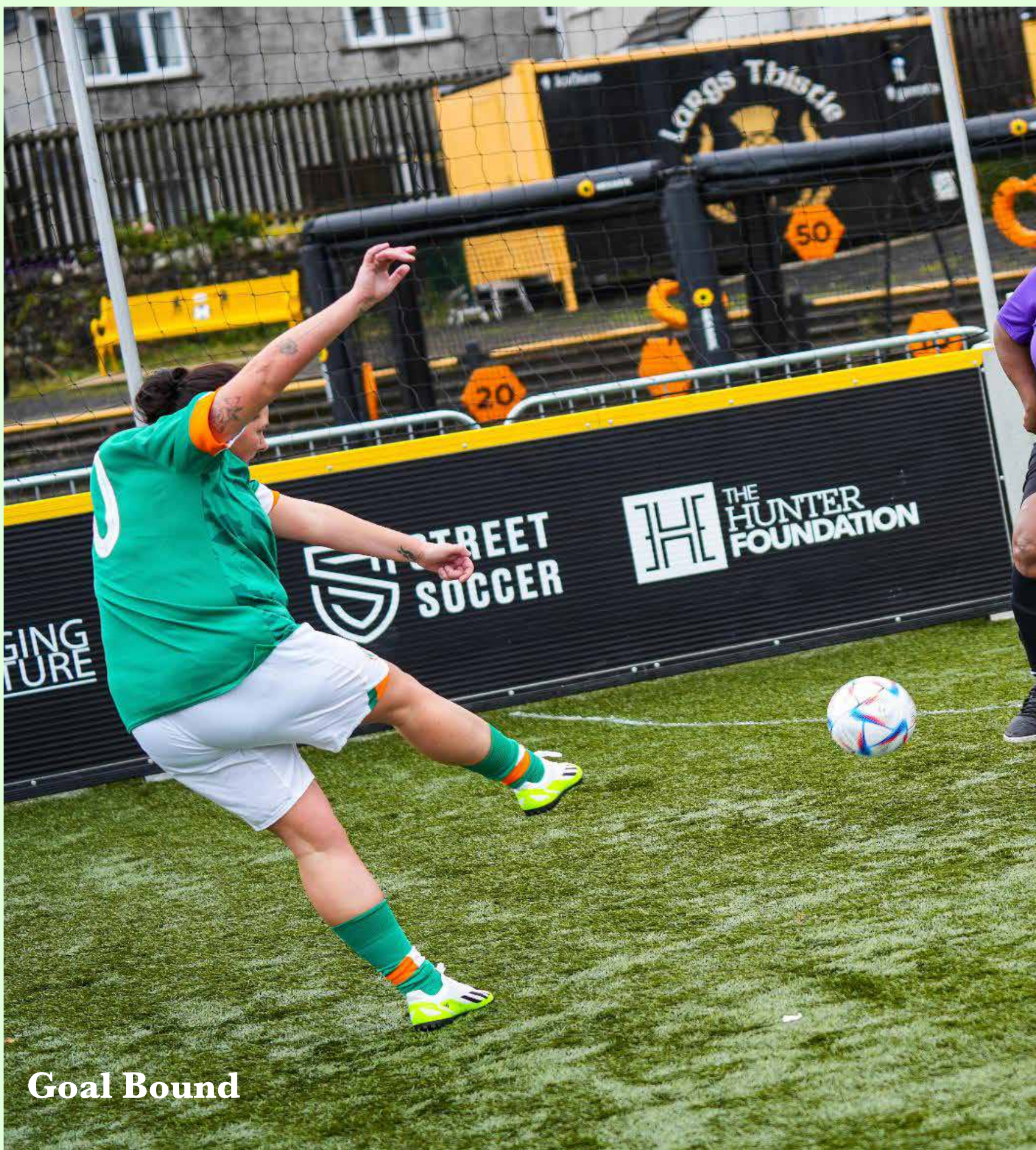


L-R: Cynthia Gonzales, Alba Fuentes, Amanda Duffy, Alison Ryan, Amanda Kilian, Vanessa Ogbonna, Siobhan Kennedy, Nicola Duffy



Street Soccer Womens Nations Cup Scotland, Aug 2023





Goal Bound

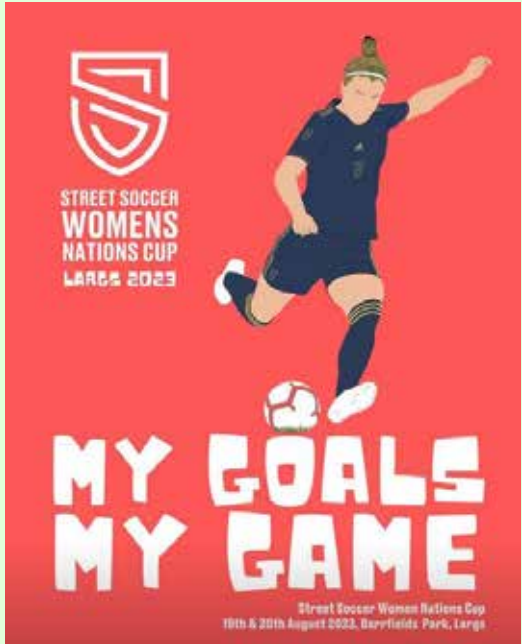


Player of the Tournament
representing Ireland
Vanessa Ogbonna

*“A Ball
Can
Change
A Life”*



Proud moment



It's mine



Enjoying the moment

Congratulations to Ireland’s Ladies team on their achievements in the Nations Cup in Langs, Scotland, August 2023

IMPORTANT CONTACTS



Important Contacts

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

Local Authorities

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

Day Services

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

Emergency Numbers

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


122 or 999




Feidhmeannacht um Dhaoine ar Easpa
Díidíne Réigiún Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin Region Homeless Executive



An Garda Síochána
Ireland's National Police and Security Service






Ireland’s newest trade union is proud to campaign for decent housing and an end to homelessness.



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Fórsa Trade Union



Fórsa trade union

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FOCUS Ireland



Thanks to you, last year we changed the lives of over 12,500 people

FOCUS Ireland



Because laughter is the best medicine!

Bob was in trouble. He forgot his wedding anniversary. His wife was really pissed. She told him, “Tomorrow morning, I expect to find a gift in the driveway that goes from 0 to 200 in 6 seconds AND IT BETTER BE THERE !!”

The next morning he got up early and left for work. When his wife woke up, she looked out the window and sure enough there was a box gift-wrapped in the middle of the driveway.

Confused, the wife put on her robe and ran out to the driveway, brought the box back in the house. She opened it and found a brand new bathroom scale.

Bob has been missing since Friday.

A Catholic guy goes into the confessional box. He notices on one side a fully equipped bar with Guinness on tap. On the other wall is a dazzling array of the finest Cuban cigars. Then the Priest comes in.....
“Father, forgive me, for it’s been a very long time since I’ve been to confession, but I must first admit that the confessional box is much more inviting these days!”
The Priest replies, “Get out. You’re on my side of the box...”

Tom, Dick and Harry were in the pub enjoying a few quiet drinks one night, when they decided to get in on the weekly raffle. They bought five \$1 tickets each, seeing it was for charity. The following week, when the raffle was drawn, they each won a prize.

Tom won the first prize - a whole year’s supply of gourmet spaghetti sauce.

Dick was the winner of the second prize - six month’s supply of extra-long gourmet spaghetti.

And Harry won the sixth prize - a toilet brush.

When they met in the pub a week later, Harry asked the others how they were enjoying their prizes.

“Great,” said Tom. “I love spaghetti.”

“So do I,” said Dick. “And how’s the toilet brush, Harry?”

“Not so good,” Harry said, “I reckon I’ll go back to paper...”

A doctor and his wife are having a fight at the breakfast table. Husband gets up in a rage and says, “And you are no good in bed either,” and storms out of the house. After sometime he realises he was nasty and decides to make amends and calls home. She comes to the phone after many rings and the irritated husband says, “What took you so long to answer the phone?” She says, “I was in bed.” “In bed this early, doing what?” Shouts the doctor. “Getting a second opinion!”

A group of girlfriends are on vacation when they see a 5-story hotel with a sign that reads: “For Women Only.” Since they are without their boyfriends and husbands, they decide to go in.

The bouncer, a very attractive guy, explains to them how it works. “We have 5 floors. Go up floor by floor, and once you find what you are looking for, you can stay there. It’s easy to decide since each floor has a sign telling you what’s inside.”

So they start going up and on the first floor the sign reads: “All the men on this floor are short and plain.” The friends laugh and without hesitation move on to the next floor. The sign on the second floor reads: “All the men here are short and handsome.” Still, this isn’t good enough, so the friends continue on up. They reach the third floor and the sign reads: “All the men here are tall and plain.” They still want to do better, and so, knowing there are still two floors left, they continued on up. On the fourth floor, the sign is perfect: “All the men here are tall and handsome.” The women get all excited and are going in when they realise that there is still one floor left. Wondering what they are missing, they head on up to the fifth floor.

There they find a sign that reads: “There are no men here. This floor was built only to prove that there is no way to please a woman.”

S C R E E N

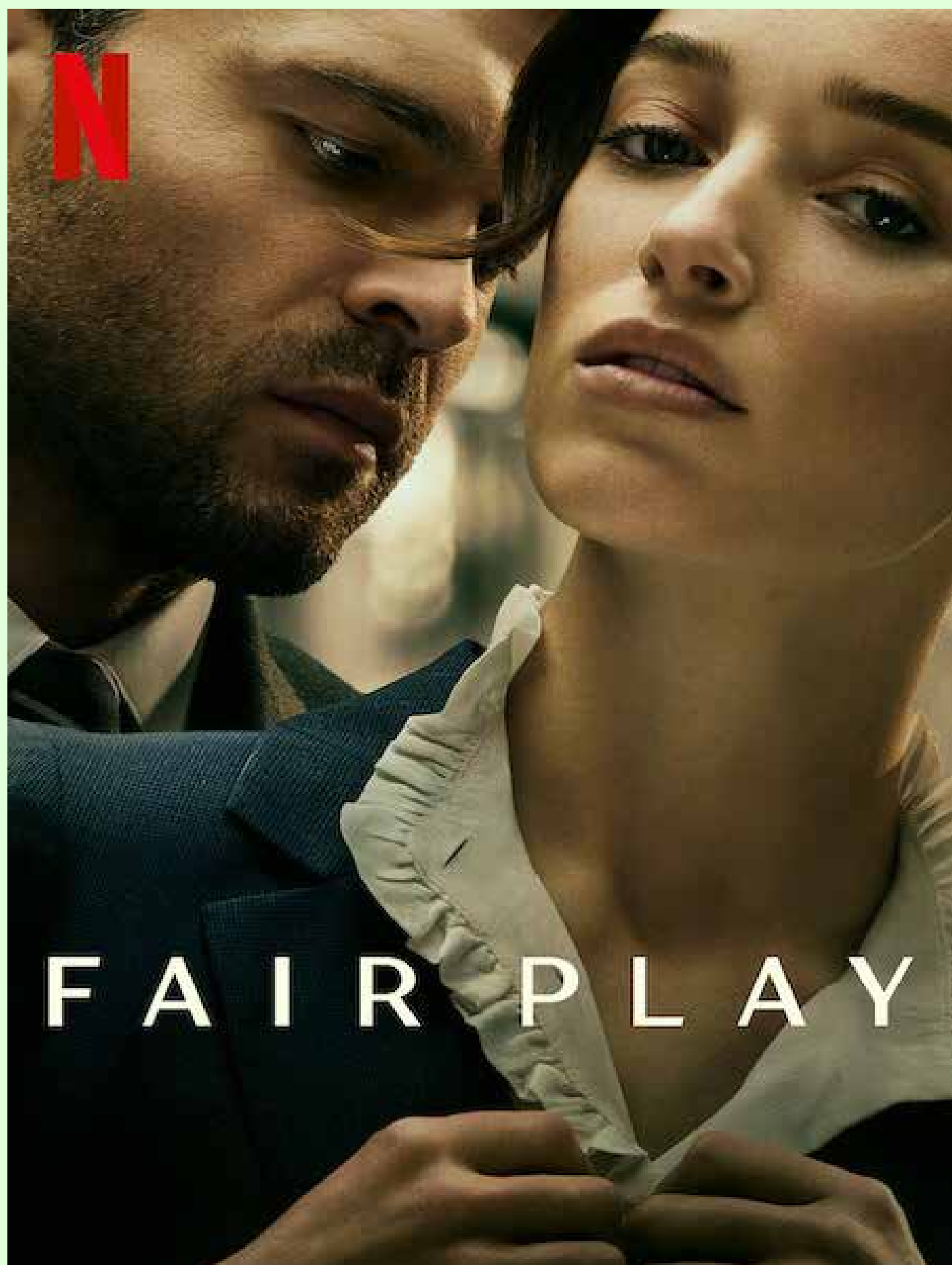
S C E N E

Fair Play **

Starring: Phoebe Dynevor, Aiden Ehrenreich
Run Time: 115 mins
Streaming on: Netflix
Available: 6th October

Described as an erotic thriller, this movie first premiered at Sundance Film Festival and arrives globally on Netflix 6th October.

Fair Play centers around Emily (Phoebe Dynevor) and Luke (Alden Ehrenreich), a pair of financial analysts who are engaged in a relationship forbidden by their shared employer. But when one of them gets an unexpected promotion, their relationship gets pushed to the brink, threatening to unravel far more than their recent engagement. Fifty Shades fans will love this.



The Changeling ***

Starring: LaKeith Stanfield, Emy Coligado
Run Time: 8 x 60 mins
Streaming: Apple TV+
Available: Currently

Based on the 2017 Victor LaValle novel of the same name, The Changeling stars LaKeith Stanfield as Apollo Kagwa, a used book dealer and new father. Life is about as good as it gets, and Apollo is loving each and every moment as a first-time parent, but it seems his wife, Emma (Clark Backo), is exhibiting signs of postpartum depression.

As Apollo does his best to tend to his spouse and child, the former does something terrible and then vanishes. With no time to lose, Apollo embarks on a search-and-rescue quest for Emma, as a world of horrors begins unfolding around him. The first three episodes of The Changeling premiered 8th September with one additional episode dropping each Friday until October 13.



Inside **

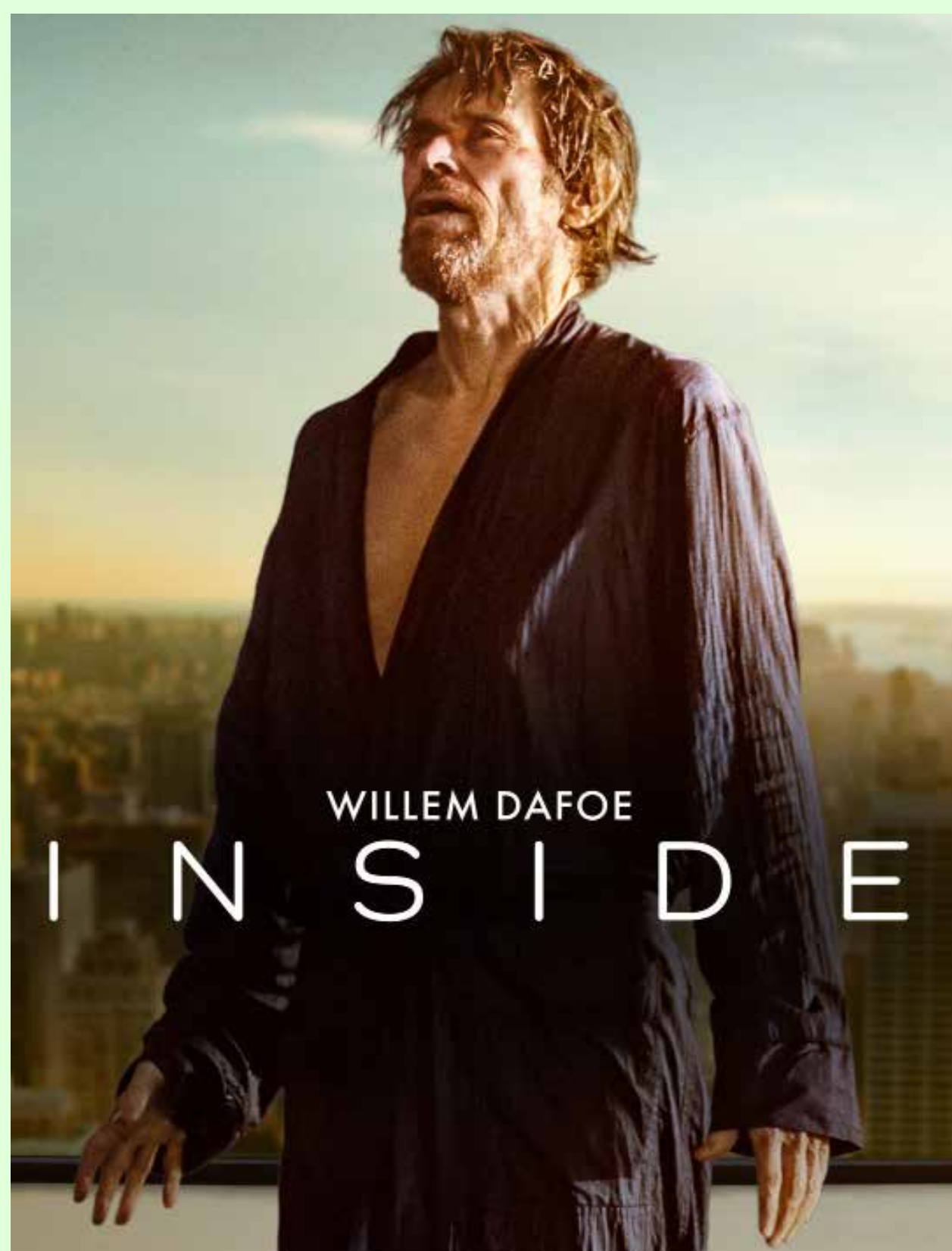
Starring: Willem Dafoe

Streaming: Prime Video

Run Time: 105 mins

Available to stream: Currently

There is nothing quite like spending an entire film trapped with Willem Dafoe in a luxurious apartment as he struggles to survive and Inside, with all its faults, delivers on that. Telling a story of art, ambition, and agony, it follows Dafoe's thief Nemo who finds himself left behind at a heist after it all goes terribly wrong. Left with limited resources, he'll have to find a way both to survive and break out as no salvation is coming other than the one he creates for himself. The film is an endurance test by design, but it also is an oddly thrilling experience where all the small details coalesce into an art display of its own.



The Little Mermaid ***

Starring: Halle Bailey, Melissa McCarthy

Streaming: Disney+

Run Time: 135 mins.

Available to watch: Currently

Disney's live-action "The Little Mermaid" is now straming on Disney+ after earning \$568 million at the worldwide box office over the summer! It was certainly the movie on everyone's lips pre-Barbie.

Halle Bailey takes on the iconic role of Ariel opposite Melissa McCarthy as Ursula, Javier Bardem as King Triton and Jonah Hauer-King as Prince Eric. Why remake an excellent film? Halle Bailey is all the reason that any audience should need to justify revisiting this classic. Just wait till you hear her sing 'Part of Your World,' delivered with all the conviction of Jennifer Hudson's career-making rendition of 'And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going.' A star is born." Excellent for fans of The Little Mermaid - but not for everyone.



What are you streaming?
Tweet us @BigIssueIreland

Chris McMorrow: Taking a Chance on Art

Chris McMorrow is a self-taught artist from Whitehall, Dublin whose paintings are in high-demand around the globe. Sam McMurdock recently had a chat with the Northside artist who specialises in vibrant oil and acrylic paintings of street scenes, cafes and pubs.



Chris McMorrow grew up a quiet, introspective child on the Northside of Dublin in Whitehall to a mum who’d been a nurse and a dad who worked for Aer Lingus. As a little boy Chris recalls asking his mother if he had been a twin as he always felt “a bit different.”Although he was not one of twins, looking back he believes he had undiagnosed Autism...

“I’m convinced, so is my wife that I’m what they’d term neurodivergent today. I’ve always been different and I’ve always liked being alone.”

In times past autism was almost whispered about in hushed tones. Isn’t it great we are more aware and accepting of neurodiverse individuals these days?

“We are. Back when I was a child, being called Autistic would have been an affront. The world is getting better in that respect.”

....people
in the arts will usually have the
same mannerisms, needing alone time
and being more comfortable with solo
pursuits...

I was reading lately about the highly sensitive nature of artists and how they find joy and beauty in places that others won’t.

“I actually only discovered quite late in life that people in the arts will usually have these mannerisms as well as needing alone time and being more comfortable with solo pursuits.”

Why do you think that is?

“I think it’s because artists tend to have projects they get wrapped up in very easily and this leads to being alone.”

Chris didn’t have an enjoyable schooling experience, with teachers, unaware of his neurodiversity being downright cruel,

“I can remember one woman teaching us maths problems in the first class and saying, ‘If Farmer Green has 20 cows and Mr. Smith has 15 sheep or whatever the case may be and finding the whole problem completely confusing... I would get lost amongst all this information and be utterly confused. She made me stand in front of her table and she’d a big long cane and just hit me over the head with it for not getting the answer correct. The longer she made me stand and the more she hit me, the more exhausted I was getting and the more muddled.”

That’s actually very upsetting to hear.

“Thinking back it’s difficult not to be angry about it because this teacher was there to teach, she could clearly see I was trying my best, becoming overwhelmed and still, she continued to punish me cruelly and relentlessly because I was built different mentally. I can also recall small children who were left-handed having their left hands tied behind their backs or whacked it was awful to witness and it was awful for those children just doing what was natural to them. What was wrong with these people? I can’t bear to think of kids, puppies or anything being punished like that ... it’s upsetting, cruel and very wrong.”

Thankfully educators know better now.

“Well it’s still pushing round pegs into square holes in the school curriculum in many cases ... is there really any room for being different? Are teachers recognising that some kids should be focusing on other things like the arts? Teachers still need to realise that we’re all wired differently and encourage individual interests.”

Despite not enjoying school, Chris loved getting home to draw and paint, a talent he believes he inherited

from his mother,
“who never got the chance to pursue her talent.”
Chris and his five siblings would marvel at their mum’s work, especially her “beautiful calligraphy - but she was a stay-at-home mother and with six of us and a home to keep, you can imagine she never got to indulge her passion much.”

Chris laughs as he speaks of his biggest cheerleader, “encouraging the artist in me” by “buying me the little tins of paints... you know the ones you’d wet your brush and there’d be all these tiny little colours within the tin?” Chris’ mum would sit and watch him draw and paint and encouraged him in his other endeavour - bird-watching,

“She knew I loved watching birds, writing down what I saw, how the bird sounded and stuff like that... I called it my bird book ... I always knew she was very proud of my unusual interests.”



Many young people would never notice a bird in the sky?

“That’s the thing, even to this day I could be walking along the street and a Buzzard will fly by a mile up in the sky and I’ll hear it. I’ll say to my life, ‘Did you hear that?’ And of course she’ll have no idea what I’m talking about.”

Chris credits his love of birds and country life to a tiny river surrounded by housing estates,
“...I’d find myself attracted to it constantly. The river belonged to the Department of Agriculture and it was only tiny but filled with little frogs and bugs and I’d escape off there all the time ... I loved it - every spare moment I was there and I’d be absorbed in the most minute details of what was going on. I lived near the airport so it was nice escaping to this place of solitude looking into another world. I’d come home and draw or paint what I’d seen and my mother would be looking over my shoulder saying, ‘Isn’t that very very good?’ And of course that motivated me all the more. Then I met a guy at school who was really into drawing, his dad was an architect and this boy would bring me in special pens I could use for my drawings.”

**These
prints motivated me
- they were my carrot they
made me want to paint. I’d never
seen anything like them ...**

So art broadened your friendship circle too.

“Yes, and then the school magazine ran an art competition and I won it, so all this built my confidence. Around this time RTÉ had a documentary about two artists and they each got 15 minutes to showcase their work and one of them did wildlife and I can actually remember that very moment thinking, ‘If only I could do something like that’”.

Like almost every artist out there, Chris finished school and “followed the normal path” of obtaining secure employment in the Civil Service. When he was 19 “the bug hit again” and he enrolled in some art night-classes,
“The teacher there really accelerated my growth in art by a couple of years and because he was so infectious, it really rubbed off, so from that point on I started taking my art and a possible career in it more seriously.”

Life and work commitments again took precedence but an impromptu trip to Cleggan in Galway changed everything,

“I walked into a gift shop and spotted these four prints by an English artist called John Dickson and was mesmerised. There was something about his work that piqued my interest like never before. I’ve since looked him up on the internet and can’t find out anything about him. He did these West of Ireland scenes - they were so beautiful, so colourful and I just had to own them. These prints motivated me - they were my carrot they made me want to paint. I’d never seen anything like them ...”

Although you wanted to paint for a living, you must have had that niggle at the back of your head - ‘will I make any money?’

“Well, when I finally got the courage to quit the day job I had a wife and four kids to support.... so the fear was real [laughs].”

Was everyone supportive?

“[Laughs] My wife supported me but everyone else thought I was mad ... I’m glad I didn’t make a pros and cons list because I’d never have given up my job ...the cons would have been five pages long.”

How did you start?

“I remember walking down Merrion Square and seeing artists selling their work so I started taking one or two up with the hopes of making a sale.”

That would have been difficult for a reserved person.

“It forces you to interact - suddenly you’re in business, you’re trying to sell yourself, put yourself out there, talking to people ... it was difficult but good for me.”

How so?

“Feedback from the public helped me improve, and talking to other artists gave me better ideas for approaching galleries.”



And it paid off?

“Suddenly I was making my full-time salary by working part-time. Sadly I’m very scatterbrained Not so good at the business, the websites and all that stuff ... I tend to do the paintings and forget the rest [laughs]. My youngest son is moving to Barcelona and is planning on setting up an art gallery there to sell my work and future paintings of that city.”

He also has the artistic gene?

“One of my twin sons just finished his English degree, is going on to a Masters and is putting the finishing touches to his first novel, so yes, we do seem to have that artistic gene through the family.”

I started taking one or two up with the hopes of making a sale.

Advice for anyone wanting to quit the day job?

“Be prepared to twist and turn ... I had to deal with the crash and the pandemic.”

Speaking of the pandemic, how did you adjust during that period?

“I started doing prints instead when people weren’t buying paintings. For a good few years the market dipped - for most people it was ‘do we buy a painting or a 40 inch TV Let’s go with the TV [laughs].”

You find Dublin City inspirational obviously - what excites you about it?

“I worked there and knew the streets. The pub and street scenes always grab my attention. There’s something about the old brickwork - I just get sucked into it all and need to paint it.”

As with all art, it’s important to know what works best commercially and Chris uses an app that sends out an email two weeks after someone has bought a painting requesting feedback and from this feedback, “I can really discover what draws people to certain paintings, for instance someone will say they bought a pub scene because they met their wife there, or another painting, someone worked in that pub for 30 years and the painting is a retirement gift. There’s a lot of nostalgia involved and using a business app I can really see what works commercially.”

As we finish our chat Chris tells me he’s been drawing family members’ dogs lately “to unwind” but jokes “I drew one and now everybody wants their dog sketched.... Why did I start?”

Check out Chris’ work at <https://chrismcmorrow.net>



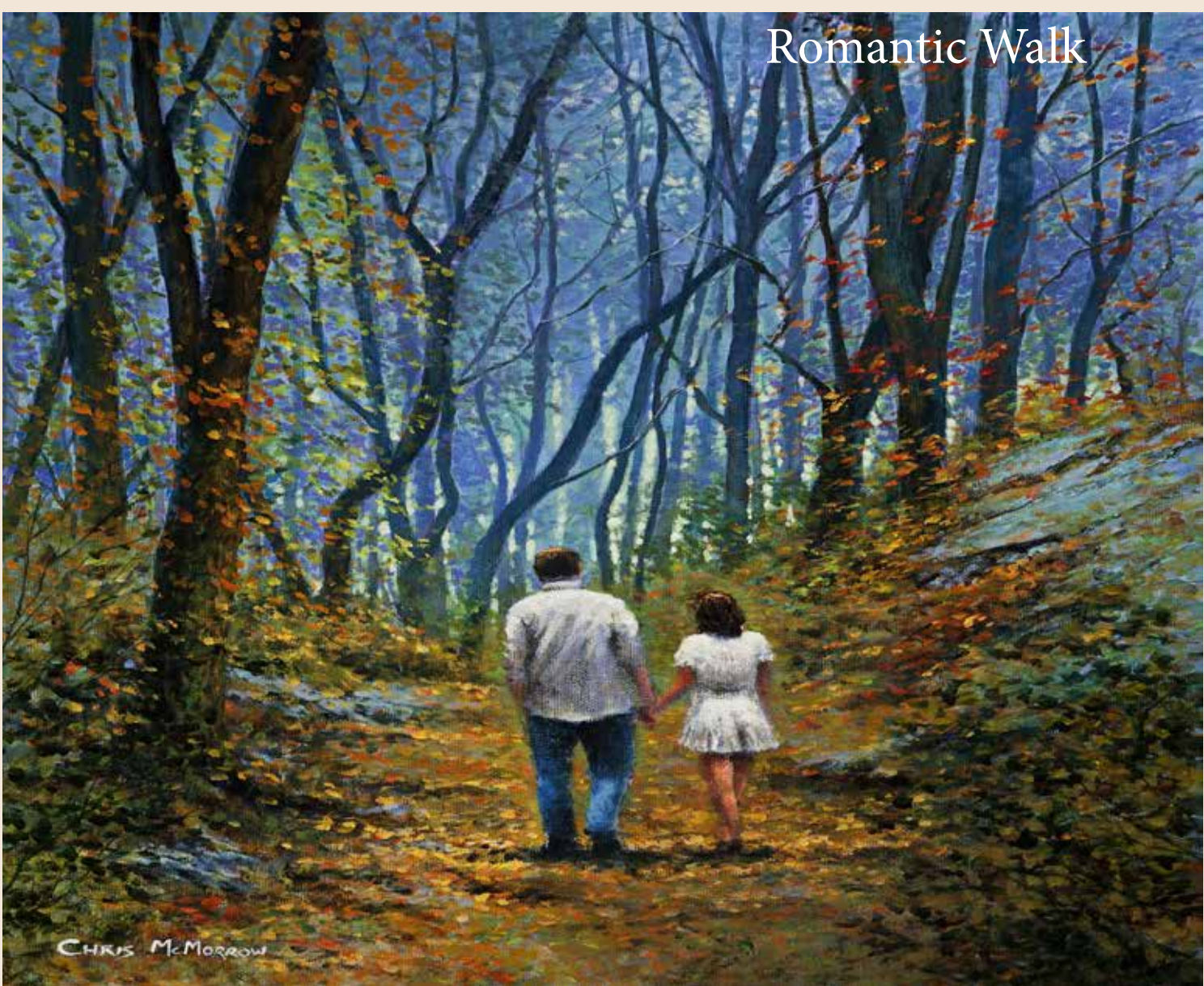
Seapoint, Dublin



Kehoes Pub, Dublin



Romantic Walk

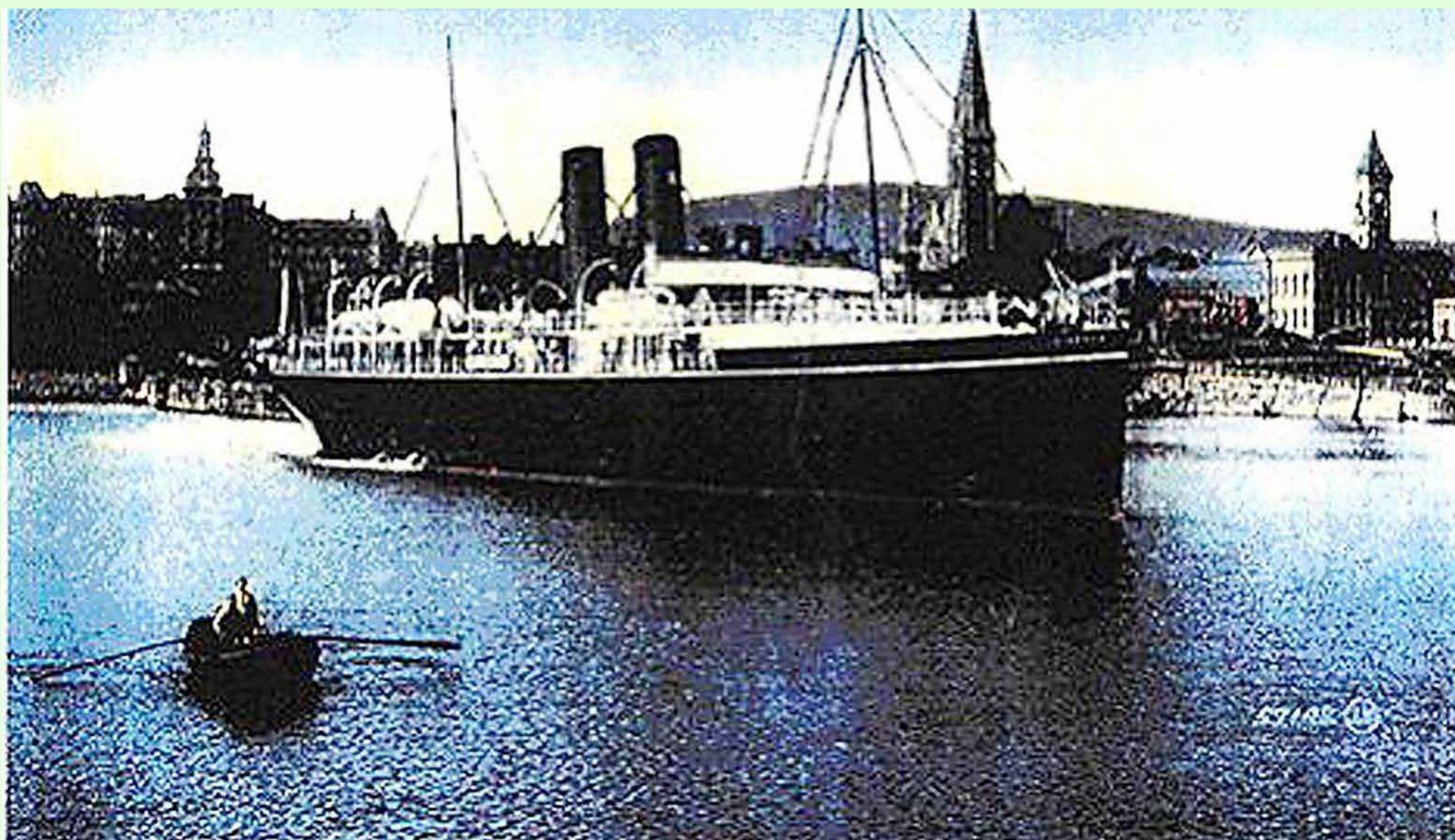


The Last Sup



The RMS Leinster - The Sinking We All Forgot

Liz Scales looks at one of the worst shipping disasters in Irish Naval history - the sinking of the RMS Leinster which caused the deaths of over 500 people, yet somehow this tragedy is largely forgotten in the annals of our history.



Background

Between 1850 and 1920, the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company (CDSPCo) operated a mail and passenger service between Dún Laoghaire (then Kingstown) and Holyhead, Wales. Having the post office contract to carry mail across the Irish Sea, the four ships covering the route carried the prefix RMS, for Royal Mail Steamer. Nicknamed The Provinces, they were named RMS Connaught, RMS Leinster, RMS Munster and RMS Ulster.

The RMS Leinster Sets Sail

On 10th October 1918, at around 9am the RMS Leinster left Carlisle Pier, Kingstown, Co. Dublin for Holyhead, Isle of Anglesey, Wales - it was to be her final voyage. The vessel, which was built by Cammel Laird, Birkenhead carried 813 passengers and crew and was commanded by 61-year-old, highly-experienced Captain William Birch, a Dubliner who had relocated with his family to Holyhead. Birch started his career on sailing ships like the Singapore and the May Pocha for the Pacific Navigation Company and was highly respected in naval circles, even holding the honorary title of Commodore.

The RMS Leinster was a beautiful vessel by all accounts, weighting 2,640 tonnes and with a speed of 24 knots (44 km per hour). After the outbreak of WW1, the ship was armed with a 12 pounder and two signal guns - although it was not a warship, Germany and their allies were at war against the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (as it was then known) and it was clear their navy fleet was inferior to that of the British navy, and so, for much of the war they were forced to remain in port; As the Germans remained hemmed in by the British, and the country was facing almost certain starvation (due to allied blockades), the Germans resorted to using submarines to blow up merchant ships - and they found the easiest targets in those in the waters around Britain and Ireland - so the 12 pounder and two signal guns were for protection.

**Royal
Naval ships which rescued
survivors included the armed yacht
Helga, which had shelled the centre of
Dublin during the Rising two years
previously.**

Apart from Birch, the Leinster had a crew of 78, drawn from the ports of Kingstown and Holyhead. Also on board were 22 postal workers from Dublin Post Office, working in the ship's postal sorting room. There were 201 civilian passengers, men, women and children, most of them from Ireland and Britain. Demographics of passengers varied - from affluent voyagers like Lady Phyllis Hamilton, daughter of the Duke of Abercorn to a 15-year-old disabled boy named Gerald Palmer from 'The Cripples Home' in Bray (both parties would perish).

The greatest number of passengers on board the Leinster were military personnel, many going on, or returning from leave. They came from Ireland, Britain, Canada, the U.S., New Zealand and Australia.

As the Leinster sailed away, the weather was quite lovely, despite the sea being choppy, following recent storms. Earlier that morning some Royal Navy ships just off Holyhead had to return to port due to the blustery conditions but Birch saw no issues that would prevent a smooth sail, however ...

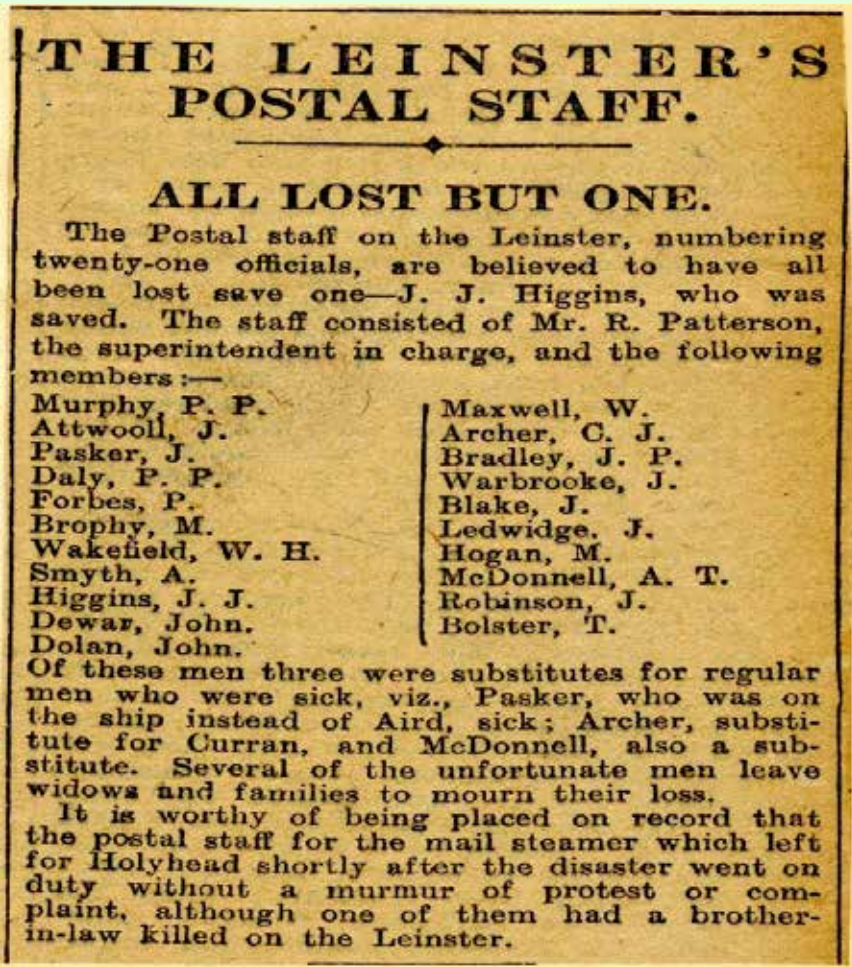
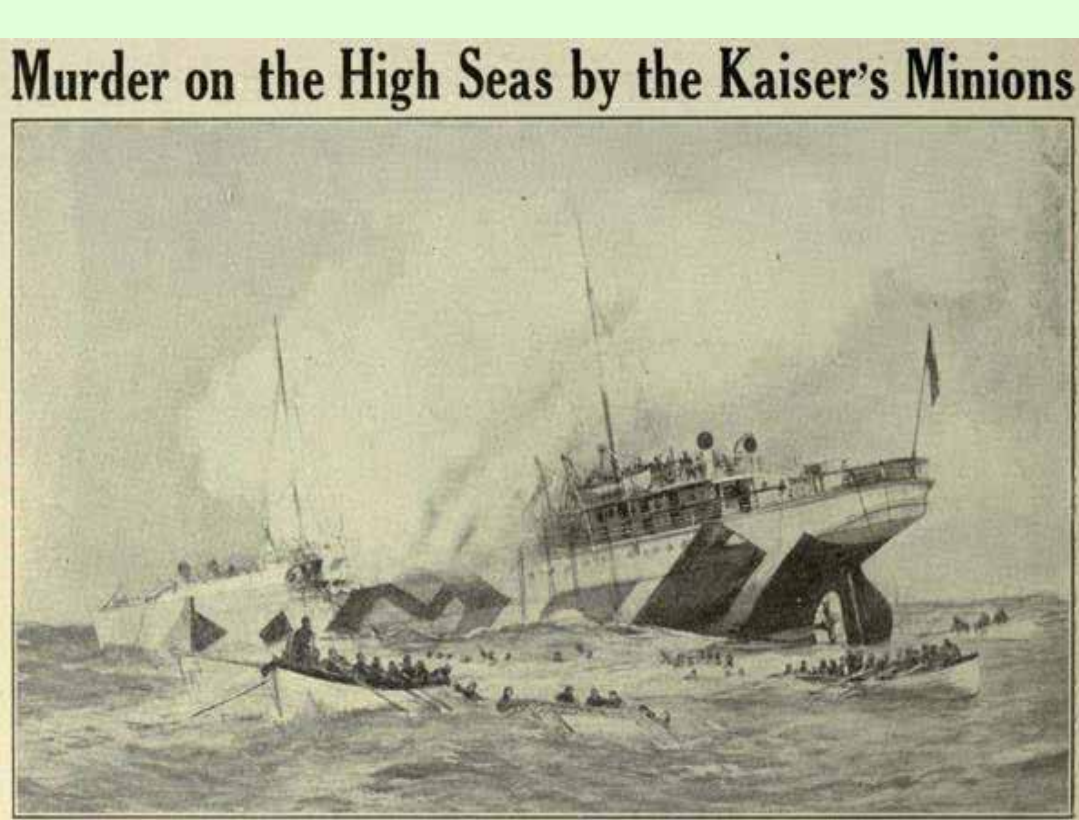
Torpedo Attack!

At four nautical miles east of the Kish Lighthouse, at 10am, and 26 km from Kingstown, a few people on the deck of the vessel spotted a torpedo approaching the port side of the ship. It narrowly missed - but soon afterwards another torpedo struck the port side where the postal sorting room was situated. John Higgins, one of the postal workers said,

“...the torpedo exploded, blowing a hole in the port side. The explosion traveled across the ship, also blowing a hole in the starboard side.”

Striving to return to port, Capt. Birch turned 180 degrees, until the vessel faced the direction from which it came. With speed greatly decreased and slowly sinking, the steamer had sustained casualties. Lifeboats were swiftly launched and at this point a torpedo struck the

ship from a German submarine UB-123 on the starboard side - virtually blowing it to pieces. The Leinster sank soon afterwards, bow first. (The UB-123 was lost in a minefield with its entire crew while attempting to return to Germany).



The Unforgiving Sea

Many of those on board were killed. Survivors desperately scrambled for lifeboats or in desperation clung to rafts and wreckage. Terrified, having watched other passengers sink to their watery graves, survivors invested all their energies in surviving the rough seas but unfortunately many perished whilst awaiting rescue.

Eventually a number of destroyers and other ships arrived. Royal Naval ships which rescued survivors included the armed yacht Helga, which had shelled the centre of Dublin during the Rising two years previously. It was refuelling in Dun Laoghaire when the Leinster was attacked and managed to rescue 90 passengers before the ship went down.

**The
sinking provoked
widespread outrage in the Allied
countries.**

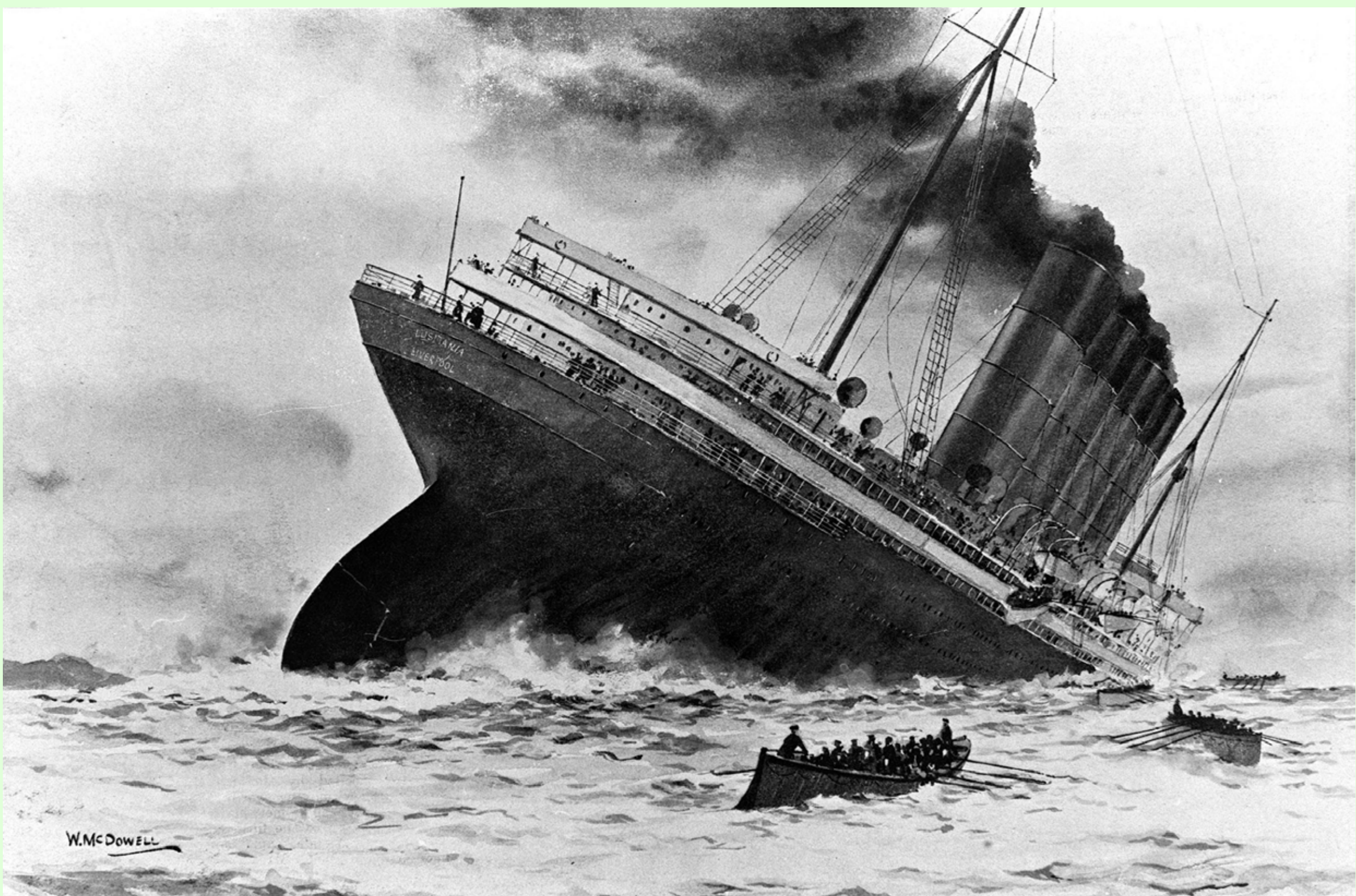
The survivors were landed at Victoria Wharf, Kingstown where the ferry terminal now stands. Survivors were terrified and in a state of shock. Medics, rescue workers and a fleet of 200 ambulances dashed to Victoria Wharf and those needing medical care were brought to St. Michael’s Hospital in Kingstown and other Dublin Hospitals. Those who didn’t need medical care were taken to local hotels and guest houses.

In the following days, bodies were salvaged from the sea and funerals took place across the island. Some bodies were taken to Britain, Canada and the U.S. for burial. One hundred and forty-four military casualties were buried in Grangegorman Military Cemetery in Dublin. Research to date has shown that there were 813 people on board during the final voyage, of whom 569 were lost, including Captain Birch, Josephine Carr (19) from Cork, the first ever Wren (Women’s Royal Naval Service) to be killed on active service, six members of the Gould family from Limerick and 21 of the 22 postal sorters aboard; the only one of the postal staff (from the Dublin Postal Establishment) to survive was John Higgins. He was working in the Registered Letter enclosure with two colleagues – Murphy and Attwooll, when the Leinster was hit. Attwooll was standing nearest the door and Higgins shouted to him to get out but received no reply. Stepping past him and into the Sorting Office, Higgins immediately was up to his waist in sea water. All he could see was twisted metal and falling beams. As the water-level grew, Higgins swam through, “a sea of white letters, floating on the water.” Finding the stairway had gone, he hauled himself up to the deck by some exposed electrical wiring. He made his way to the mail shed, found two lifebelts and tied these around himself and another man on the deck. Higgins later stated that he doubted anyone else could have got out of the Post Office below deck. A lifeboat was already in the water below him with some twenty people aboard and he

climbed down a trailing rope and dropped into it. After two hours the occupants of the lifeboat were picked up by a destroyer. Once ashore, Higgins went first to the General Post Office in Kingstown, eventually going home at 3.45pm It is reported his wife had heard the news on the radio and she and the children were praying as he walked in the door. His first words to her were,

“Woman will you get off your knees and get me some tea I’m starving and frozen cold”.

The sinking resulted in the greatest ever loss of life in the Irish Sea and the highest ever casualty rate on an Irish owned ship.



The Aftermath

The sinking provoked widespread outrage in the Allied countries. From the US Irish tenor John McCormack, whose brother-in-law was lost, publicly condemned the sinking. From England Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts, sent a telegram of sympathy on the death of John Ross, secretary of the Howth Yacht Club, who was on his way to a scouting conference, but the most significant comments came from US President Woodrow Wilson on 14th October. Referring to German peace overtures made on 4 October, he said:

“At the very time that the German government approaches the government of the United States with proposals of peace its submarines are engaged in sinking passenger ships at sea.”

**Higgins
swam through, “a sea
of white letters, floating on the
water.”
Finding the stairway had gone.**

With the ghost of the Leinster threatening the possibility of peace negotiations, Germany responded on 20th October, agreeing to cease hostilities against merchant ships. The attacks stopped the following day. An armistice was agreed and the war itself ended on 11th November 1918.

It’s regretful that if you mention the sinking of the Lusitania, almost everyone will know the tragedy you’re speaking of, but mention the sinking of the RMS Leinster and most people will have little or even no idea about it despite the fact it was the worst disaster ever to befall an Irish-owned shipping company and resulted in the highest-ever loss of life in the Irish Sea.

A Little Bit of Irish

Phrase:	Translations:	Pronunciation:
Bí cinnte agus do lón ar fad a ithe inniu	Be sure to eat all your lunch today	bee kin-che ogg-uss duh loan air fod ah ihh-heh inn-u
Cá bhfuil do Bhosca Lóin?	Where is your Lunch Box?	kaw will duh buska loan
Déan deifir nó beimid mall	Hurry or we will be late	dane djeffer no baim-eed moll
Cuir ort do chóta	Put on your coat	kwer urt duh koh-tha
La brea ata ann	It's a lovely day	lah brah ahtaw ow-inn

Word Power

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

Word	Pronunciation	Answers
1. Blare	blair	1. To emit a loud, raucous sound:
2. Cauterize	kaw-tuh-rahyz	2. To burn with a hot iron, electric current, fire, or a caustic, especially for curative purposes
3. Flageolet	flaj-uh-let	3. A small end-blown flute with four finger holes in front and two in the rear.
4. Jurisprudence	joor-is-prood-ns	4. The science or philosophy of law.
5. Languid	lang-gwid	5. Lacking in vigor or vitality; slack or slow:
6. Quasi	kwey-zahy	6. Resembling; seeming; virtual:
7. Vicinage	vis-uh-nij	7. The region near or about a place; vicinity.
8. Asterisk	as-tuh-risk	8. A small starlike symbol
9. Phlegm	flem	9. The thick mucus secreted in the respiratory passages.
10.Faux	foh	10. Artificial or imitation
11. Billingsgate	bil-ingz-geyt	11. Coarsely or vulgarly abusive language.
12. Buoy	boi	12. A distinctively shaped and marked float

How did YOU score?

10 or more – Perfection!

6-9 Brilliant.

3-5 Well done.

0-2 Must do better.

Patricia Scanlan's Book Club



Patricia Scanlan was born in Dublin, where she still lives. She is a #1 bestselling author and has sold millions of books worldwide. Her books are translated in many languages. Patricia is the series editor and a contributing author to the award winning Open Door Literacy series. In this monthly feature, Patricia brings you her favourite reads of the moment.

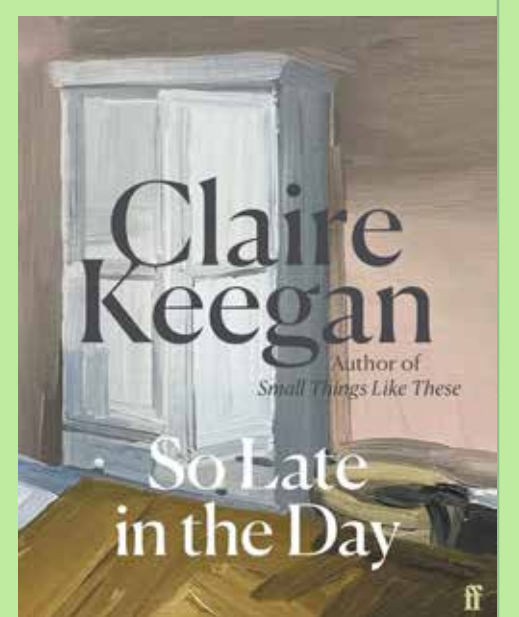
Elon Musk – Walter Isaacson – Simon & Schuster



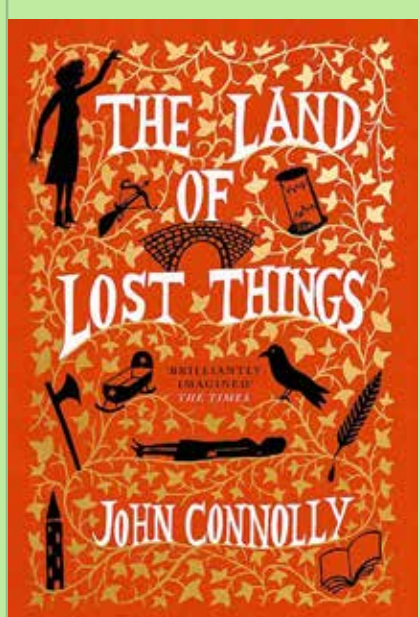
Epic feats. Epic failures. An epic story. Walter Isaacson charts Elon Musk’s journey from humble beginnings to one of the wealthiest people on the planet – but is Musk a genius or a jerk? When Elon Musk was a kid in South Africa he was regularly beaten by bullies. One day a group pushed him down some concrete steps and kicked him until his face was a swollen ball of flesh. He was in the hospital for a week. But the physical scars were minor compared to the emotional ones inflicted by his father, an engineer, rogue and charismatic fantasist. His father’s impact on his psyche would linger. He developed into a tough yet vulnerable man-child with an exceedingly high tolerance for risk, a craving for drama, an epic sense of mission, and a maniacal intensity that was callous and at times destructive. At the beginning of 2022 – after a year marked by SpaceX launching thirty-one rockets into orbit, Tesla selling a million cars, and him becoming the richest man on earth – Musk spoke ruefully about his compulsion to stir up dramas. ‘I need to shift my mindset away from being in crisis mode, which it has been for about fourteen years now, or arguably most of my life,’ he said. It was a wistful comment, not a New Year’s resolution. Even as he said it, he was secretly buying up shares of Twitter, the world’s ultimate playground. For two years, Walter Isaacson had unprecedented access. He shadowed Musk, attended his meetings, walked his factories with him and spent hours interviewing him, his family, friends, co-workers and adversaries. The result is the revealing inside story, filled with amazing tales of triumphs and turmoil that addresses the question: are the demons that drive Musk also what it takes to drive innovation and progress?

So Late in the Day – Claire Keegan – Faber & Faber

An exquisite new short story from the Sunday Times bestselling author of Small Things Like These and Foster. After an uneventful Friday at the Dublin office, Cathal faces into the long weekend and takes the bus home. There, his mind agitates over a woman named Sabine with whom he could have spent his life, had he acted differently. All evening, with only the television and a bottle of champagne for company, thoughts of this woman and others intrude - and the true significance of this particular date is revealed. From one of the finest writers working today, Keegan’s new story asks if a lack of generosity might ruin what could be between men and women.



The Land of Lost Things – John Connolly – Hodder & Stoughton



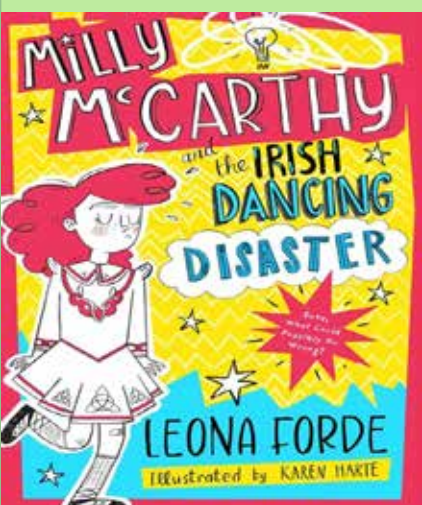
Phoebe, an eight-year-old girl, lies comatose following a car accident. She is a body without a spirit, a stolen child. Ceres, her mother, can only sit by her bedside and read aloud to Phoebe the fairy stories she loves in the hope they might summon her back to this world. But it is hard to keep faith, so very hard. Now an old house on the hospital grounds, a property connected to a book written by a vanished author, is calling to Ceres. Something wants her to enter, and to journey - to a land coloured by the memories of Ceres’s childhood, and the folklore beloved of her

father, to a land of witches and dryads, giants and mandrakes; to a land where old enemies are watching, and waiting. To the Land of Lost Things. A sequel to The Book Of Lost Things.

Age Is Just a Number – Francis Brennan – Gill Books



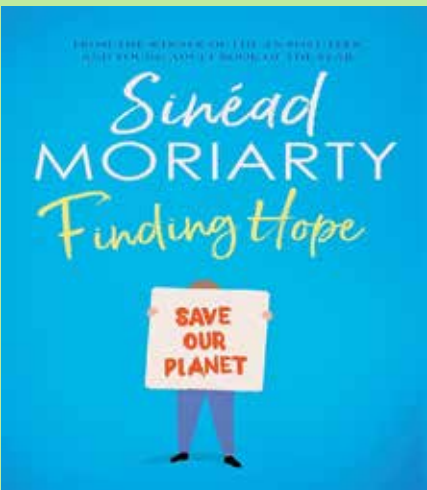
Francis Brennan is the epitome of someone who is growing old gracefully, with his stylish suits and zest for life ever-present as he prepares to turn 70 in September 2023. Though still full of beans, he’s had a couple of knocks, from health scares to losing loved ones. But while there are some challenges to ageing, Francis is determined his later years will be his golden years. In his latest book, he shares what he has learned about making the most of them. He explores topics such having an active retirement and maintaining health, mobility and psychological wellbeing. Francis also speaks to the experts and shares practical advice based on his own experiences so that you are armed with all the information you need to embrace the joys of growing older and wiser with a positive attitude!



Milly McCarthy and the Irish Dancing Disaster –Leona Forde Karen Harte (Illustrator) – Gill Books

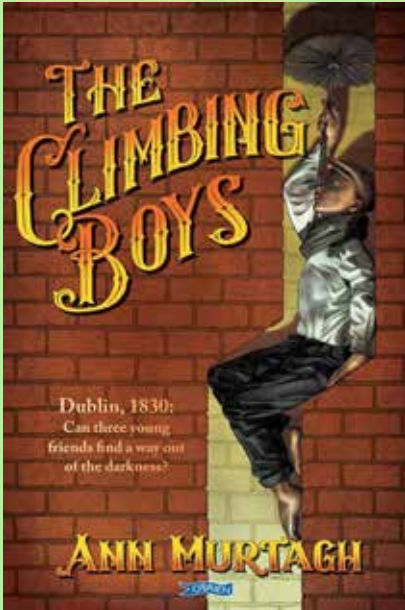
It really isn’t my fault that Mrs Katherine De Búrca will never be able to judge a competition again, not with post-traumatic stress disorder. And it’s also not my fault that from now on there needs to be a minimum distance of five metres between the judging panel and the contestants at all times. And it’s totally, one billion per cent, NOT my fault that all wigs now need to be checked to make sure that they reach EU safety standards ... Milly McCarthy is a ten-year-old girl from Cork – and she’s determined to win a medal for Irish dancing. But her lessons don’t go according to plan, and when she is subbed into a show at short notice, there’s only one way things are going to go ... disastrously!

Finding Hope – Sinéad Moriarty – Gill Books



Hope’s mum died over a year ago and she misses her terribly. Her twin elder sisters have each other, and her dad has just started dating again, but Hope is lonely. A growing interest in the environment becomes an out-of-control obsession as Hope tries to find solace and meaning in her life, driving her family mad in the process. First, she tries to turn them all vegan, and then suggests limiting shower time and selling the family car to walk everywhere. The more fed up her family get, the more misunderstood Hope feels, until she finally decides to run away and find the only person, she is sure will understand her: Greta Thunberg! Hope’s family need to convince her that she is loved and valued – but can they find her in time?

The Climbing Boys –Ann Murtagh –O’Brien Press



Dublin, 1830: When his da breaks his arm, Hugh ‘Scholar’ O’Dare has to leave school to work as a chimney sweeper with his brothers. The job is scary and dangerous, but Scholar knows their growing family won’t survive without the money he earns. On Christmas Eve, the brothers are working in 30 Merrion Square, home of the most famous man in Ireland, Daniel O’Connell. The ‘Liberator’ tells Scholar he has heard of his talent for maths – which makes Scholar yearn even more to be back in his beloved class. When travelling sweep Darby Madden and his apprentice Bert start going after the O’Dares’ jobs, Scholar’s dad and brothers plan to chase them out of town. Scholar is tasked with scaring Bert off, but a shocking secret comes to light, catapulting them both in a new direction. Who will they turn to for help, and how will the secret change their futures?

The Podcast Review

We source the best selection of podcasts each issue. This time we bring you The Trial of Lucy Letby, This Podcast Will Kill You, The Rest is Money and What Was That Like?

The Trial of Lucy Letby (True Crime)



Lucy Letby, the 33-year-old former neo-natal nurse, has been found guilty of murdering 7 babies and attempting to murder 6 others while they were in her care at the Countess of Chester Hospital in the Northwest of England. The verdicts make Lucy Letby Britain’s most prolific baby killer.

Follow the trial’s evidence just as the jury did, with reports from Daily Mail correspondent Liz Hull and broadcast journalist Caroline Cheetham. In this podcast, they bring you far more detail about what the jury heard, examine key moments of the trial, and conduct exclusive interviews with investigative detectives, victims, and experts.

This Podcast Will Kill You (Health)

Started when the presenters were PhD students in disease ecology and epidemiology, the podcast takes a deep-dive into the epidemiology, history and treatment of different diseases – all delivered in a relaxed, accessible style with some fun facts peppered in along the way. Did you know that cats can get asthma? Or that the identification of the Marburg virus led to a shortage of polio vaccines in Germany? Me neither. There’s more: each episode comes with a themed “quarantini” recipe to enjoy while you listen. Drink a “High and Dry” with their episode on altitude sickness; sip a “Happy as a Chlam” while you listen to the Chlamydia episode. Well worth a listen.



The Rest is Money (Finance)

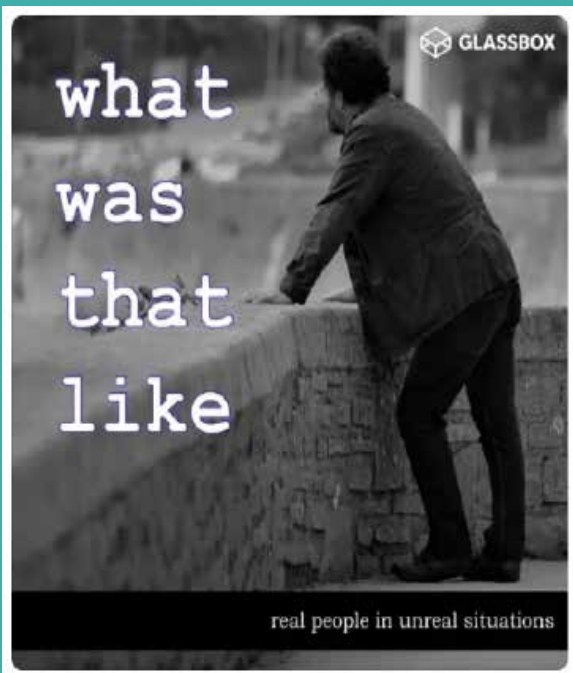


In a new podcast series titled The Rest Is Money, business correspondent Steph McGovern and economics expert Robert Peston aim to demystify the complex world of finance and economics for the average person. The show will delve into various topics that impact daily life, such as the role of AI in the job market, inflation trends, and why wealthy countries are investing in sports.

The podcast aims to break down business jargon and bring a fresh, relatable perspective to money matters, much in the same way people discuss sports or entertainment. Excellent advice each episode.

What Was That Like? (Human Interest)

First-hand true stories - a plane crash, a mass shooting, a bear attack, a train derailing, and more. Each guest tells us exactly what happened, and answers the question, What Was That Like?



How to:

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

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COMPETITION TIME!!!

Fancy a copy of John D.T. White's fantastic new book: 'Manchester United: Who? What? When? Where? Why? The First Half'?

The book, John's 21st about the club is available now from all good bookshops and online; foreword by Alan Keegan, The Voice of Old Trafford.

The book is being published in two volumes, The First Half, 30th September 2023, and The Second Half at the end of the season.

We have 5 copies to give away. If you would like a copy, answer the following question:

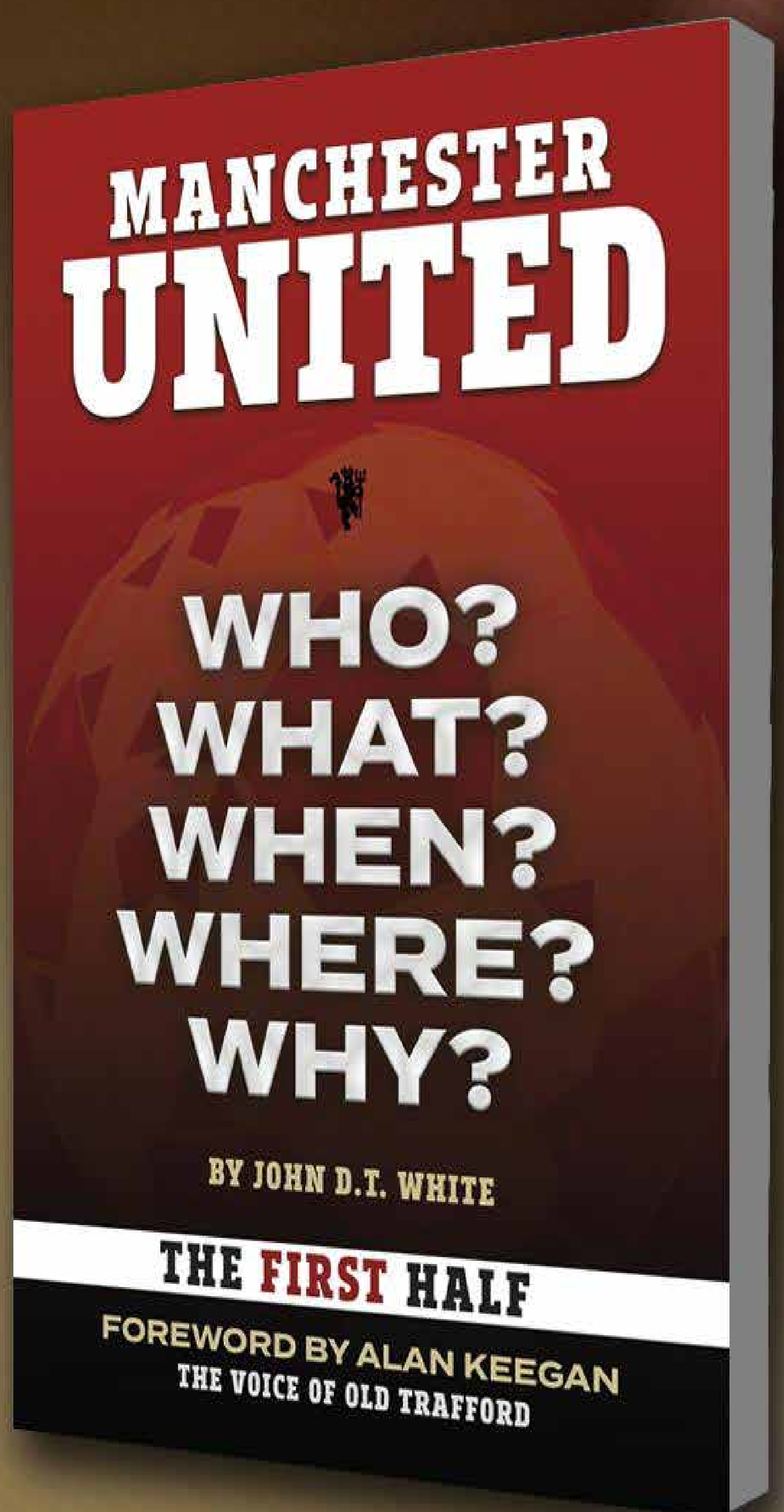
At which stadium do Manchester United play their home games?

Answers to: info@irelandsbigissue.com with Man United Competition in email subject line.

**WHO?
WHAT?
WHEN?
WHERE?
WHY?**



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