

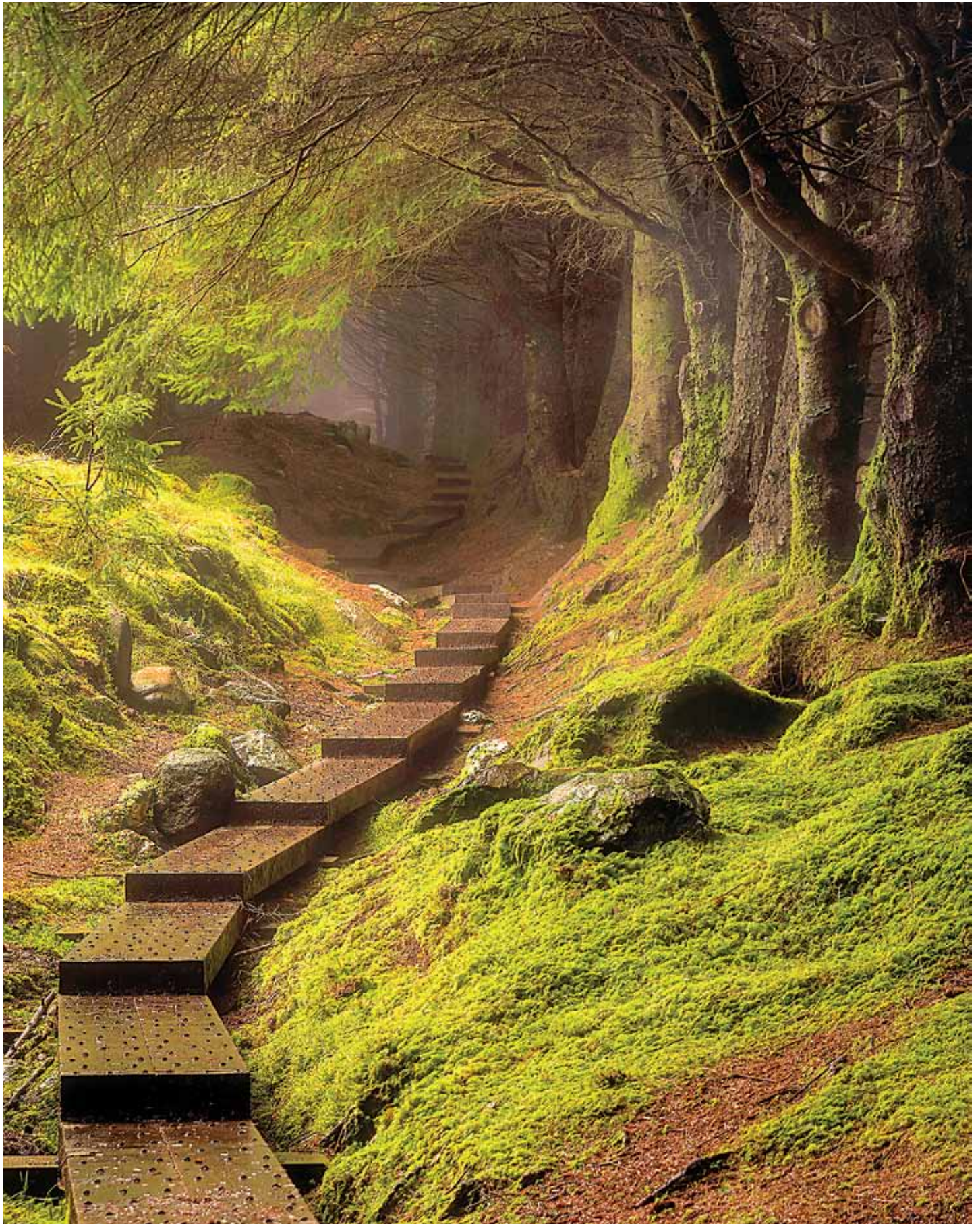


CRANN

SPRING/SUMMER
ISSUE 2021 | NO:113

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**COVER**

Our cover picture was taken by Ita Martin, Seabury Lawns, Malahide, Co Dublin, in Ballinastoe Woods, Roundwood, Co Wicklow. It was Commended in last year's Crann/Coillte Photographic Competition. Details of this year's competition are on Pg 5 of this issue.

PICTURE CREDITS

Ita Martin, Sean McGinnis, Elizabeth Murphy, Patrick Moran, George Cunningham, Monkstown Educate Together NS, John Feehan, Joe Barry, Orla Farrell, Peadar Collins, Athenry Black Shamrock, Tidy Towns, Ger Clarke, Tom Roche.

So I sat down to write a play about trees. As you do.



DURING a pandemic, what else is there to do?

Here's what happened. I'm always on the lookout for good subjects for plays or short stories, and when I heard last summer that an astronaut was returning to earth from the International Space Station, I felt there had to be something in it. Coming back to a changed Earth where a plague had broken out since they were here last. Yes, definite possibilities.

Next, Fishamble, the New Play Company, announced a competition for new plays, sponsored by the ESB. Yes, tick the box, thank you very much.

I didn't let the details put me off. The play should be no more than 600 words long and it had to be about environmental issues. It was "an opportunity to give creative expression to all points of view in the transition to a low carbon energy future: to look at the choices we all must make to meet our future climate goals, examine how those choices will impact communities across Ireland, and imagine what we want the Ireland of our future to be."

Hardly Normal People, but no problem, I had a whole week to write it (I hadn't heard about it until near deadline time).

Three days later, I was still stuck, weightless and idea-less, on the International Space Station, so I moved the location to the Moon. Another 48 hours elapsed, before I relocated again, this time to Mars, because the Red Planet was in the news at that time with a rover landing on its surface. Perseverance.

To make a short story even shorter, my opus got finished about 10 minutes before the deadline. And it wasn't half bad, even if I...

The plot: A chap called A.J. is being briefed by his boss in the Mars colony on his mission to take back to Earth a cargo of tree seedlings from the seed bank that the Mars people have built up in the 50 years since the colony was founded. Those silly Earth people have messed up their environment to such an extent that their forests are dying out and they need fresh stock to rejuvenate the lungs of the planet. There's a trade war going on between Earth and Mars, and the Mars people are thoroughly enjoying Earth's embarrassment.

Sad to relate, Dear Reader, the judges weren't as enthusiastic about my play as I was. I failed to make the top three. Or even the short list of ten. But the least they could have done was give me a special prize for the brilliance of my title. It was inspired by the location where the briefing took place, in the colony's pub: The Mars Bar. Oh, and it turns out that A.J.'s full name is Adam John. And his companion on the trip is a girl called Evie.

I know, I know. The plot was terribly far-fetched. It could never happen that Earth would have to go to such lengths to rescue its environment in 100 years' time.

Could it?

Paddy Smith



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Crann - Trees for Ireland



cranntrees

OUR MISSION: To enhance the environment of Ireland through planting, promoting, protecting and increasing awareness about trees and woodlands.



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CRANN Membership applications

Ireland was once entirely covered with woodland. It is now the least wooded country in Europe. CRANN is Ireland's leading tree organisation, uniting people with a love of trees. CRANN's mission is to enhance the environment of Ireland through planting, promoting, protecting and increasing awareness about trees and woodlands. CRANN is pursuing this mission through contributions to urban & rural planting projects, through its schools programme and through this magazine.

Members receive:

- A copy of CRANN magazine.
- Invitations to join with other members on a variety of woodland walks and talks.
- Access to advice and information about trees in Ireland.
- Most important of all, by joining CRANN you will be helping secure a future for Ireland's rich heritage of trees and woods.

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CRANN is an Irish non-profit organisation promoting and planting broadleaf trees.



Crann meets Forestry Minister on crucial tree issues

By PADDY SMITH

CURRENT issues in relation to woodland and forestry were raised by a Crann delegation at a meeting with Forestry Minister Pippa Hackett and Department officials in March. Afterwards, the Minister described it as “a very good broad-ranging meeting covering a lot of topics” and she thanked Crann for their time.

The Crann delegation at the meeting, which was conducted by WebEx, comprised Chairman Mark Wilkinson, Board member Diarmuid McAree and Crann Administrator Marguerite Arbuthnot-O'Brien.

Mark Wilkinson expressed their welcome for the Department-commissioned report by Jo O'Hara, the former chief forester for Scotland, and for Project Woodland, particularly in relation to the processes and procedures for forestry licencing in Ireland. Mark also confirmed that Crann would be willing to provide a representative to serve on the Forestry Policy Group (FPG).

In addition, Mark referred to the forthright Irish Times article by Professor John Fitzgerald, the former economist with the Economic and Social Research Institute, questioning the appropriateness of forestry licencing. The Crann chairman commented on the current situation of the backlog in forestry licencing and on the attempts at having this sorted. He stressed that farmers needed an incentive to plant trees and he made strong representations to the Minister that premiums should be paid for a longer term.

Diarmuid McAree assured the Minister that Crann was optimistic about forestry; it was such a positive enterprise but was getting a lot of negative publicity at the minute. “The multifunctional benefits of forestry and trees



and their non-timber benefits need to be promoted,” he said. The Department should capitalise on the aim of ‘the right tree in the right place’. “The sector needs to keep focus on forestry as being economically viable, socially acceptable and environmentally sound,” he said.

He spoke about the UN International Conference on Green Jobs in the Forest Sector which was planned for 2021 and for which Crann had secured Department funding to host. Crann had been asked as an NGO to host this international conference under the UN initiative for Green Jobs in the Forest Sector.

As the conference was cancelled due to Covid 19, Diarmuid explained their plan now is to host another conference called ‘Forests for Health and Green Jobs’ in partnership with the Nádúr Centre for Integrative Forest Therapy and the EU Erasmus + ‘Forests for Health’ programme to highlight the potential benefits of forestry and tree-planting to the economy, the environment and for health purposes.

He also proposed to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), in conjunction with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Nádúr, to re-open the Knocksink Wood Interpretative Centre in Co Wicklow as a Forest Ecotherapy Centre.

He suggested another initiative for the Department would be to establish or designate a woodland as a National Covid-19 Commemorative Woodland to commemorate all those who had lost their lives in the pandemic.

Other suggestions he made were, that DAFM should re-introduce a revised ‘Code of Best Forest Practice’ with an updated suite of Environmental Guidelines and that in view of climate change the forestry sector should consider the planting of many different and appropriate tree species that are not necessarily native.

In response, Minister Hackett echoed the points made about the multifunctional benefits of forests and outlined all the Department had done to date in terms of addressing the amendments to the forestry legislation last autumn and the recruitment of additional ecologists and inspectorate staff. She pointed out the improvements in the appeals backlog, saying the licencing backlog would improve under the new Project Woodland and its four workstreams. Work would begin in all the groups early the following week and stakeholders and those involved in it needed to give Project Woodland a chance. She undertook to consider how Crann could contribute to the process.

On John Fitzgerald’s comments about licencing, Minister Hackett said that forestry licencing was necessary to ensure compliance with stringent EU directives on habitats and birds. “This slows down the processes,” she said, “but we are obliged to adhere to all environmental legislation and must work within all these constraints. It will ultimately lead to a more varied, robust forestry model in the future which will enjoy the widespread support of all stakeholders.”

The Minister agreed to have the status of Knocksink Wood followed up with the NPWS to see what could be done.

Crann – ‘Trees for Ireland’ 2021 AGM

We have made the following arrangements to hold our 2021 AGM, bearing in mind the current Covid advice and the needs and safety of our members and also subject to the public health situation at the time of the meeting.

The “venue” meeting shall be restricted in numbers attending, therefore it will be a ticketed event (Eventbrite).

Please note that as the date approaches we may have to cancel the “venue” meeting and hold a virtual meeting via Zoom.

The arrangements for the AGM are as follows: Saturday 2

October 2021, 1pm, National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin, D09 VY63. Booking via Eventbrite: <https://tinyurl.com/pavtf8ns>

The meeting will be limited to the standard business of a general meeting. Proxies will be available for those who may not be able to attend. Proxy forms are available on request, to be received by Crann – Trees for Ireland, PO Box 860, Celbridge, Co Kildare, no later than 5pm Wednesday 29 September 2021.

To request a proxy form email info@crann.ie or tel 01 6275075.



See the forest for the trees in **Giants Grove**

By Sean McGinnis

WHILE sequoias are the 'stars' of Giants Grove, the project is about so much more than just the redwoods. The grove is an ecosystem that will continue to develop and improve as the giants grow bigger and taller over the next 1,200 years. Any ecosystem is measured by its biodiversity, or how much biological variety it has regarding genetic diversity, species diversity, ecosystem diversity and functional diversity. Biodiversity is an enormous subject, far too large to go into in any detail here, but Giants Grove has some interesting types of diversity, among others.

Species Diversity

The grove is not a monoculture of exotic conifers. It has an enormous variety of species present, and the numbers will increase significantly over time. We took a grass field, with very little diversity, and planted a range of native tree and shrub species in the spaces between the redwoods – oak, birch, Scots pine, alder, rowan, holly, spindle, yew, juniper and guelder rose.

We do not use herbicides, so the area has also been colonised by a huge array of local grass, shrub, and tree species too, some pretty, some prickly, but all welcome. As a result, all this variety has become home for more insects, spiders, invertebrates and creepy-crawlies than I can even begin to identify, and they are all settling in nicely. These tiny creatures have attracted larger species like hedgehogs, shrews, birds, bats and rodents, to accompany the herbivores like rabbits and hares. These in turn are beginning to attract the larger predators to the site: foxes on the ground and buzzards in the skies above. Otters, squirrels and pine martens are close by too, and we hope they will also make the grove their home soon. There are lots of often forgotten but equally important fungi, lichen and algae too, but the names of all but a handful are far beyond me.

Ecosystem Diversity

Giants Grove is the largest redwood forest outside of their native United States, so the site's characteristics are not uniform throughout the entire area. Differences in soil types and



The grove ecosystem will continue to develop and improve as the giants grow bigger and taller over the next 1,200 years

drainage, open spaces, wider or closer spacing, adjoining fields and forests, and rivers and watercourses, all create distinct ecosystems and habitats which add so much diversity to the grove. These different areas have their own biological communities which often vary greatly from each other, and the transitional areas where they meet, the ecotones, can be different again. As the giants mature and develop, so too will these habitats, expanding or contracting over the years, or even over the seasons. This ecosystem diversity is an integral part of the project, as important in every way as the more obvious species diversity.

Structural Diversity

The diversity at the grove is not just horizontal along the ground but also vertical up into the canopy of the trees. Well-developed forests have multiple layers, or habitat zones, that are very different from each other and add significantly to the biodiversity of some forests.

From the ground up, there is a ground layer, shrub layer, sub-canopy layer, canopy layer and emergent tree layer. These separate layers are separate habitats, attracting a range of species

that use them for food or shelter. Most forests in Ireland are commercial crops, monocultures of trees so tightly spaced that their uniform canopy does not permit enough sunlight through to allow any vegetation, or even their own lower branches, to survive.

Although only in its very earliest stage, the grove will be a very different forest. It will be a multi-layered woodland, and one of the few, if not only, woodlands in Ireland with a real emergent layer as the redwoods surge skyward.

So, if you come someday to visit your redwood, you might look and see the forest for the trees. How many tree species, or shrubs, or any plants can you identify? How many bird species will you hear, or how many mammal species will you catch a glimpse of? How many habitats will you walk through? How many layers are there now? How different is the Giants Grove to any forest you have ever been to?

SEAN MCGINNIS, of Ecoplan Forestry, manages the Giants Grove site on behalf of Crann – Trees for Ireland and Giants Grove

THE PROJECT

Giants Grove www.giantsgrove.ie at Birr Castle, a voluntary partnership between Birr Castle and Crann – Trees for Ireland, is planned as the largest grove of giant redwoods outside California, a mix of giant and coastal redwoods. These redwoods were native here before the Ice Age 3 million years ago.

Giants Grove is a symbol of Ireland's global concern for conservation, as climate change represents a threat to the long-term survival of redwoods in California.

The planting, maintenance and establishment of the 1,000 redwoods is being financed by you, the Giants Grove sponsors, dedicating trees to family and friends. Your tree will be associated with a GPS coordinate within the grove, identified on your certificate.

More information: www.giantsgrove.ie or email info@giantsgrove.ie.



Photographing trees

As the details of the 2021 Crann/Coillte Photographic Competition are announced, ELIZABETH MURPHY has some personal reflections

EVERY year, I watch out for the announcement of the Crann/Coillte Photographic Competition. I have been entering the phone camera section for a number of years now. I won one year and was commended a few times. This was very encouraging.

As well as being a great learning experience, the huge benefit for me is that I have become much more observant of the sylvan world around me. This has added great interest to my daily walks in all seasons and weathers. I also scan the landscape around me for photo opportunities as I travel about my daily business.

I really appreciate the phone camera section as I'm not a serious technical photographer. What I enjoy most is the challenge of capturing what the eye can see through the lens of a camera in a well-balanced and framed picture.

This article is a tour of some of the photographs I've taken over the years, some good and some that could be improved upon.

Tree, cattle, copse: Dunboyne, April 2019

When I think of this photo, I forget entirely about the tree 'in the way' of the cattle. I love the curiosity of cattle and never tire of their expressive faces. In my mind, the cattle take centre-stage with the sylvan interest in the background – the copse. Copses always remind me of my father as he planted some on the farm many years ago.

Red berries on an ash



The first picture Elizabeth Murphy entered into our (phone camera) competition: **Trees in Autumn, Dunboyne Oct 2016**

tree: Dunboyne, August 2020

This next one is one I took when walking locally. I walk this route regularly but suddenly I noticed the ash trees. They were festooned with berries of a wonderful rich hue.

An early summer morning - Phoenix Park, July 2017

You can almost feel the warmth from the sun. I love the solitude of this photo and the sense of the path going on forever, an invitation to explore. The chestnut trees lining the main avenue through the park are the first to awaken in the spring and burst forth with their stunning candle-shaped blossoms.

May blossom: Dunboyne, May 2019

What about the May blossom for a spectacular landscape while driving or

walking on our roads? It is wonderful that Ireland still has so many hedges. We are indebted to the farming community and organisations like Crann for ensuring their survival.

Tree in winter sun: Dunboyne, January 2019

Even in winter, trees provide interest. What interests me most is how the trunk and branch system is replicated in so much of our environment, e.g. broccoli and our own internal arteries, veins and capillaries.

Trees in Autumn: Dunboyne, October 2016

This last photo was the first photo I submitted to this competition and it was commended. A few weeks after the photo was taken, two of these splendid trees had been felled. Now this photo is a historical record.

Photographic Competition 2021

Our annual photographic competition, sponsored by Coillte, attracted another record entry last year. Standards were very high and we look forward to receiving equally good images for this year's contest.

Theme: **Trees, Forests & Woodlands**

Sponsored By: **Coillte**

First Prize **€250**,

Second Prize **€100**,

Third Prize **€50**

ENTRY IS FREE!

Closing date: October 15

Digital entries should be emailed to

CrannCoillte2021@gmail.com

Prints should be posted to **Crann – Trees for Ireland, Photo Competition, Crann, PO Box 860, Celbridge, Co Kildare.**

RULES

- This competition is open to all amateur photographers.
- Entries can be digital (emailed) or prints (posted).
- Emailed images must be in jpg/jpeg format, minimum file size 2MB, maximum file size 8MB.
- NOTE: Emailed entries must be as attachments to the email (not embedded in email).
- Prints of photos should be minimum size 6x4 inches (15x10cm) up to maximum size A4.
- A certain amount of manipulation of digital images to enhance the subject matter is allowed but gimmicky special effects are not.
- Each photographer may submit up to 3 entries.
- Prints should have the following information on the back: Name, Address, Telephone Number, Title of Print, Location and Date Taken.
- Prints should NOT be mounted.
- Prints cannot be returned.
- Emails should have the following information: Name, Address, Telephone Number, Email Address, Title of Picture, Location and Date Taken.
- The copyright of the image remains the photographer's. However, Crann and Coillte retain the right to use any images in future publications and on related social media and websites e.g. Crann may use some of the competition pictures in related third party publications, tweets, website, social media and promotional literature like calendars. You may be requested to supply the images in high resolution eps/jpeg format for this purpose.
- Entering this competition implies full and whole acceptance of the competition rules.
- The judge's decision will be final and no correspondence or communications will be entered into in relation to the results

PHONE CAMERAS

We have a special section for phone camera photographs.

Entries should be emailed to

CrannCoillte2021@gmail.com, with the words 'Phone camera' entered in the subject line.

The winner will receive a special prize of €50.

CALENDAR

Photographers who enter our competition may see their pictures selected to appear in a wider range of platforms, thus promoting Crann – Trees for Ireland.

"This, after all, was the original purpose of our competition," said Crann chairman Mark Wilkinson. "These platforms include related third-party publications, tweets, websites and social media, and promotional literature such as calendars."

He points out that the production of 2020 and 2021 calendars, sponsored by the Forest Service and featuring a selection of the competition photos, was particularly useful in promoting the aims of our organisation.



The secret life of a nervous (at times) ecologist

Gorse



Dr Emma Reeves,
who lives near Navan,
has a PhD in botany
from UCD



By EMMA REEVES

IT'S RAINING... again. That is the only drawback to my occupation. Ecology is a very rewarding profession; quite often you get to see things very few other people ever get to see and it is a delight to be so close to nature so regularly. I think many people have exploited this during Covid and have benefited greatly from it. To get paid to do it is pretty awesome too! Weather can be an awkward pain but I love ecology and what's better is that my husband is my wonderful boss. He knows my limitations (little or no computer skills, will fall asleep if left in front of said computer). He also knows my skills which now, after 15 years at it, include ornithology.

So tonight, as I write this, I'm hiding in my van from the rain with one eye down a night vision scope and one eye on my notebook, seeing everything and nothing. I'm on the lookout for night-feeding waders on a site we have been surveying for everything from invertebrates to plants, mammals and birds for the last two years.

Much of the work is solitary, so, with various letters and what not, our work has continued during the pandemic. For the most part I work alone, which suits me fine. Except when there's cattle, then I'm really not fine. That's actually another drawback to ecology if you're of a sensitive persuasion like myself: strictly no horror films during the fieldwork season. *The Hills Have Eyes* and *Predator* have had serious impacts on my nerves.

Incidentally, I have not seen a single wader here tonight but there are flocks or 'charms' of up to 60 goldfinch at this site; yellowhammer are also really common here. I can't let on where this site is but know it's a rural enough area and two years of expert surveys are quite an investment, so needless to say this could be a contentious one!

I'll stay in the van for just a few minutes longer till the rain clears a bit. She's a white Renault Kangoo; actually she is more green and covered in zig-zag trails where snails have gorged on the algae. My sister calls it natural camouflage.

It is just a field and is dominated by plants which you'd expect to find in a field recovering from a life of tillage farming, a



Blackthorn

mixed grassland with a high number of weedy or ruderal species, plants like groundsel, the fumitories, dandelions, thistles with the odd mutated old cabbage plant. These plants support little seed-eating birds like sparrow and goldfinch, not so much night-feeding waders. But for our employer's benefit, we must be certain of this fact, hence my presence.

The best thing about the field is its hedgerow system. The field has not received much management in recent years. Its abandonment has led to the development of hedgerows which are high and fat. Good cuddly hedgerows that would infiltrate a tidy farmer's dreams. The last time I was on-site during daylight hours I got some photos of the most dominant shrubby/tree species present in the hedge that were in flower. These included gorse and blackthorn.

Why is gorse so looked down upon? People can't stand the sight of it. Okay it is flammable, hanging on to its brown needle-like leaves for all eternity but it is a

lovely plant and it smells just divine. I was 20 minutes wandering up the hedgerow last week with a rather angry stonechat flying from one yellow tuft to another banging his pebbles together. It was like standing in *The Bodyshop*, the smell of coconut was so strong. How could anybody detest a plant that smells so good?

The blackthorn is in full bloom at the moment and is visited by an enormous variety of hover flies and other pollinators. It is a wonderful hedging plant and, as a spinous shrub, it is good for keeping in the stock. There is a tendency in Ireland to plant it almost as a monocultural hedge. This led to a bit of a humiliating ego hit for me when I first started in ecology and interpreting aerial imagery. Inspecting a field network in Co Roscommon, I questioned a group of very well respected, really experienced ecologists. "Why do the sheep stand in rows at the edge of the fields?" (I misidentified blackthorn as lovely, fluffy woolly sheep! Cringe!)

Rain has stopped, the wind hasn't, there's nothing to keep me in the van anymore, except that fear brought on by complete solid darkness. And *Aliens*.

Pictures: PATRICK MORAN





FACSIMILE EDITION OF

*The Trees
of
Great Britain
& Ireland*

BY
Henry John Elwes, F.R.S.

AND
Augustine Henry, M.A.

Originally privately published in seven volumes and index
Edinburgh, Scotland
MCMVI to MCMXIII

This edition published by the Society of Irish Foresters
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MMXII

E.H.W.



A Tree Masterpiece

By GEORGE CUNNINGHAM

CELEBRATING four score years should always be a significant event and a great pleasure. Health problems and Covid put paid to mine in early December in 2020, but the family made up for it when they presented me with an original set of Elwes and Henry's monumental 15-part *The Trees of Great Britain and Ireland*. Published privately with 300 sets between 1906-1913, the work is rightly regarded as one of the greatest tree books ever published.

To a tree lover and bibliophile, it ticked my two great passions. I am now the proud owner of not only this treasure but also the facsimile set published in 1969 in collaboration with the Royal Forestry Society (RFS) and the magnificent half leather limited eight-volume edition published by the Society of Irish Foresters (SIF) in 2012 to mark their fortieth anniversary. It also was my pleasure to present a set of the linen-backed edition from SIF to my alma mater, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, and to my heritage collection at Tipperary Public Libraries. I had the pleasure, too, of helping the then SIF president, John

McLoughlin, and their technical director, Pat O'Sullivan, with the initial exploration of republishing such a comprehensive work. As a thank you, they allowed me to acquire No 2 of the limited numbered edition of 40 sets, masterfully bound by Antiquarian Bookcraft at Marlay Park.

Englishman Henry John Elwes (1846-1922) devoted his early life to plant collecting,

botany and entomology. Inheriting his father's estate and large fortune in 1891, this rich legacy enabled him to enlarge on these passions. Using Loudon's early 19th century great work, *Arboretum et Fruticetum Britannicum*, as a model, he decided on a plan to describe all the trees which grow naturally or are cultivated in these islands... and are looked on as timber trees. He enlisted the

help of Dundee-born but Northern Ireland-raised Augustine Henry (1857-1930), both for his specialised botanical knowledge and his style and ease of writing. Knowing that no commercial publisher could or would allow the all-embracing scope of the venture, Elwes decided, with the help of Edinburgh publisher R and R Clark Ltd, to publish privately for subscribers the work in stages, starting the research in 1903. Seven volumes plus the index in 15 parts (two parts to each volume, the first text, followed by plates) appeared between 1906 and 1913 when the final part, that of postscript, subscribers, addenda and index was published.

Not only is it a masterpiece of scholarship and industry, it is also a monumental work – the original set weighs over 18 kgs – large 4to or small folio with almost 3,000 pages, 412 full page black-and-white platinum photographs, drawings and colour titles. Each two-part volume is contained within a pictorial card folder portfolio, ribbon-tied on the top, bottom and side.

The number of sets printed was thought by the RFS to be 500 but



Facsimile copies

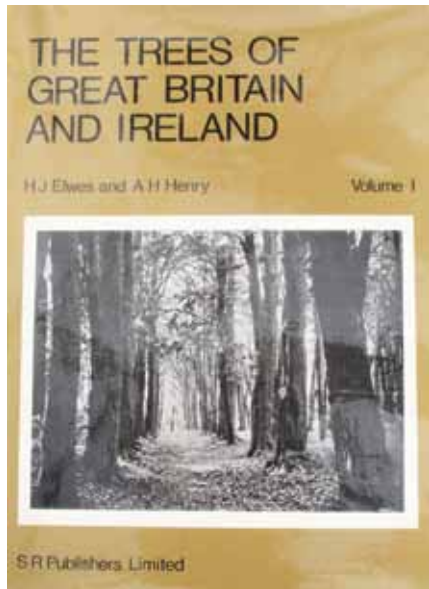
Facsimile copies are photographed reproductions of the original book. Sometimes, as in the case of the Society of Irish Forester's volumes, new background material is added. The president of SIF, John McLoughlin, pens an introduction, and Matthew Webb, Director of the National Botanic Gardens, provides a scholarly résumé of both the work and its authors. Also, some minor corrections as regards illustrations were made to enhance the volumes.

Print-on-demand volumes usually have no added material and are generally reproduced in black-and-white.

Of great value are facsimiles produced in India with a range of bindings and carriage-free worldwide, although Covid has slowed down delivery.

In Ireland, outstanding facsimile editions of great Irish scholarly books have been published in recent years by antiquarian bookdealer, Éamonn de Búrca, with the added value of modern introductions.





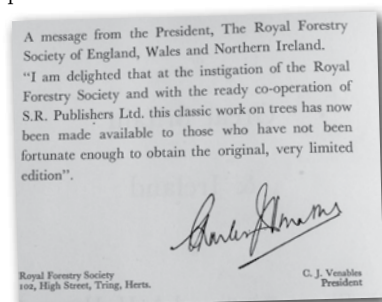
The dustjacket of volume 1 of the 1969 edition published by the Royal Forestry Society

Irish research has shown that maybe only 300 were issued. The list of subscribers numbers 244 and there were 12 presentation copies. Irish subscribers listed are few in number: Glasnevin and less than ten others, mostly from the Big House. The only Irish help with notes on trees acknowledged is Mr R.A. Phillips, Cork, and Sir F.W. Moore of the Royal Botanic Garden at Glasnevin.

Sets in the original parts are rare – bookdealers quote up to five figures – as most subscribers rebound theirs in hardback half or full leather according to their housestyle.

In 2014, Cambridge University Press issued a paperback edition of the seven volumes with a price tag of over €300. Individual volumes may also be purchased as print on demand for around €70 per volume (see abebooks.com). These prices emphasise the value of the facsimile h/b set being offered to Crann readers by SIF in conjunction with this article for only €250 or, if you or yours can acquire a family heirloom, the half leather limited edition of 40 sets for €1,000. The likes of this international work on trees, monumental in its scope and scholarship, is unlikely ever to be seen again.

Augustine Henry became a towering figure in Irish Forestry. He was appointed the first Professor of Forestry at UCD in 1913, a position he held until his death in 1930, aged 73, being allowed by the university to carry on as he did not have enough service for a full pension.



Win a 7-volume set plus index

The Society of Irish Foresters (SIF) is offering a set of the facsimile eight-volume linen-backed Trees of Great Britain and Ireland (2012) to the winner of the following quiz which is open to all Crann members and supporters. The winner will be the first drawn from the correct entries submitted. Entries, by 8 August 2021, to George Cunningham, Parkmore, Roscrea, Co Tipperary; georgencunningham@eircom.net.

1. Which is the odd man out, and why? oak, ash, yew, horse chestnut, holly, alder, birch, juniper.
.....
.....
2. True or False: elder and hazel form part of the Ogham Tree Calendar.
.....
3. Who is supposed to have said that he dreaded more the sound of an axe in an oak grove than all the fears of death and hell?
.....
.....
4. Who wrote the celebrated article, The Sacred Trees of Ireland?
.....
5. Give the meaning of Newry, Killakee, Sallins, Fethard, Glenbeigh.
.....
.....
.....
6. What have the gingko and the dawn redwood in common?
.....
7. Give the common or English name for: quercus, betula, ilex, acer, alnus, sambucus, fagus, fraxinus, salix.
.....
.....
.....
.....
8. Where and what species is the famous autograph tree?
.....
9. What poet wrote:the house of the planter is known by its trees?
.....
10. Which of these trees is not a 'Noble of the Woods' in the early Irish Tree List: oak, hazel, holly, yew, apple, pine, birch and ash?
.....
.....

SIF is also offering the ordinary seven volume set plus index to any reader for a once-off price of €250 (retail value when published was €500).

The Society is also offering the limited numbered half-leather set for €1,000 (retail value when published was €1,500). Orders or queries on these to: Technical Director, Society of Irish Foresters, Glenealy, Co Wicklow: email: info@soif.ie



Amazing Amazon trip is a class effort by 4B of Monkstown school

By PADDY SMITH

WE IN Crann are very impressed by the efforts of 4th class pupils of Monkstown Educate Together National School in Dublin who undertook a unique fundraiser to support our work in Crann.

One of the parents, Jenny, wrote to us to report that the class (mostly 10-year-olds) had been inspired by Katherine Rundell's children's novel *The Explorer* and the brilliant discussions they had had with their teacher, Neil, about the importance of rainforests and the global issue of deforestation.

The girls and boys decided to take some action and over the course of nearly three months from early February to the backend of April they collectively covered the 7,080 km distance from their school to the mouth of the Amazon river (all within their current 5km limit).

In doing so they raised funds for both Crann and the Rainforest Trust and during their travels they kept posting updates on their progress through their gofundme page:

www.gofundme.com/f/y5rw5-metns-4b-race-to-save-the-amazon-rainforest.

A letter was written collectively by 4B and posted to our office in Crann, as follows:

*Together as a class we are raising money to help the Amazon Rainforest and to support our own country's environment too. Our classmate, Tadhg, came up with the idea for the challenge after we all read a book called *The Explorer* by Katherine Rundell. This story is set in the Amazon Rainforest. We reached out to the author to tell her how her book inspired us and she replied with a great message of support!*

We decided we must take action once we learned more about the effects of deforestation, climate change and the destruction of animal habitats. We know how important the forests on Earth are because they give us oxygen and medicine.

NASA has estimated that if the current



Above: Class 4B at Monkstown Educate Together NS, Dublin



Left: The mighty Amazon river, complete with crocodiles, was the destination

levels of deforestation continue there won't be any forests left on the earth by 2100.

We believe that forests are the lungs of the earth and should be protected. Ed Begley Jr highlights part of the problem in his quote: 'I don't understand why, when we destroy something man-made, we call it vandalism but when we destroy something created by nature, we call it progress.'

We all feel excited to see if we reach our goal. The challenge has been a good incentive to get us up off the couch and to get outside during lockdown. It gives us time to spend with our families outdoors too.

Doing the challenge has made us realise how enjoyable getting out into nature can be. It feels good that we are doing a good deed for the environment.

It was all hard work and the boys and girls threw themselves into it wholeheartedly. By 22 February, 18 days into the challenge, they had

covered 1,777 km, around the distance from Dublin to Rome. Two weeks later they were approaching the half-way mark.

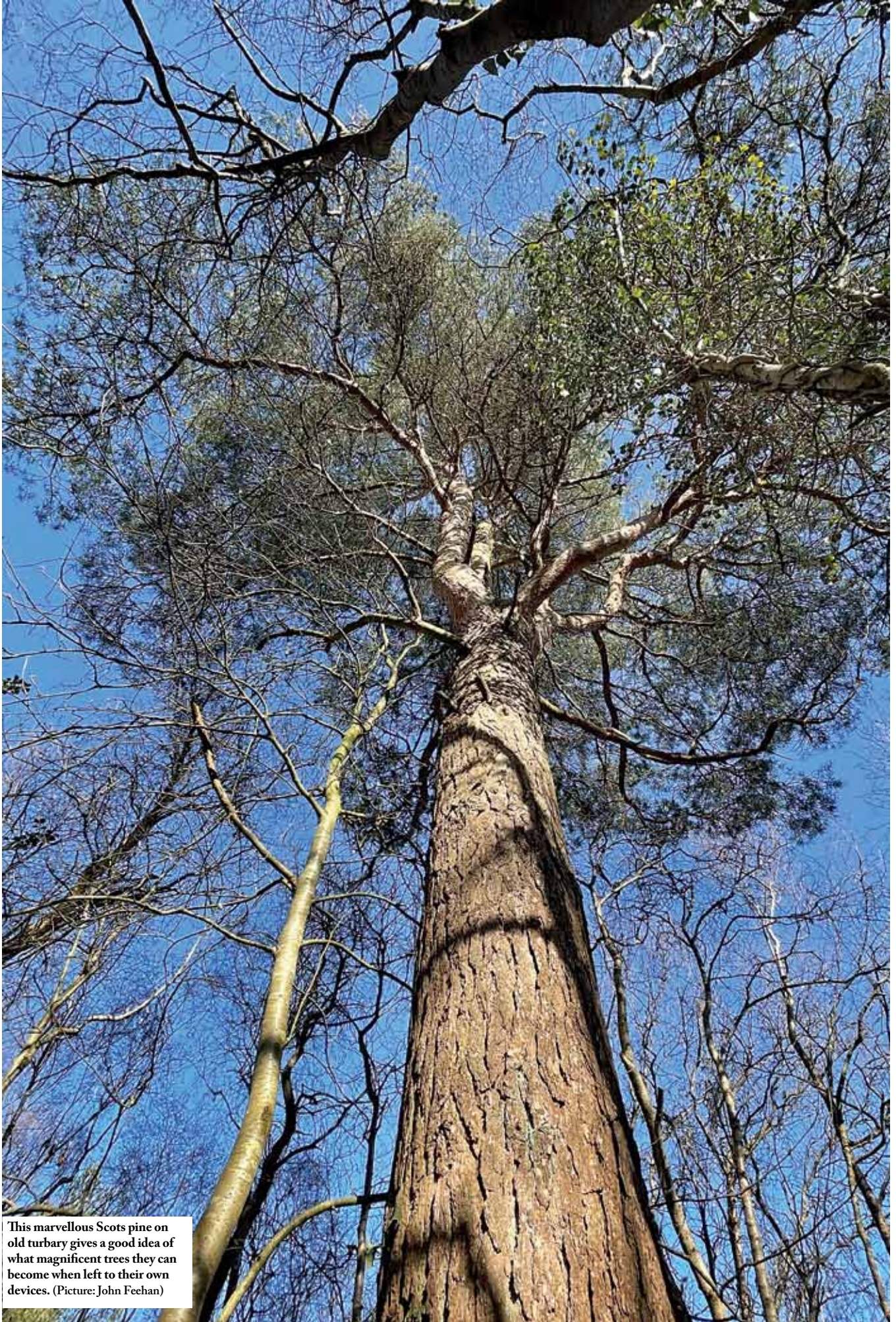
"The class is seriously committed and doing amazing work," they reported. "Many parents are a lot fitter too!"

By 19 March they were thanking author Katherine Rundell for her lovely message of support to the class, and also thanking Ossian Smyth, the Green Party TD and Minister of State, for his support and encouragement.

The class effort didn't go unnoticed nationwide either. Their story was featured on RTE's News2Day programme on 26 March. It can be viewed on www.rte.ie/player/series/news2day/SI0000001210?epguid=IH000400254

And then on Thursday 22 April, the Big Day. They reached their destination: the mouth of the great Amazon River. What an achievement!

What is more, they surpassed their target of €3,000 in fundraising. Thank you, all!



This marvellous Scots pine on old turbary gives a good idea of what magnificent trees they can become when left to their own devices. (Picture: John Feehan)

A NEW WOODDED WILDLAND FOR OUR BOGS

By JOHN FEEHAN

There is much talk these days among ecologists and naturalists generally – and indeed everybody who is concerned over the loss of biodiversity – about the prospects for the rehabilitation of the great raised bogs of the Irish midlands, now that industrial exploitation of these bogs has come to an end.

Bord na Móna was established in 1946, and it had an enormously positive influence on the economy of the midlands, but at that time there was little concern, or indeed awareness, of the loss entailed across the whole spectrum of other environmental values through the strip-mining of the bogs: the climatic implications of the loss of the great carbon store held in the peat, of its regulation function in relation to water flow. And there was little appreciation of the educational and scientific value of what were among the last of Ireland's truly wild places, or of the aesthetic and spiritual values they embodied.

Global warming and the biodiversity crisis did not exist for us in 1946, nor was there any awareness of the population explosion and the challenge of feeding 9 billion people in a water-challenged world. All of our attention was on the task of coaxing into flame the glowing embers of an economy that had very few natural resources at its disposal.

You might think that an area that was so systematically exploited for its peat would be degraded and devoid of natural interest, but cutover or cutaway bog has great ecological vitality.

Readers will remember **John Feehan's** essay on 'The Spirit of Trees', which appeared as a special Millennium Supplement of *Releaving Ireland*. He has been described by Michael Viney as 'one of Ireland's top ecologists and communicators of nature', and is well known for his passion for Ireland's trees and woodlands.



The flora and fauna are quite different from what they were before human exploitation, however, and will continue to evolve as they adjust to the changes that will inevitably take place over time. In the warmer world of 2050 – with biodiversity reduced and confined as never before at a time we will have come to appreciate as never before the full spectrum of functions these places serve in human life – cutaway bog will have come to be treasured as one of the few places on our doorstep to which we can retreat from our frenetic world in order to experience contact with nature.

Bord na Móna has declared its intention

to rewet more than eighty of its bogs, the first phase taking in an area of over 31,000 hectares. Rewetting mainly involves filling in the network of internal drains that make the surface dry and firm enough for the great peat harvest machines to work on it, as well as the removal of all the infrastructure associated with the particular form of strip mining that is peat extraction.

The word used for Bord na Móna's over-riding intention is 'rehabilitation'. Many people think this will result in the restoration of the raised bog, but this can only happen if the preparatory drainage stops at an early stage and the network of drains is filled in before the water table has dropped far enough to kill the surface vegetation. Certainly, the carbon peat store in the remaining peat is retained (a figure of 100 million tonnes of carbon dioxide in perpetuity is mentioned for Phase 1), but it is unlikely to lead to the return of active bog, except in limited areas.

As a result of the systematic drainage necessary before harvesting can commence,

the acrotelm – the zone of peat formation – disappears very early on, and hydrological and ecological conditions are rarely adequate for its subsequent re-establishment. If peat removal ceases at some intermediate stage, the result in the short to medium term is usually the development of heathy vegetation in drier situations and marsh-like conditions where it is wetter. Where the aim is to maximize the level of post-harvest biodiversity, the optimal strategy would normally be to remove most of the peat and allow natural ecological regeneration



Young yew in birchwood on old turbarry Picture: John Feehan

to proceed. The most significant long-term ecological opportunities for cutaway bog do not relate to raised bog restoration, but to the development of a carbon sequestering wild-land of high biological diversity: not that of the vanished bog, but of comparable ecological value.

What will happen in most places is that a diverse mosaic of new habitats will develop over time, in which natural woodland in ecological equilibrium with the changed ecological circumstances will become established.

Most raised bogs are surrounded by an aureole of old turbary, areas where the hand-winning of turf over many tens of generations took place. Until relatively recently, everybody in the midlands relied on the bogs for their fuel, from the Big House at one end of the social scale to the smallest tenant farmer on the edge of the bog itself. When Bord na Móna identified bogs it intended to work – and they selected only the largest bogs, on which their large machines could operate with maximum efficiency – they had the authority to acquire the turbary rights by compulsory purchase where necessary. The cutover areas all around the edges of the great raised bogs were abandoned and left to themselves.

But even before the hand-winning of turf came to an end, the older wet turbary areas closer to the edge of the bog had long been colonised by birch, and as time went by these became areas of true wildwood where natural ecological processes operated. The vast majority of the animals that live in this tanglewood are small, able to move freely through interweaving stems, branches and leaf litter. Larger animals such as wood mice, badgers and deer make their own tunneled highways through which they move comfortably in darkness. Birds weave their winged courses through the spacious air above. Most obvious to our eyes are the trackways of deer, gratefully followed by the few humans who make their uncharted way through these wild lands.

These birchwoods are truly biodiverse areas. Birch is among the most important of native tree species in terms of biodiversity support value. In Great Britain, 344 species of insects have been recorded feeding on it, and in Ireland the number is around 230 species. It is, however, a short-lived tree, old at a hundred years or so, but in that time it



will have transformed the peaty substrate with the indispensable help of the multitude of soil fungi it hosts (including the stunning fly agaric whose favourite mycorrhizal partner is birch).

In the older birchwoods it is very noticeable how exposed the shallow main roots become as the peaty substrate dries out with the passing decades. This is a highly significant development, because the next generation of trees is unlikely to be dominated by birch but by longer-lived trees better adapted to the changed edaphic

conditions, and with deeper root systems. By the time the birch reaches old age and decays – and, remember, birch is old at 100 – the peat soil is quite changed and more suited to broadleaved trees of greater stature and longer life, whose roots can more easily access the mineral ground at greater depth. Even today in some of the birchwoods in old turbary areas you can find pioneer oak and yew beginning to appear.

Scots pine tends to favour rather drier situations on the bog, especially where there is a greater depth of peat remaining, with



Far left: A pool on cutover bog at Mannin Lake, Co Mayo Picture: Wikimedia –Brian Nelson

Left: A Bord na Móna bog train at Edenderry Picture: Bord na Móna



The stunning fly agaric whose favourite mycorrhizal partner is birch Picture: Jan Rehschuh

a more open understorey dominated by heather. It too has a wide range of fungi and invertebrates that depend on it, some of them exclusively. Like birch, it has been with us for a very long time. If you look at the pollen diagrams that record the story of how the vegetation has changed over time since the Ice Age you will see how Scots pine and hazel began to replace birch in the forests of the midlands around 10,000 years ago. Scots pine is one of the loveliest and most charismatic of trees: a species whose every mature tree has an individuality of form rare in other species.

The Scots pines that grow on the drier turbary areas are trees of great presence, very different from the regimented phalanxes of planted lodgepole pine of commercial forestry.

The likelihood is that these marginal woods will extend onto large areas of the Bord na Móna bogs spontaneously and if left to themselves will develop as decades grow into centuries to form a network of truly wild and biodiverse wooded land, interspersed with other natural habitats where conditions are more suited to the development of wetland, natural grassland or heath.

A priority at this stage is for local communities in these bogland areas to be aware of the great opportunity they have, and to become actively involved in steering Bord na Móna and other empowered agencies to take the necessary steps towards the designation of these areas as Biodiversity Reserves, because it is in this way that their greatest value can be realized; not the second-best option; not the only thing we can do since other, more profitable, options no longer appear viable. Sixty years ago we could not have foreseen that we would come to value the other functions of peatland in a way that might in certain circumstances outweigh what in conventional economics would be considered the more productive functions.

We understand and appreciate much better than we did 50 or 60 years ago the many ecosystem functions other than the productive function (in the narrow economic sense) that different dimensions and facets of natural ecosystems – including peatlands – perform in our lives. In the economy of the midlands in the decades following the establishment of Bord na Móna, the bogs were of greatest value to us as a source of the raw material from which we could make turf or briquettes, or burn to generate electricity. We had little time or leisure to consider the recreational, aesthetic, ecological, cultural or spiritual functions they served.

This community awareness is the most important thing. An important element is how little it will cost in monetary terms to bring about, on our doorstep, what would become in time not only an area of great biological diversity but of significant carbon sequestration, with enormous educational and recreational potential to which we can retreat within reach of where we live in a future when we will have need of such places as never before, lockdowns or no lockdowns.

OUR CHRISTMAS 2020 FUNDRAISING DRAW RESULTS

1st Prize A wonderful variety box of books worth in excess of 250 couriered to any Irish address, sponsored by Crann Director Dr George Cunningham, Roscrea. **Winner: Ness Porter, Sonnagh, Anascragh, Ballinasloe, Co Galway #630 Line #16**

2nd Prize Have 21 trees planted in a woodland managed for biodiversity, at a Crann/Easy Treesie community planting event. A printable Gift Certificate with details of our million-tree project with Ireland's million school children and the TrillionTreeCampaign.org.

Marcella Clarke, Stroane, Butlersbridge, Co Cavan #314 Line #4

3rd Prize Ireland's Blue Book Gift Voucher worth €100, valid until 21 October 2025, sponsored by Miriam Kingston.

Geraldine Mills, Doon West, Rosscahill, Galway #90 Line #8

4th Prize €100 Voucher for Wilkinson's Jewellers, Kennedy Rd, Navan, Co Meath. **Cathriona Brownlee, The Laurels, Broadfield, Naas, Co Kildare #214C Line #1**

5th Prize Family (2+2) Pass for 4 Visits to Belvedere - Valid for use up to 31/12/2020. Belvedere House, Gardens & Park, Mullingar, Co Westmeath

www.belvedere-house.ie. Ruth Browne, 8 St Patrick's Tce, Roscomon #385 Line #19

6th Prize Family (2+2) Pass for 4 Visits to Belvedere - Valid for use up to 31/12/2021. Belvedere House, Gardens & Park, Mullingar, Co Westmeath

www.belvedere-house.ie. Tom Fannon, 7 Owenriff Pk, Oughterard, Co Galway, #643 Line #6

7th Prize Family (2+2) Pass for 4 Visits to Belvedere - Valid for use up to 31/12/2021. Belvedere House, Gardens & Park, Mullingar, Co Westmeath

www.belvedere-house.ie. Catherine Nolan, South Main Street, Naas, Co Kildare #617 Line #10

8th Prize €50 Voucher for Cappagh Nurseries and Garden Centre, Tinnakilly Lower, Aughrim, Co Wicklow, Y14 HF65 **www.vanderwel.ie. Helen Hennessy, Ballymacar, New Ross, Co Wexford #41 Line #9**

9th Prize €50 Voucher for O'Briens Wine Off-Licence 34 stores nationwide **www.obrienswine.ie. Máire Mulcahy, Renvyle, Wilton Ave, Cork. #176 Line #2**

10th Prize A signed copy of 'If Trees Could Talk' by Ben Simon, The story of woodlands around Belfast. **Laurena McCormick, 13 Emmet Cres, Dublin 8 #225 Line #13**

11th Prize Book 'The Hidden Life of Trees' by Peter Wohlleben, sponsored by Crann Director Diarmuid McAree. **Jason McClave, Mullaghmore West, Ballinode, Co. Monaghan #343 Line #15**

Your efforts to support Crann's work are very much appreciated. THANK YOU!

'Thank You' to all our friends and sponsors for supporting and sponsoring this fundraising draw (including GPS Colour Graphics Ltd, who printed the draw cards free of charge **www.gpscolour.co.uk)**





Eoin Donnelly sharing his experience of hedge-laying at a demonstration some years ago

The birds, insects and mamma

IF ALL THE words written about the current difficulties in getting approval to plant or harvest trees were translated into actual trees planted, we would probably now have the highest planting rates on the planet.

Given this fact, there is probably little point in my adding further to the piles of articles on this depressing subject. So, I will con-

fine myself to writing about the trees I planted in the good old days of the 1990s when forestry was encouraged and welcomed as the excellent alternative land use it undoubtedly is.

My farm has been transformed into a haven for wildlife, having lost most of the trees that had been planted centuries earlier. I still had some magnificent beech, most of which are still

standing, but then nowadays we are told we really shouldn't plant wonderful trees like beech as they are non-native. Well, the birds, insects and mammals that value them as a source of food and habitat don't seem to care, and neither do I.

Nor do I care that the serial objectors to forestry don't seem to like my spruce, pine and cedars, as well as my red

oak, Spanish chestnut, walnut, acacia, eucalyptus and the numerous specimen trees I planted such as sequoia, zelkova, lime, pin oak, scarlet oak (possibly one of the most beautiful specimens of all) in company with rowan, hazel, oak, ash, Scot's pine, holly and virtually anything else I felt would thrive in our corner of Meath and also in Co Leitrim. Some are, of course,

Making a hobby into something useful

By JOE BARRY

A friend recently sent me the link to a 1982 American documentary film set in woodland in Vermont, detailing the workings of a mill on the Stevens River. It showed how energy from the river was used to drive a multitude of leather belts and associated machines. It was delightful to watch how such a free energy source was harnessed to aid in the manufacture of so many valuable metal and timber products by powering both a sawmill and a forge. The film is called Ben's Mill and it can be accessed on the following link <https://www.folkstreams.net/film-detail.php?id=187>

Now, before anyone writes to me criticising the health and safety aspects of this ancient

mill, I am well aware of these issues but it was genuinely inspirational to watch how a traditional craftsman like Ben Thresher took raw logs, cut them, shaped them and created all kinds of useful things for his farming neighbours, such as a large trough for cattle to drink from and a sled for drawing timber from the woods, as well as gates, tables and numerous other essential items.

It was a lovely example of how farm forestry can work to the benefit of people, wildlife and the landscape. These farmers valued their trees and managed their woodland carefully for future generations, harvesting the timber when needed and ensuring the wellbeing of future crops. It was also nice to see two men with a pair of sturdy horses drawing out logs to the mill using the sled the mill owner had made them. A bit laborious, perhaps, but delightful to watch.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18



Is don't care – and neither do I

simply standalone specimens to enhance the landscape while most are part of a far larger wooded area. They are a constant joy to behold throughout the changing seasons and each has its own special attributes that enhance the mix.

This spring, while high pruning some oak in a section containing a beech/oak mix, I saw my first pine marten. I knew

they had arrived in our locality but, until then, I had never been lucky enough to see one. It was a fleeting glimpse as it ran quickly along a bank and I suppose I can thank their presence for the now merciful absence of grey squirrels that plagued us in the past. Jays are now a daily sight, as indeed are the buzzards that are plentiful, having been totally absent only 25 years ago.

It is simply amazing what a change has taken place. And how anyone can object to someone planting, thinning and managing trees is simply beyond my comprehension. A walk in the woods is like a visit to a health farm and I defy anyone to say they don't feel enriched and invigorated by a stroll among trees, be they broadleaf or conifer or a mix of many species.

I also reclaimed an ancient pond that had been part of an old landscaping scheme and it now sits sheltered on one side by larch, pine, oak and beech with an understory of holly and hazel. Mallard nest there as do water hens and little grebes with a regular visit from herons that predate the frogs.

JOE



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

I have to admit that, much as I admire horse-drawn logging, I prefer my quad and mini forwarder which is faster, requires only one man to load it using the hydraulic crane and it leaves hardly a mark on the woodland floor. Each to their own, I suppose, but both systems are to my mind preferable, whenever viable, to huge and expensive machinery clearing large sections of trees.

There are, of course, situations where large harvesters and forwarders are required as, like combine harvesters in a wheat field, they are fast and super-efficient and are necessary to provide the essential raw materials for the building industry. But working on limited acreage in a farm woodland, the smaller operations will always have their place.

I am old enough to have worked as a child helping to stack sheaves of corn to dry before the annual arrival of the threshing machine. In those days, we didn't purchase things like rails and fencing posts as most farmers do now but, instead, we felled a suitable tree and brought the timber to the local sawmill. Not unlike what I saw on the film I described above.

There is a lot of interest and goodwill out there towards traditional craftspeople who live in the woods and make charcoal or even the bodgers of old who manufactured chair legs, using a pole lathe. That marvellous craftsman, Eoin Donnelly, who lives in the wonderfully-named Bodgers Hovel in Wexford, always attracted huge crowds when demonstrating pole lathe woodturning at forest shows. He could rapidly turn a simple block of wood into a useful garden dibber within minutes.

Hedge-laying is also something that has almost died out completely due to the labour involved but I still get craftsmen like Robert Birtwistle from Co Leitrim to visit from time to time and restore sections of the farm hedging. Robert gave a demonstration on the farm here a few years ago when we had an Irish Timber Growers field day and it was the highlight of the day, especially so for those who had never seen hedge-laying in action.

These days, I find I am constantly trying to come back to a system of self-sufficiency, a



sort of John Seymour approach which is so satisfying when viable. The snag is the term 'when viable' for if we cost our time at even the minimum wage, most craft work struggles to provide a living income.

I will happily spend days working with hazel and forest thinnings and get a real sense of satisfaction at having made something of use, regardless of how long it took me.

But I am not silly enough to confuse that as providing a real economic return. It's a form of hobby, therapeutic, like spending a day fishing. Absolutely not an economically viable activity but then I am sure my efforts at gardening are probably not strictly economic.

Here at home, we are almost self-sufficient in fruit and vegetables, provided we stick to only eating what is in season, but then who



Left: Picnic table and benches made from home-grown cedar and larch. Surely much better than buying something similar in a garden centre that was probably imported.

Above left: Coppiced hazel at the edge of mixed coniferous woodland. It will have regrown in 6 to 8 years to provide further craft materials.

Above centre: Robert Birtwistle setting up hazel stakes as part of a hedge-laying demonstration on Joe Barry's farm in Co Meath

Above right: Transporting forestry thinnings from the woods to the yard for processing. An alternative is to use horse power but I prefer the speed and light touch of a quad and mini forwarder

needs strawberries in December or avocados and other imported treats? And it is a real pleasure to collect fresh eggs each day from hens that are free to roam and scratch, but my father always said that there wasn't a hen in Ireland that didn't die in debt. Activities like keeping chickens, woodcrafts and growing one's own food are not just about money and cannot be compared in that light.

Am I a vandal to be cutting down trees I planted 25 years ago?



WE NEED to be careful about what we plant in our woods for the future. A bit of common sense is required because otherwise we will end up with thousands of hectares of woodland that is of no economic value whatsoever. There has to be a sensible balance to where we grow timber for further use in construction and around the farm or wherever and that we set aside other areas of woodland specifically for environmental benefits. The two things need not be that different or incompatible but if we plant native trees like birch and alder, for example, they currently have zero commercial value other than for wood fuel and small-scale craft work.

I find it very hard to explain this to people because, thanks to years of propaganda, the public have been brainwashed by newspaper articles and other media broadcasts that native species are the only ones to plant. I can well recall that great hero of mine, the late Matt Fogarty, who was a genuine tree lover and an inspiration to all farm foresters, stating that because we have such a miniscule number of native tree species, it would be foolish in the extreme to ignore the potential for disease and other pitfalls and not also plant the many wonderful other non-native species that grow so well here in Ireland.

Perhaps I am rambling here but it can be hard to explain how there are so many aspects to growing trees that are either unknown or misunderstood. Some people would say that when I cut a tree that I planted, say, 25 years ago I am committing some form of vandalism but all I am doing is making space for its neighbours to grow further and, like the mill owner in Vermont, providing my home and farm with the raw materials required. Is there anything more sustainable than growing your own fencing materials and constructing the odd bench or picnic table? Why go to a hardware shop or garden centre when I can provide my own?

And the perfect raw material for such tasks is the coniferous timber that is long lasting and grows straight and true, making it ideal for planking into different shapes and sizes to suit the task. Someone purchasing an imported teak garden seat probably has little idea that the same seat could be easily constructed using home-grown cedar, spruce or larch. I have a very basic workshop and limited talent for woodwork but thanks to the help of the craftsmen from our local Men's Shed, I provide the timber and their skill does the rest. They also get the raw material for various projects of their own, so everyone wins.

Now, just imagine if I hadn't planted trees all those years ago.

JOE

Record tree deliveries all over the country

By ORLA FARRELL

“100,000 TREES planted in the middle of our Level 5 Lockdown?”, I am asked by RTÉ *Nationwide* journalist Valerie Waters, who has come to my Clontarf garden for a National Tree Week feature on the Easy Treesie/Crann project. “And where are all the events?”

I explain. A lengthy cast-list of tree luminaries and enthusiasts starred in nationally-broadcast webinar and Zoom events running throughout Tree Week. On the Wednesday evening I was recording our *Nationwide* interview while in two Zoom rooms at the same time! All our meet-ups were, of course, virtual.

Now here is the magic: for the second year in a row, simultaneous record tree-deliveries took place to local authorities and communities all over the country where socially-distanced planting was carried out following all the guidelines. In their bubbles

and in their pods, people are relishing every chance to be outdoors enhancing our local parklands, community gardens and surroundings. It brings the Easy Treesie tree-planting counter very close to the 200,000 mark by the closing bell of Tree Week (which took place with an Earth Hour cherry tree-planting ceremony back in March – in the dark!).

You may have spotted us celebrating National Tetrapak Tree Day way back at the kick-off to our planting season last autumn? Our delegation presented President Michael D Higgins, Crann Patron, with our 100,000th sapling. A huge thank you to both Coillte, which is making an additional contribution of 100,000 native saplings to our million-tree initiative, and to Trees on the Land who have delivered a second 30,000-tree donation for our 2021 planting programme. Alder and oak, silver and common birch, Scots pine, rowan and whitethorn: what a varied woodland mixture! Add to this the standard and other species supplied to us by voluntary and commercial Irish nurseries and 2021 is already



a record year for our ongoing community planting.

DAY 1. Launch Day dawns sunny and warm. Lusk National School 6th classes were back to school that very week for the first time since Christmas. The excitement of the children being back with their friends could be heard in their cheery laughter as they helped line up trees, spades and watering cans and, of course, PPE: buckets of gloves of all sizes and

Ciara Hanratty, a 6th class pupil from Lusk Senior National school, at a Scots Pine planting ceremony with Crann/Easy Treesie for National Tree Week

Below left: Darryl Pyper-Dill, a 6th class pupil from Lusk Senior National School pictured at the Easy Treesie Planting of Coillte Native Trees for National Tree Week

Below right: Jennifer Umenwa (left) with John Ryan and Deborah Oyedeji, all 6th class pupils from Lusk Senior National School, pictured at the Crann/Easy Treesie event for National Tree Week



patterns from our vast glove-library. I joined 90 children, delighted to be outside to plant a shelterbelt of 150 silver and downy birch backing the willow wall planted earlier to help protect their playground. The Junior School 2nd class added rowan to the mix. I am old friends with this school community, having been on its teaching staff since the year I left college until I departed to restore trees at scale to the Irish landscape fulltime in 2018. And what a school it is with its model tree-planting

template! I had the pleasure of joining the children to plant 1,000 trees for each member of the school 'family' the year its state-of-the-art new complex opened. On another picnic day we took a double decker bus to nearby Newbridge House Demesne and planted another 400-sapling Tiny Forest near the children's playground and farm.

This school merits an award, don't you think? A sycamore bowl from Blackwater Valley makers, made from a tree downed during Storm Ophelia, was presented to Principal Teacher Paul McComiskey to celebrate their outstanding commitment to enhancing their school with trees. They are joining a tradition of Easy Treesie/Crann Crown Award winners. In addition, the schoolchildren took ownership of three bird houses made by Wellwood, Mitchelstown, specially commissioned in a natural finish to enable the school to serve as Tree Trail signage. Chocolate is central to our MO so there had to be Easter Eggs (rainforest certified). We were celebrating World Forestry Day after all. Since Lusk is our premier market-gardening town,

a planting day is a reason to celebrate local produce. Another old friend – he has supplied our project with apple rewards on planting day picnics and guided walks in the past – local orchard owner David Llewellyn pulls up his van to the school gate as the school bell rings with crates of local red juicy apples and pressed apple juice. And how nice it was to see one of our great photographs in the national media afterwards, capturing the joy of our healthy and happy launch day feature.

DAY 2. My phone hops a little dance across the spreadsheets laid out on the desk as reports come in of the deliveries being received. 11,600 trees arrive in Shankill. The call is to say they are here at the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Council depot with compliments to the great Pat Peters who, with Pat Neville and Mark Carlinn of Coillte, have rolled out a distribution *par excellence*. Crann Director Diarmuid McAree and team are standing by and not an hour has passed when he sends on great pictures of the first batch of trees already in the ground with thanks to the efforts of

the Shankill Tidy Towns tree planters. 3,000 are greening Shankill by their next report. Deliveries arrive on schedule with just a few minor hitches: Cooley, Greystones, Tralee, Annascaul, Mayo, and on it goes. Our next task is, of course, adding all the planting sites' co-ordinates to the UNEP world tree map. Imogen Rabone, Trees on the Land founder and tree-hero, is standing by to run a class in our Zoom office to assist in spatially recording all the new plantings.

Our new intern, Opeyemi Adetifa from TU Dublin (succeeding AB, who continues his first-rate support to us), has been a great asset since he joined us just in time for our busiest planting drive. Opeyemi has a degree in botany and is working on a Master's Degree project with us. His skills of wizardry with Excel are particularly valuable; you can imagine the logistics of delivering quite so many 'Right Trees to the Right Places'. He and our volunteer, Canqi Li of Brown University, join me on a Plant-for-the-Planet webinar where we shake things up by challenging the 80 other collaborating countries to answer the Garda *Jerusalem* Dance Challenge. We include you, dear readers! We take a distanced-dancing break and rope in a few of our tree planters. We include a donkey and a hen at St Anne's City Farm; their horticulture volunteers are planting 50 willow for their goats – with a giant Wicklow rabbit carrying bucket and spade!

DAY 3. Swords Woodland Association launch a wonderful local-tree poster which is presented to its 16 district schools. River Valley Community School is planting 50 silver birch trees with each of their children in this new school, so new it has only two classes of infants. St Colmcille's take in 200 saplings for their large boys' school grounds playing-field perimeter, a lovely way to end the term. The Swords delivery – first instalment – has arrived to their organic farm depot with Fiona, the electric tree-planting augur; some are destined for Malahide Castle. And it is there I have the pleasure of meeting the new GAA President, a fellow teacher, Larry McCarthy. The Fingal County Council Operations Team meet us to select a site. We plant an oak sapling overlooking the pitches within the demesne, a symbol of our new partnership with GAA Green Clubs who have committed to planting 45,000 trees with their communities. I present a heritage apple tree, the first for their new orchard at the GAA farm. In turn, I am gifted with a GAA jersey that I put on straight away! Every good wish to all those who worked on this new collaboration, especially our new Community



Orla Farrell of Easie Treesie/Crann joins GAA president Larry McCarthy on National Tree Week 2021 at the planting of an oak tree at Malahide Castle Demesne pitches to mark the collaboration of GAA Green Clubs in the planting of 45,000 trees as part of the Crann/Easy Treesie project



Helen Batson and Susan Knowles with one of the silver birch, rowan, Scots pine, alder, oak, hazel and cherry trees planted by the staff in a Wellness initiative to mark National Tree Week 2021



Assistant Director of Nursing and Midwifery Shideh Kiafar and Nurse Colette Farrell of the National Maternity Hospital, Holles St, Dublin, celebrate the planting of 1,000 saplings by their team as part of the Crann/Easy Treesie National Tree Week initiative.

Liaison Facilitator, Orchard Project founder and artist Steven Doody, and GAA Green Clubs leader Jimmy McCarthy and their teams.

Later we prepare for RTÉ *Nationwide's* Tree Week series in an interview where our project is being highlighted. What a great opportunity! The crew sets me up under my apple trees; this is quite intimidating because journalist Valerie presented her own gardening programme for years and our back yard has served more as a tree nursery and depot than an ornamental backdrop to our lives in recent times. Fortunately, my husband and supporter-in-chief, Owen, is there doing the spade work for our filmed tree-planting ceremony. Two neighbours are presented with a holly and silver birch to plant and it is good fun recounting our tales of planting which now are almost-nationwide. Straight after the programme our website and email crashes; Marguerite, Crann Administrator, has a similar flood of enquiries; people want to get

planting. We pencil in our new enquiries to our new project lists for consideration for the upcoming season. With our activity, the week is not long enough to get back to them all immediately with comprehensive answers. Finding good homes for our saplings takes a bit of organising. Fortunately, our new website is designed to have several templates which will make answering questions easier.

DAY 4. As part of Tree Week activities we have linked with the National Maternity Hospital to facilitate and support their Wellness initiative 'From Nursery to Nursery'. We distribute 1,100 birch, hawthorn, cherry, silver birch and rowan to the hospital staff for planting in their own homes, supplemented with our *Crann* calendars and *Crann* magazines. There is a great feeling of excitement reported from the hospital with many staff members wandering about like walking trees carrying bundles over their shoulders. This extends our engagements



Above, Stewart Davis, Swords Woodland Association, with Fiona the Electric Augur, and Orla Farrell of Easie Treesie/Crann. Greenprint-Maxol are supporting education for a Clean Energy Transition.

Above right, angelic Gonzaga College students enjoying our Christmas tree planting party



Our week of media action continues as we are asked to share our story by our great collaborators in our tree-planting initiative, the Tree Council of Ireland, as part of their webinar series. CEO Brendan Fitzsimons is MC and Siobhán Quinn, Administrator, manages all the complex logistics swimmingly to run our first 'Film Friday' show. We have been so busy planting we haven't promoted our many 'edu-taining' films; this was our chance. We ran eight films in a row with a little introduction to each. A restful end to the working week. Our new film show joins our previous recordings on the Tree Council website. Check them out!

DAY 6. It's a wrap! We are celebrating with all our communities nationwide as photographs and reports land in of the plantings taking place, from Donegal Town river walk to another riverbank in Ovens, Co Cork, from Sligo's 'Pure Clothing' student project to a Fingal Hedgerow Society, from Maynooth University to Clarinbridge Tidy Towns. We thank everyone who worked under the most challenging of restrictions to make National Tree Week a focus for Covid-safe planting action and especially our many supporters.

High praise is deserved for the communities who were recipients of tree deliveries and managed the planting. Those on our waiting list will be prioritised for our upcoming planting programme for which we have even more ambitious targets: 250,000 saplings to be planted on average over the coming three years to reach our target of planting 1 million by the second 2023 season. Can we do it? Yes we 'Crann'!

And as Tree Week came to a close we looked ahead to our next project, the TEDxCountdown/Crann – Trees for Ireland conference on Earth Day (full report in our next issue). Watch out for our new talks on the Easy Treesie YouTube channel, see our newest tree-planting supporters and sponsor a €10 tree on www.easytreesie.com.

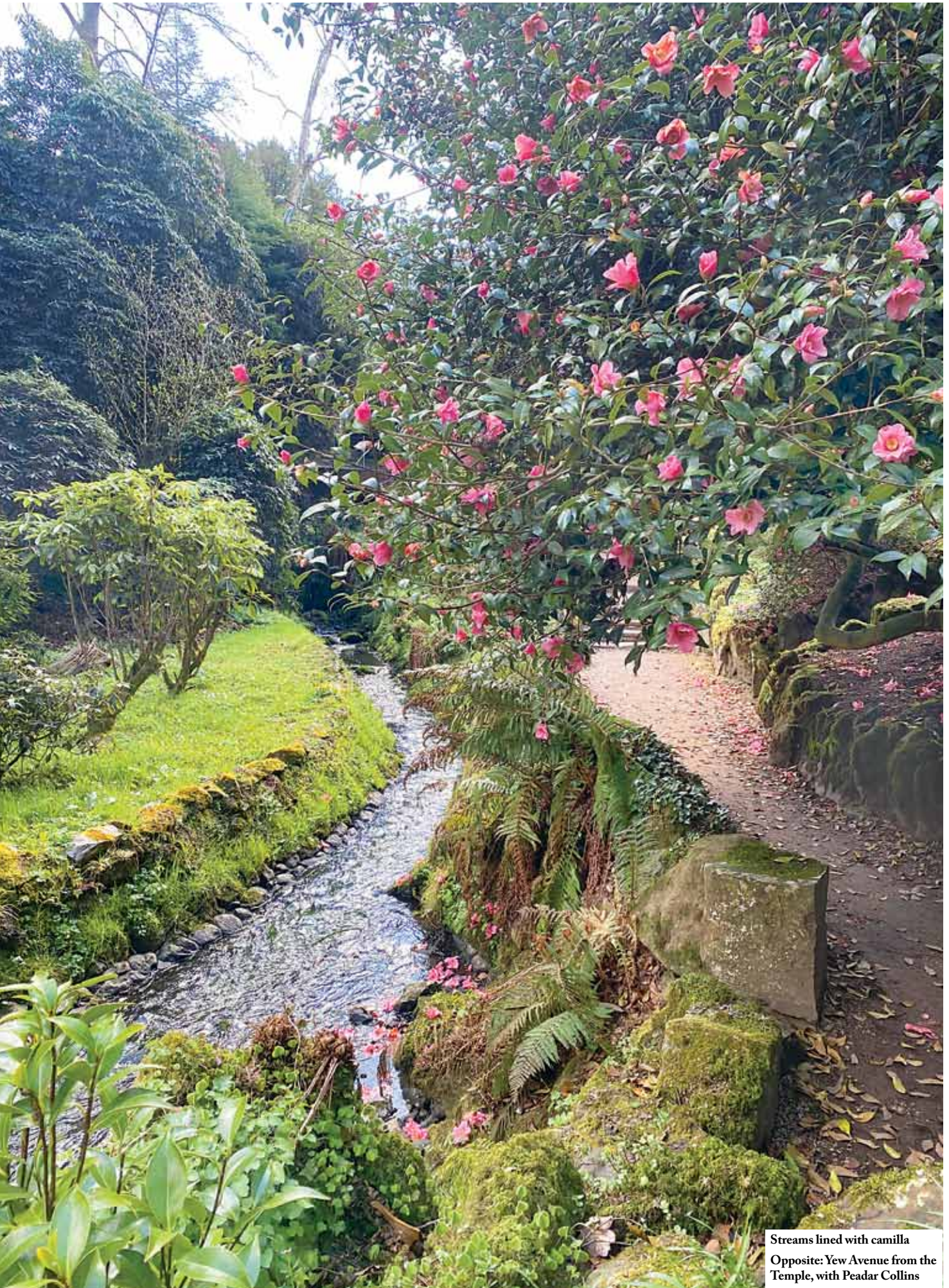
with hospitals from previous years including Clontarf, St Luke's and Dr Steeven's hospitals. With no public events this year we wanted to acknowledge the team at the National Maternity Hospital for their heroic work. Shideh Kiafar, Assistant Director of Nursing and Midwifery, who was instrumental in the organisation of the donation, expressed the hope that the opportunity to plant a tree will act as a physical reminder of the staff's own strength and resilience for having worked through this pandemic.

We also launch our new collaboration with the Museum of Childhood, Ireland. This virtual museum was listed in 2020 as one of the Top 6 Museums in the world in the 'Best International Digital Activity' category (along with Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum) in a recent world ranking. Our Easy Treesie/Crann project works hand-in-glove with the artistic community; they add so much joy to our endeavours. We were thrilled to launch Irish filmmaker Fion Gunn's wonderful, serene film, 'Plant More Trees', and meet a panel of distinguished guests at our Zoom webinar. This was the highlight of their week of tree poetry by their young voices broadcast on Twitter and tree planting with us from Nepal

to Italy to Chicago, to Melbourne, Killarney National Park and Mayo.

DAY 5. Our Project is delighted to be able to now share the news that it is an Awardee of the Rethink Ireland Innovate Together Fund in the category 'Sustainable Ireland'. This fund was set up to support innovative responses to the Covid-19 crisis. It is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development via the Dormant Accounts Fund, with additional funding from corporate partners which include the Zurich Foundation, Oakfield Trust, Medtronic and Twitter.

This award entitles our project team to participate in the Rethink Ireland Accelerator Programme. Support has been delivered in many strategic areas through this initiative to our project and those of the 19 other awardees. We have been enjoying the contribution of expertise in areas such as goal setting, strategic thinking and online communications which has enabled us to carry out actions such as the preparation of a new re-designed website with Dr Roisin Lyons and her team at DCU School of Business.



Streams lined with camilla
Opposite: Yew Avenue from the
Temple, with Peadar Collins

Hillsborough: a wondrous place where politics and horticulture meet

By PEADAR COLLINS

WHEN I WAS a kid in Co Cork, I lived for holidays and Granny's farm in Ballysurdane.

One of my daily adventures was to cycle up the road to McCarthy's to meet Jerry on his return from the creamery with the Cork Examiner newspaper for Granny. Jerry was a kind and happy soul with a huge appreciation for nature. I would always be invited in for tea and soda bread with generous amounts of real butter and strawberry jam and the richest creamy milk for the tea. Jerry would have scooped this from the top of the churn before setting out for the creamery earlier in the morning.

On one occasion I remember his sister, a nun who was home for a visit, joining us for tea. She explained to me how she was stationed in Belfast. This was in the late 1970s and my awareness of the level of extreme violence from watching the news was the only reality in the North, I asked if she wasn't afraid to live there. She assured me that life was good there and, yes, there was trouble but it wasn't everywhere and one could easily travel all day long and not encounter what was so focused an image of the North as seen on the news.

Forty years later I find myself temporarily stationed near Belfast. By kind invitation, I am here to help build a substantial private garden in the neighbourhood of the very charming, quaint and loaded-with-valuable-history town that is Hillsborough. The rolling surrounding countryside south of Belfast is



PLACES TO GO

blessed with a rich dark heavy soil, a perfect location to establish an arboretum and, boy, Hillsborough got one: Hillsborough Castle and Gardens. Well worth seeing. And very accessible.

On the Saturday we were there, while planting trees in the neighbourhood, my colleagues and I could clearly hear the 42-gun salute marking the passing of Prince Philip. This took place on the grounds of the castle. The following day, Sunday, I took a stroll around the gardens at Hillsborough castle.

There is something very different about the trees at Hillsborough. They absolutely thrive here. The most notable trees for me are the really substantial oaks and powerful trees of the pinetum. There is a superb collection here of giant and coastal redwoods as well as numerous hemlock with its graceful flowing conifer branches standing out in the crowd for me.

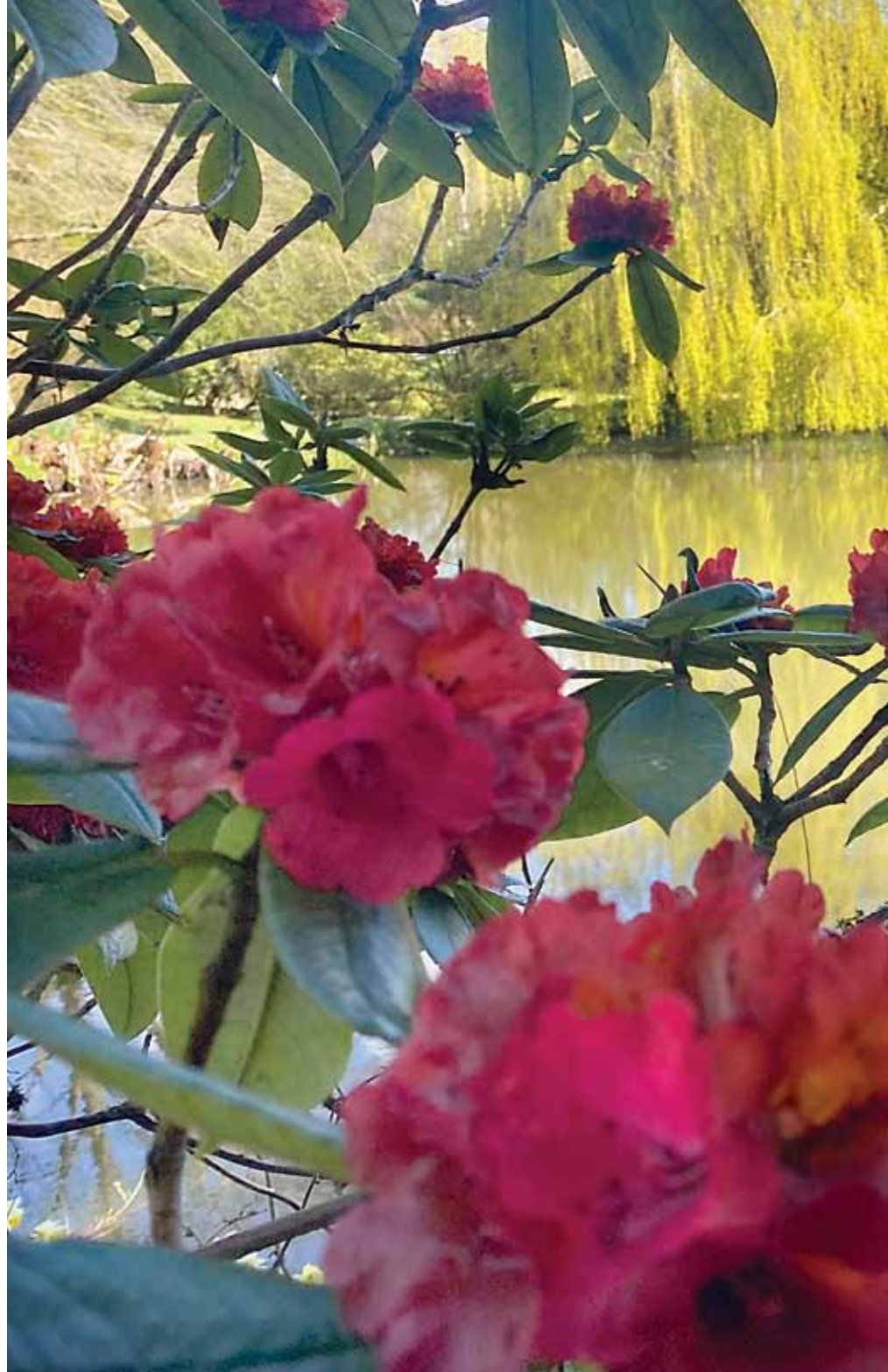
I love the engineering cleverness of this substantial garden. The canvas is well painted with interesting plant diversity. That's obvious, but the construction engineering that underpins the garden is less obvious. Cleverly stitched into the walks around the lake with its planted man-made islands are a number of sluice gates and drain-off canals. These manage nature's flow of water from natural streams and man-made lakes that need adjusting. Brilliant!

Of course not all people who have experienced Hillsborough over the years were

*People over time become
afraid to prune, and slowly
the tree gets bigger and bigger
until it challenges you not to
cut it, not to change, not to risk*

avid horticulturists. It has been a centre for thinking, imagining, formulating, nurturing, trusting, negotiating and leading people with respect and dignity out of self-feeding blind hatred into a new lasting kindness for each other. The pathways around Hillsborough Castle Gardens have been well firmed by the weight of responsibility carried in recent history by our political representatives, who brought about in my lifetime a new reality. I am very grateful to them all.

There are two formal pathways: the mature lime walk and the fastigate Yew Avenue walk. They very cleverly hinge at a right angle to each other, meeting at Lady Alice's Temple, and it's only in the temple that you see in both directions. This to my mind is very symbolic



because apparently Northern Ireland Secretary of State Mo Mowlam used to spend a lot of time sitting in the temple from where, I'm sure, she visualised the two main points of view at the Peace Talks and how they diverged from each other, with neither being able to see the other from the two pathways. But she also saw them coming together, as they eventually did. A great lady.

In the Hillsborough garden, brave decisions were made – politically, of course, but horticulturally too. My eye is drawn to the severe pruning given to the Yew Avenue. People over time become afraid to prune, and slowly the tree gets bigger and bigger until it challenges you not to cut it, not to change, not to risk. It takes courage to prune. The toughest





A major water feature at Hillsborough
Below: The impressive pinetum



decisions are the best ones to make. It's clearly obvious that a tough decision was made on the noble Yew Avenue. The results are now proving very successful.

I love trees as much as the special people close to me. I also love stories. A good garden like a good park can, if laid out well and interesting, cultivate more than just plants but also attract people together to meet in an environment that disarms us, absorbs unconsciously our anxieties, lifts our spirits. Hillsborough Castle and Gardens has a catalogue of stories and, I believe, is still making them.

If there is a link between psychology and design, Hillsborough has got it right. From the time you arrive to the time you leave, you

will be there suitably long enough to leave the past behind you, free your mind and walk out with a clear new vision. The length of the pathways, the numerous surprises stitched into the journey, the boldness of the design, the fine precision executed in the walled fruit and vegetable garden, the towering pinetum, rolling parkland together with mature trees in carpets of wild and cultivated flowers as if created by nature. What a place to kiss a girl! Or do a deal!

So, from the time of Wills Hill in the mid-1700s to the recent superb restoration and re-opening, a lot of valuable history has been created here. Considering that the future is informed by history, I am looking forward to it.

Black Shamrock takes steps to support green spaces

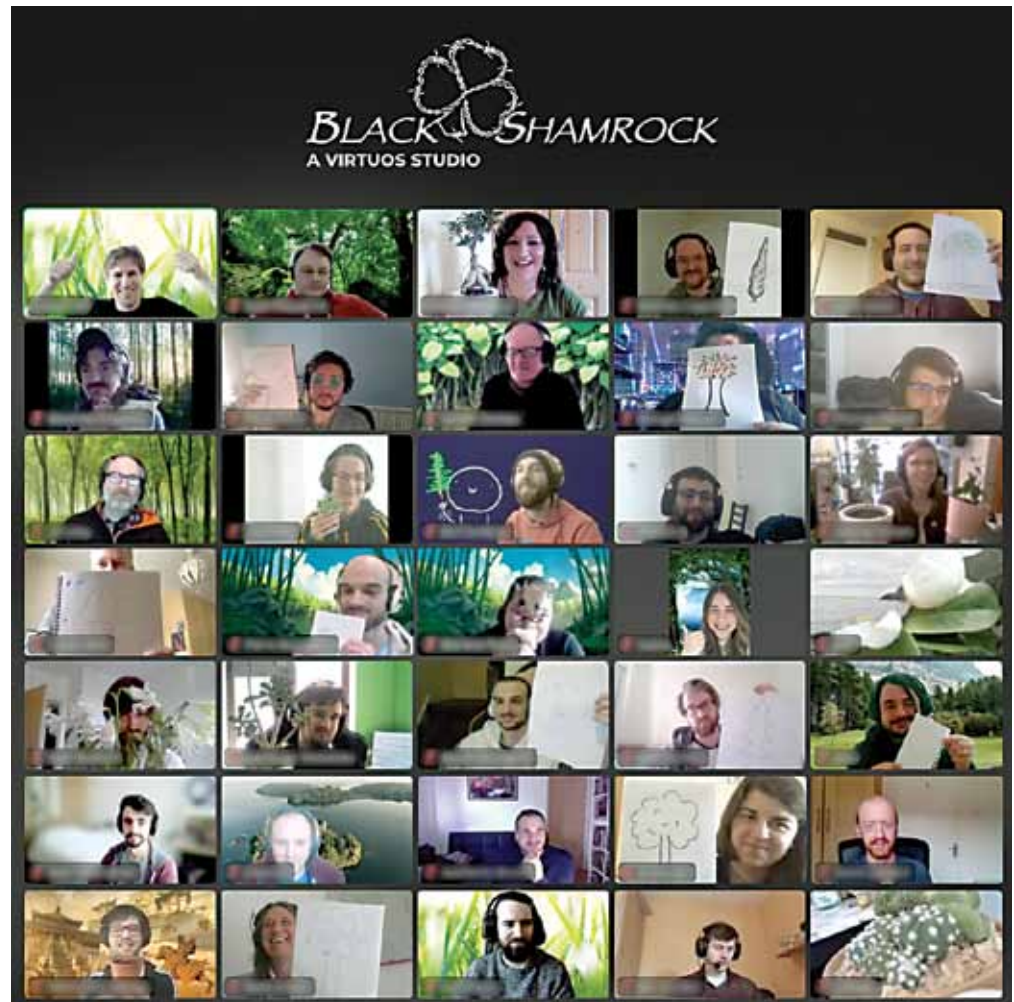
Like most companies, Black Shamrock has had to adjust to life in lockdown, with staff in its Dublin base scattering to their work-from-home locations. Keeping everyone connected and engaged with the company's values has been a constant challenge.

"As much as we're committed to creating virtual worlds full of wonder, we're also committed to taking responsibility for the real world around us," said the company. "Our Corporate Social Responsibility policy has environmental sustainability as one of its pillars, and at a time when so many of us are confined to our homes and the local 5km area, we all have a much greater awareness of the benefits of having natural resources around us."

At the start of February this year, they launched a four-week Steps Challenge to encourage staff to emerge from their winter hibernation and get out to enjoy the first signs of spring wherever they were. In addition to offering prizes for the highest steppers during the month, the company committed to donating an amount of money based on the total steps walked over the course of the challenge.

The Steps Challenge inspired the staff to not only get out and enjoy the first signs of spring but also to engage in some serious competition. Steps walked mounted over the course of the competition, with the eventual winner racking up over a quarter of a million steps during the fourth week, for an overall total of more than 650,000 steps.

Overall, the competitors walked more than six million steps during



It may be just another online conference session, but the Black Shamrock team decided to go a step further and show their appreciation of trees and green areas, and/or draw a tree or show their favourite plant and green background

the challenge, escaping from their desks to enjoy the world outside their windows and raising money for a good cause.

The success of the challenge meant that a total of €2,000 was available to be donated to a deserving cause, and the competitors themselves were consulted about which cause should benefit from the many miles they had walked. The choice of the group was Crann – Trees for Ireland.

The company explained: "A year of lockdown has sharpened our appreciation of the natural world. We have all been restricted in how far we can travel for a lot of

the year, so we have all become more aware of the green spaces near where we live. Our Steps Challenge helped encourage our staff to make sure that they didn't spend all day indoors or in front of a screen, and this matched well with Crann's role in supporting and promoting green spaces nationwide.

"We look forward to engaging more with Crann in the future, once lockdown comes to an end and everyone can travel a bit more. Until that time we're glad to have done our bit to encourage our staff to get out into local green spaces and to contribute to Crann's efforts to ensure that

those spaces are there for all to enjoy."

Crann chairman Mark Wilkinson thanked the company for their contribution which, he said, would be put to very good use in the ongoing campaign to increase the awareness of trees and woodlands.

Black Shamrock is one of Ireland's leading game development studios, part of the globe-spanning Virtuos Group. The company has worked with producers from around the world on some of the biggest games on console and PC, and it continues to grow and achieve even greater things.

CORPORATE ACTIVITIES

More and more corporate enquiries are coming our way in Crann – Trees for Ireland as companies need to fulfil their green agenda objectives.

Some of the companies mentioned in this article have participated in such partnerships with Crann – Trees for Ireland in various ways.

We urge our members to be on the alert in identifying likely companies to participate in this form of corporate activity.

The Crann – Trees for Ireland partnership with corporate clients works in various ways. For example, we have organised for company staff to visit a local school and plant trees as part of National Tree Week. In another case, company staff worked with after-school/homework clubs who planted trees as a community group. In yet another, we arranged for a company's staff to work with us as volunteers planting trees on designated county council sites.

Community-spirit initiatives similar to the above have a widespread appeal to companies and also serve to promote Crann aims.

We always welcome enquiries, ideas and suggestions:
Tel 01 6275075, info@crann.ie

Marguerite Arbuthnot-O'Brien
Administrator,
Crann – Trees for Ireland



Novel way to involve families in trees

ATHENRY Tidy Towns commenced planting native trees over 10 years ago and have since organised the planting of over 40,000 native trees. Most of these trees have been planted by school-children from all the national schools of Athenry parish and a number of schools from the wider hinterland. Of course, their Mummies and Daddies helped them too. Second-level students and many local organisations including Athenry Soccer Club, Athenry Scouts and the local IFA members also helped. Trees were planted mainly on local authority open spaces, sports grounds and along open spaces of major roads.

Care and maintenance of the young growing trees has been provided with the help of tidy towns volunteers and local men's shed volunteers as well as some of the families that planted the trees.

Athenry Tidy Towns were delighted when they won the National Tidy Towns Tree Competition in 2018 and this gave a great boost to interest in tree planting in and around Athenry. Covid then arrived and Athenry Tidy Towns responded to requests from Galway County Council and from national institutions to develop programmes which complied with Covid regulations. They came up with a series of pandemic projects, one of which is the tree maintenance project, which includes families with young children each taking on the care of 30 oak trees. This involved clearing vegetation around the base of the young trees, cutting any briars and any scrub bushes from around the young oak trees and labelling each oak tree. The families chose names to put on these labels that meant something for each family. This little pandemic programme for families was advertised on the committee's Facebook page and in the *Connacht Tribune*. "The response was very good," said the committee, "and we now have over 20 families that have adopted over 30 oak trees each so we can be sure that these trees will be well cared for over the next decade."

Many of the same families were involved in the planting of these oak trees in February 2018. Athenry Tidy Towns hopes to expand this programme once the Covid restrictions are over, and families can then get to know each other better. They will continue together to expand their interest in trees and the importance of trees for our environment. The committee's Facebook post announced this initiative as a Pandemic Project. "Athenry Tidy Towns group are looking for a



Maire Leader and her children Caoimhe, Donnacha and Muireann

number of volunteer families each of whom would be willing to look after a small number of native trees," it said. "These native oak trees which are planted along one of our most popular walking routes need a little bit of TLC. Families will be given training. If interested, please message the tidy towns Facebook page and we will make all arrangements."

The idea worked so well that the committee later appealed for more families to volunteer. Then, for National Tree Week, it posted a photo of Maire Leader and her children Caoimhe, Donnacha and Muireann, caring for the trees planted on the Northern Relief Road outside the town. They also thanked the family of Julie and Malachy Conlon and their children for caring for the trees.

This is a Covid-friendly Athenry Tidy Towns pandemic project which allows families to get involved in a socially distanced fashion. These trees on the Northern Relief Road were originally planted by Athenry Tidy Towns on Saturday 10 February, 2018. The planting was carried out by parents and pupils of the following three schools: Gaelscoil Riada, Carnaun NS and Scoil Chroi Naofa NS.

Crann's Assist Programme

Crann has a Tidy Towns Assist Programme which consists of a visit from one of our tree experts – who will meet committee members, do a site visit along with an advice clinic and make suggestions on various issues of interest to the Tidy Towns initiative. This programme assists groups with planting schemes, improving knowledge, raising awareness and achieving valuable extra points for their community efforts.

If interested, we ask that your Tidy Towns Committee become a 'Group Member' of Crann at a special rate of €45 p.a. The Advice Clinic costs €150 plus travelling expenses of 50c per mile (agreed prior to visit), invoice supplied. Contact us via info@crann.ie or PO Box 860, Celbridge, Co Kildare, with your details.



Dandelion and tulip

65 Years A-Growin` and it all started with an empty bag of Tayto crisps



By GER CLARKE

THE FIRST tree I ever planted was really only a shrub and it was planted alongside a stream running through an estate in my hometown in Mayo. It was a big event organised by the ever-so-busy and grand lady of the house, Mount Falcon. She was a great believer in what is now known as the Tidy Towns programme. Many trees were planted on that day in the early 1960s and every time I drive out the Killala Road I look at the results of such wise forethought. I wonder sometimes if the residents of Marian Crescent remember the event and the wonderful woman who instigated it.

In later years, the chaplain of our 5th Mayo Scout Troop got three of us to plant a line of poplars behind the Cathedral in Ardnaree. Decades later, new development necessitated their removal. They are no longer with us but we benefitted from their majestic presence for a time.

Likewise we miss the presence of our chaplain, Fr PJ Gallagher. He left this world a much better place and inspired a host of young scouts, many of whom went on in later life to become community activists and leaders, drawing on his fantastic inspiration and the memories of a life well spent. He was an avid cinematographer and I hope his huge collection of 16mm reels of film recording hikes

and camps, jamborees and Christmas parties are safe and secure because they are a treasure trove of life in Mayo in the 50s and 60s.

Later still, much later, I put some chestnuts into an empty Tayto bag and left them in my anorak pocket. I was out and about around Galway, enjoying my life as a young science student. Months later when the rain came I put the coat on again and I found that I had a handful of fully-sprouted young seedlings in my pocket. The garden of the house/flat backed on to one of the old walls of Galway, close to Eyre Square. If you happen to find some 45-year-old horse chestnuts there today I will proudly take the blame or credit for their presence. Finding the wall and learning about that part of the city's history inspired me to delve further into the events of that earlier time: stories of underground streams, dry wells, droughts and even a skeleton found at the bottom of a well in the basement of a major shop in the city centre, probably murdered and hidden there over 400 years ago.

That lifelong interest in history and archaeology has given me so much pleasure and to think that if I did not pick up those conkers and happen to have an empty crisp bag available I might never have discovered the joys of local history.

So much for Galway in the 70s, Later visits to work and travel in Sweden and Canada opened up a whole world of trees and forests.

Imagine, I used to believe Beleek, near Ballina, was a huge forest. When flying from Sudbury to Timmins in Ontario, the hundreds of miles of continuous forestry – reputedly owned by the New York Times – made me realise just how great the forests of the world

really were. It was then that I made up my mind to try and get to know as much as possible about the Taiga, the Amazon and all the great regions of the world. I was lucky to meet a woman from the USSR whose mother was a shaman and she introduced me to some of the tree lore of eastern Russia and in the process learned to listen to trees, literally.

My upbringing in Ireland did not prepare me for the harshness of the northern continental climates of Canada and Sweden. The long winters and short daylight times affected me enough to encourage me to head back home to Ireland, into the 80s and 90s. Wherever I went I planted trees, so on my return I headed up in to the Dublin hills and put in some trees, guerrilla style, on state land.

Even then I was conscious of biodiversity so I planted rowan hawthorn and blackthorn. By the 90s I was the proud owner of a house with almost 2 acres attached (today, I am still here but it is now 2 acres of trees and gardens, with house attached). I have managed to plant an average of 100 trees a year for the last 35 years, not all in Dublin or Meath but Mayo, Louth, Down, Sligo and Clare have also benefitted from my attention. Most of the trees I grew from seed myself or were grown by colleagues. Their parents were all selected for their quality and were treated with great tender loving care. Another colleague of mine from the midlands would bring some helpers with him on a visit to us in Dalgan Park. We have some really fine 200-year-old oaks there and each autumn we harvested the acorn crop to provide top-class seed for a project he has going on down in Roscommon. My thanks to Gerry for his wisdom, care and friendship over the last 20 years. I have another friend, not far from Gerry, in Westmeath, whose husband is a charcoal burner and they have quite a large plantation. She is a brilliant artist and we were very lucky to have her create a 'rubbish sculpture' in our woodlands made from the litter dumped in our local hedgerows. Mishel also took some Spanish and horse chestnut saplings from the Columban Eco-garden in Dalgan. They are now growing in their new Westmeath home.

The plot thickens. Primary school teachers attending a course I have been giving for the last 15 years have been encouraged to collect the young plants growing in the lawns about the park. These are mostly oak but some are maple, ash and chestnut. They have all gone to the gardens of the schools of Meath, Louth Cavan and Kildare. We all feel the better for rescuing those young trees before they could be decapitated by the lawnmower brigade.

On one day alone in the park outside the town of Bangor, Co Down, I was part of a group training team in Community Leader-



Mayflower and fritillaria



Periwinkle in among the cotoneaster



Mayflower, lesser celandine, daisy and snowdrops

ship (run by CVI, Conservation Volunteers Ireland) and we each planted 250 trees.

Speaking of that event, we stayed for the weekend on the Clandeboy Estate, in the courtyard of which I met one of the finest sequoia trees I have ever seen. We have four of them in Dalgan, but the prevailing winds sweeping up from the south-west have stunted their growth somewhat. I grew a lot, thanks

to that course, and in particular the sessions on Conflict Resolution were most interesting. That part of the course was held in Townley Hall near Drogheda, another fine estate with some really fine trees to see.

Recent visits to France and Italy have seen the continuing habit of planting. In 2019 I was giving a talk as part of the Erasmus Programme to a community in NW Italy. They



Wild cherry in blossom



were interested in astronomy and my talk was on the archaeo-astronomy of the megalithic tombs of the Boyne Valley. But the weekend I was there coincided with the annual sweet chestnut festival, and everyone was out collecting and cooking meals based on the nuts. I had rabbit starts and wild boar main course. Fabulous. That was in Perinaldo.

But each day for the rest of the week the

young children of the schools in the surrounding area planted many trees with myself, Donna and our host Manuela. The most common question from the children was about what the Irish schools were like and whether our Irish students were planting trees and vegetables. Which, of course, they are.

Manuela has her own orchard of walnut trees and produces her own walnut oil. Her best friend is the 4th generation owner of an organic olive farm. This is outside the town of Andora, in Liguria. Not only did we tour the farm and processing plant, we tasted and enjoyed the hospitality of a wonderful family. We left reflecting that while we might be the country of 100,000 welcomes here in Ireland, we have a lot of catching up to do if we want to be as hospitable as our Italian and French neighbours. Donna and I will return and maybe part of our retirement plan will be to set up a walnut and olive franchise to import the wonderful products we have been privileged to experience.

Which brings me to lockdown Ireland and

what I have managed to do, working from home for the last 14 months. Well, we planted a birch, two spindle and some dogwood, but had to remove a diseased juniper and tried to control the massive growth of ivy on our ash trees. To compensate for the removals, we have some Spanish chestnut just sprouted and they will appear shortly in a woodland near some of you. At last count we have 45 different tree types growing on the lot and we have counted 27 different bird species visiting us, either to the bird table/feeders or the woods and pond.

Though in seclusion, as we are, we're surrounded by friends and are all the better mentally, physically and emotionally for those relationship. As I look back now I realise it has been 65 years a-growin and it has been all the more interesting to do so with a broader vision of friendship and family than that normally accepted

Beir Bua dibb,

Cad a dheanaimid feasta?

Plant more trees!



Barking up the Rite Tree

By TOM ROCHE

I ATTENDED a rally in Dublin in September 2019 in support of the thousands of school strikers across Ireland demanding action on climate change from our government. Inspired by Swedish climate activist, Greta Thunberg, millions of schoolchildren around the world took to the streets to tell their governments they wanted decisive action on climate change, decreasing biological diversity, poverty and social unrest.

That was a day that will live in my memory for a long time. Why? Well, for a start, it gave me hope. Hope that I as an activist and development educator of 30-plus years standing, needed to experience.

This particular event – which happened to be the third climate strike after similar actions in March and May – gave me hope that the thousands of development education workshops and associated activities, delivered by hundreds of dedicated development educators and teachers to school goers across Ireland for decades, had indeed produced results. The on-going actions by school strikers around the world, including here in Ireland, gives me hope that governments will now start to do what is needed to ensure that they inherit a planet worth living on. Because that's what is at stake here.

Rite-of-passage

Today's school-goers have a rite-of-passage to a healthy planet. BURT is about facilitating that 'rite'. It is a human-rights issue and a matter of great urgency. It appears from current Covid-19 restrictions that gatherings of climate strikers will not take place in the foreseeable future. However, there is greater reason now to continue to

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remind the government that Ireland became the second country in the world to 'declare a climate and biodiversity emergency' in 2019. But now we need action.

While we continue to wage war on nature, we are threading a suicidal path. And nature is striking back furiously. Globally, biodiversity is collapsing with an estimated one million species at risk of extinction. Despite some advances in responsible forest management practices, illegal logging is on the rise again and we continue to lose 10



million hectares of forests every year.

Last year brought greater understanding that our health as individuals and as a society is deeply connected to the health of nature and to the many services it provides. The emergence of zoonotic diseases like Covid-19 is yet another reminder that our current unsustainable development practices are hastening pressures on the natural world with dire consequences for people and society at large.

We know what has to be done. We



Tom Roche confronts former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern about the use of illegally-logged timber in the refurbishment of the Irish Aid Education Centre in O'Connell Street, Dublin, during the official opening of the Centre by Mr Ahern



School students from across Ireland rally outside the Custom House in Dublin demanding action from the Irish Government on climate change and declining biological diversity
Picture: Just Forests

of which looks at individual Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and the links to my livelihood as a furniture-maker, reliant on the world's forests for resources. It also features the latest research in environmental/human rights activism and education for sustainable development (ESD) publications.

Where to start

Not sure where to start on the road to sustainability? I started with my livelihood, my work as a furniture maker. I wanted to continue to work with wood but didn't want to be part of the illegal logging and human-rights issues associated with the international timber trade. Partly because of Ireland's low forest cover we are hugely reliant on imported timber from all corners of the globe – tropical, temperate and boreal. When I set up Just Forests in 1989, I did so because I was seeing links between natural resources depletion, conflict and corruption. I saw large corporations that no one could hold to account, profiting from environmental destruction and human-rights abuses. I have not shied away from highlighting unacceptable public or corporate behavior when I came across it. Equally, Just Forests' work over the past 32 years has been about creating a more just, equal and sustainable planet. Just Forests wants corporations to be much more responsible and to respect the planet and human rights. So, if you're anything like myself and you're trying to ensure that your livelihood, job or business is not impacting negatively on the environment or human rights, take a look at BURT and see if it helps you by looking at the links between your livelihood and the global goals for sustainability.

So, let's put it all in perspective with this extract from a grounding speech by Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General in his 'The State of the Planet' address at Columbia University, on 2 December 2020:

"Recovery from the pandemic is an opportunity. We can see rays of hope in the form of a vaccine. But there is no vaccine for the planet. Nature needs a bailout. In overcoming the pandemic, we can also avert climate cataclysm and restore our planet. This is an epic policy test. But ultimately this is a moral test. The trillions of dollars needed for Covid recovery is money that we are borrowing from future generations. Every last penny. We cannot use those resources to lock in policies that burden them with a mountain of debt on a broken planet.

"It's time to flick the 'green switch'. We have a chance to not simply reset the world economy but to transform it."

must transform our economies, our food production and our financial systems to better account for the priceless value of nature and the custodians. We need to take action where we can make a difference.

Like it or lump it, all the big issues the world is facing today are fundamentally tied to people, places and things and the interactions, interconnections and implications all three have on each other. Together they are geographic issues by nature with local, regional and global influences. To wrestle with these often-complex economic, social, cultural and environmental issues requires a society that can consider and use geographic information to make wise decisions – in other words, a geo-literate society. We must pass on a healthy planet to our children and grand-children; it's our responsibility and it's their right. And in order to do so, we must help them to make right decisions.

We need a set of steps to guide us through. Just like the alcoholic or drug addict relies on a 12-step programme for recovery, we need a similar programme to guide us through the multitude of challenges we are now facing from zoonotic diseases, climate change, declining biological diversity and human-rights abuses, genocide to ecocide. We must also deal with the out-of-control addiction

called consumerism that is the driving force behind such global catastrophes.

A livelihood approach

All too often we talk about supporting the livelihoods of people in emerging economies. We base our programmes of financial support around helping them to a better way of life and I am fully in favour of that. But what about our own livelihoods? How are we supporting their continued reality? Are our livelihoods contributing to the problem or the solution? Are the members of boards of organisations we have come to love acting in the best interests of the organisation?

BURT (Barking Up the Rite Tree), launched on 5 June, World Environment Day, is an aide to ushering in a new era of 'geoliterate' climate activists and educators. This is a gift from Just Forests to all who struggle to know where to start to make changes and to find the courage within to create and advance the case for a truly 'just and sustainable world'.

It is part of my story, a compilation of some of the actions I took to bring my vision of sustainability and justice to life. BURT features some of Just Forests' original development education (DE) resources, such as the Wood of Life hands-on exhibition (updated in 2021), coupled with 17 WOODOFLIFE Goals booklets, each

How the faeries have shown approval for our action

The humble hawthorn in full bloom
Picture: Ali Isaac

ALONE hawthorn tree stood in solitary splendour in a field on my farm in Co Meath for as long as I can remember, until a violent storm blew it over. It is still very much alive, however, and has regrown vigorously from the butt.

Hawthorn can live for up to 400 years and this is widely believed to be in part thanks to the well-known protection they receive from the faeries or little people. And woe betide anyone who would harm a lone specimen.

To protect my partly-fallen tree from grazing cattle and sheep, I decided to fence off that section of the field and plant some further trees there, and I warned the fencing contractor that on no account was he to harm what remained of the thorn. He smiled and said that if I had asked him to as much as cut a branch off it, he would have refused.

So, having protected it from browsing livestock, we planted a new linear wood of mainly western red cedar, along with some small areas of birch, hemlock, larch and hazel for variety. We also planted holly and rowan near the hawthorn to enhance the sense of a mystical mix and a link with our ancestors' beliefs. All

these trees are now growing strongly and they greatly add to the pleasure of visiting that area when herding.

I can only assume that the faeries approve of our actions as it is one of those places on the farm that somehow conveys a sense of peace and wellbeing. Whenever I am nearby, it draws me nearer to admire the additions to the landscape and contemplate for a while on our ancient beliefs and customs.

As I write this, the feast of Bealtaine, traditionally celebrated on 1 May, was only a few days ago. Fires are still lit on the hill of Uisneach in Co Westmeath to mark the occasion. Boughs of hawthorn and rowan, sacred to the ancient Celts are still placed outside homes to placate the faeries and give protection against harm. It is a time to feast and celebrate the passing of winter and the return of warmth bringing the growth of crops and a period of plenty before the onset of autumn. Trees played an important part in our pre-Christian customs and beliefs with the Celtic Tree of Life or *Crann Bethadh* most prominent among them. Trees were traditionally venerated and respected, perhaps because they are a vital component in ensuring the health of our natural environment and the very air that we

breathe. The rowan, or mountain ash, holds a special place in Celtic mythology, no doubt influenced by its lovely blossom in May and abundant berries in the autumn.

With all this in mind, it is not surprising that the place where my old hawthorn lives with its neighbouring hazel, rowan and holly has a special aura of its own. Woodland still holds secrets that we have yet to understand properly. Through their network of underground fungi, trees do communicate with each other, something that we have only recently discovered. We must keep planting them, use them and enjoy them along with the multiple products that they provide the raw material for. The Celts believed they connected us with the underworld. In the world we inhabit, it is hard to imagine how we would live without them.

JOE BARRY

THE SPEAKING TREE

The concept of The Speaking Tree dates back to the 5th century BC in India when the founder of Buddhism meditated for 49 days under a Pipal tree, or *Ficus religiosa*, and became enlightened. This column in *Crann* is a platform for thoughtful comment that may stimulate debate or just reflect on the way of the world.

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