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**COVER**

*Red Squirrel Eating A Hazelnut* by Richard Duff, Ballyfin, Portlaoise, Co Laois, is an entry in this year's Crann/Coillte Photographic Competition. It's so striking that the competition judge, Mark Wilkinson, says he wishes he had taken it himself! The results are on Pages 14-19.

**PICTURE CREDITS**

Paddy Smith, Clara Clark, Peadar Collins, Orla Farrell, George Cunningham, Michael Yallop, Diarmuid McAree, Patrick Moran, Declan Murphy

# I'm seeing the world through two new pairs of eyes lately and I think I'm enjoying it



**T**HE FIRST new set are my own. I got my cataracts removed and artificial lenses were inserted into my eye-balls. As they say, it's remarkable what they can do these days.

The first fright I got was when I saw himself in the mirror while shaving. Just for a split second I wondered where all those fault lines on my face had come from. I knew, of course, that they had been there all the time but, having always removed my spectacles when shaving, I was really seeing myself for the first time au naturel, as it were. "This is what we've been looking at for years," said my brother-in-law gleefully when I recounted my experience.

A further incident bears repeating. Just four days after my second eye was done, I was at the podium about to read my story to members and visitors at the launch of my writers' group twice-yearly magazine, Boyne Berries. A big occasion, and I was nervous because I was still getting used to my new vision. One eye is set for distance, the other for reading, and I wasn't even sure I could do the reading. So I decided to explain the situation to the gathered multitudes (well, 50-plus people). Much to my surprise, I got a sustained round of applause – and I hadn't even started reading my story yet. Later, much later, it dawned on me that I must have given them the impression I had two new eyes from some unfortunate donor who had presumably died in a tragic car crash.

Well, to me they are two new eyes. And I'm not a bit sorry! And so what, if those people were inspired by my announcement!

The other set of 'new' eyes is my granddaughter Lucy's. I'm learning to look at the world in a different way through the observations and questions of a 6-year-old. An equally inspiring experience.

All these thoughts of new eyes are prompted by just one article in this issue. It's on Pages 30-34, and the headline says it all: 'Another way to appreciate the beauty of trees', by artist Fionnuala Broughan. Come to think of it, the photographers who enter our annual Crann/Coillte Photographic Competition always bring new ways of looking at trees (Pages 14-19).

Have a good look at the rest of the magazine too!

*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 for Christmas

Give a gift of CRANN membership to someone this Christmas

Membership subscriptions enable CRANN to fulfil its mission to enhance the environment of Ireland through planting, promoting, protecting and increasing awareness about trees and woodlands. We would like your friends to share the many benefits of CRANN membership and to help CRANN pursue its mission.

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# There is nothing easier than putting a tree in the ground

– Crann Chairman **Mark Wilkinson** at our AGM

**T**HE CLEAR need for greater and greater biodiversity was highlighted by Mark Wilkinson in his chairman's report to the AGM of Crann.

He declared: "After seeing the damage that has been inflicted on elm and, now, ash, throughout our country, we need more biodiversity and we need a lot more trees. In my opinion all trees are good, and the more the merrier.

"We at Crann will continue to work hard on the tree front and promote our aims. At times it's like pushing an open door because trees are where the action is now – and everyone is talking about them. Trees are best for carbon sequestration, and there is nothing easier than putting a tree in the ground."

Earlier in his address to the AGM, held in September at Belvedere House, Gardens and Park, Mullingar, the chairman thanked Marguerite Arbuthnot-O'Brien for her continued diligence and hard work as Crann Administrator. He was particularly struck by her ability to handle and process the huge amounts of paperwork that came across her Crann desk.

He also acknowledged the work of Paddy Smith as Editor of Crann Magazine. "At last year's AGM, I spoke of my high level of anticipation when I know the next issue of Crann Magazine is in the post – and I compared it to my feelings as a youngster about the arrival of The Beano. I've since changed my mind. I think now that our magazine should be compared to the National Geographic!"

For "outstanding



Above: Crann chairman Mark Wilkinson (right) at the AGM with Crann Administrator Marguerite Arbuthnot-O'Brien and Crann Secretary Diarmuid McAree

Far Left: New Director, P.J. Fitzpatrick

Left: New Director, Gerard Deegan

work in the trenches", Mark singled out Crann directors Orla Farrell and Diarmuid McAree, Diarmuid with his Tidy Towns efforts and his work with the United Nations, Orla with the impressively ambitious ongoing work with the Easy Treesie/Crann programme.

### OUR ANNUAL DRAW

Enclosed in this issue is a card for our Christmas Fundraising Draw, prizes detailed on the reverse. We would encourage you to sell as many lines as possible. This funding supports our various proactive projects nationwide.

Thank you all for your support and a special thanks to the sponsors of our prizes.

The draw will take place on 20 January, 2020.

Mark commended the constant efforts and support of two Directors who have retired: Natasha Kalvas and Joe Barry. He also had a special mention for the untiring and imaginative work of Crann Director George Cunningham.

Our main projects in Crann, he said, are Easy Treesie, Tidy Towns and the Crann Schools Programme with ecologist Dale Treadwell, who awakens the schoolchildren to their natural surroundings. The latter is funded by the county councils under the Community Environment Action Fund.

The two vacancies on the Crann Board created by the retirement of Natasha Kalvas and Joe Barry were filled by the co-option of P.J. Fitzpatrick, Ballinderry, Mullingar, (Tree Council of Ireland and formerly from Coillte) and Gerard Deegan, Cloughan, Mullingar, (winner of the RDS Farm Forestry Award 2019).

In Any Other Business, Diarmuid McAree said existing members of Crann should make a special effort this year to grow the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

organisation by encouraging each member to recruit a friend to join.

At the meeting, Orla Farrell delivered a presentation on the Easy Treesie Project to date. The project, which involves planting one million trees with Ireland's one million schoolchildren by 2023 (part of the UN Plant-for-the-Planet challenge), has really gathered momentum and recognition. The project entails constant networking to attract volunteers, support, funding and media coverage. Orla has built up an excellent relationship with various county councils and their parks department for the purpose of planting on public land. She said the support and expertise of Crann had been brilliant for the project.

Orla also organised the planting of 30,000 trees (sponsored by Coillte) in conjunction with the Science Foundation Ireland's National Science Week in mid-November.

The Chairman thanked Orla for the overview of the Easy Treesie Project to date and commended her for her energy and enthusiasm in achieving her goals, with best wishes for the planting season ahead.

Crann member Declan Murphy asked Orla what major species were being planted under this programme, how the ground was prepared, and if they were planting bare root? He also noted that he had only recently discovered to his surprise that it was general practice to spot spray with Roundup.

Orla replied: "We plant bare root saplings, five species, mostly deciduous. We advocate 'the right tree, in the right place' and a discussion always takes place to decide what is appropriate to a particular site. Some councils get their horticulturist involved on site also. In some cases, the council prepares the site but generally we just slit with a spade and avoid planting in mud. Dublin County Council doesn't allow Roundup now and parents don't like it being used. We leave it up to the council to decide."

Declan spoke of his aim to plant a woodland (see Pgs 26-29 in this issue where he describes his adventures). He also talked about the need to seek advice, the cost involved and what his options would be for his slightly upland site.

Gerard Deegan pointed out the necessity to treat the soil well for biodiversity reasons and in order to obtain good results when planting.

## ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

### Marguerite outlines the local, national and international reach of Crann

**C**RANN HAS had another busy year, according to the report of Administrator Marguerite Arbuthnot-O'Brien which she delivered at the organisation's AGM in Mullingar in September.

This overview of Crann activities since the 2018 AGM included:

Various events (walks, talks, presentations, etc) were hosted by all of the Crann Directors and some ex-Directors, involving local communities nationwide. We have Crann members active on Public Participation Networks and Tidy Towns groups nationwide, and this enables the organisation to be represented and proactive on a national level.

We are Members of the Tree Council of Ireland and attend their meetings.

On an international level, we continue to be represented at the United Nations by Crann Director Diarmuid McAree who is on the UN Team of Specialists on Green Jobs in the Forest Sector.

Ecologist Dale Treadwell continues to travel the country under the banner of the Crann Schools Programme.

A talk, 'Tree Books, Tree Travels, Tree Lore' by George Cunningham, was a very original raffle prize donated by George and was won by Tony Gahan, Kilcullen, Co Kildare. He organised George's talk for the Kilcullen Heritage Group in the Heritage Centre in March. This was enjoyed by all who attended and was a wonderful opportunity to promote Crann's work.

George and the SW Midlands Crann continued with their tree planting, in the spring, of over 600 saplings and apple trees

with CE Scheme and Tidy Towns workers. They also established several community nurseries.

Following a couple of years of Marguerite communicating with the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Santry, she nurtured a partnership with them, along with support from Panda Greenstar. This sponsorship covers a range of tree planting as well as educational and climate action activities which will benefit various communities. We marked the start of the partnership with a tree-planting event with students from Gaelscoil Bhaile Munna, planting 183 saplings as well as a magnificent standard native oak in Northwood Park, Santry, in April.

Another successful outcome of long-term communications is a partnership with Patagonia. Presentations by Crann Directors Natasha Kalvas, Joan Whelan and Orla Farrell were made at a public information event in the Patagonia Dublin City store in April and Culture Nights events in September. The company has since announced that it is sponsoring our future tree-planting projects and we welcome their endorsement of our work on the ground.

We were represented at the Woodland Festival, Killegar, Co Leitrim, in August, with a presentation by Crann director Diarmuid McAree on 'Promoting the Benefits of Trees', followed by a question-and-answer session. Diarmuid also hosted a guided walk while Orla hosted the Crann stand.

Funding: We are members of the IEN (Irish Environmental Network), an umbrella network that works to support environmental NGOs through access to funding and services.



At the Woodland Festival in Killegar, Carrigallen, Co Leitrim, from left, Jan Alexander, Founder of Crann; Orla Farrell, Crann Director; Lady Susan Kilbracken, Killegar; and Crann Director Diarmuid McAree, who gave a presentation on the benefits of trees and also hosted a guided walk at Killegar.



At the Woodland Festival in Killegar, Carrigallen, in August, Diarmuid McAree of Crann makes a presentation on the benefits of trees

We received funding via installments from this network for 2019.

We continued to broaden our reach for LA21 (Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership) funding by applying for the Easy Treesie project as well as the Crann Schools

Programme. This UN fund, which has been renamed the Community Environment Action Fund from 2019 onwards, is administered by local authorities, while the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment maintains a co-ordinating role.

Crann also received funding from the Forest Service for 2018 and have a commitment until the end of 2020.

Marguerite's report continued: "As ever, Crann welcomes suggestions, input and co-operation from our members. We always ensure that the organisation gives value for money, even though our funding can be uncertain.

"We are continually exploring ways of increasing our resources and looking for innovative projects to achieve our objectives – by making a difference with the planting of trees, raising awareness and educating our young adults of the future in a fun way."

Corporate bodies are anxious to achieve their CSR (corporate social responsibility) objectives and Marguerite feels that Crann has a purpose and opportunity to widen its scope of raising awareness of the benefits of trees to our lives and our planet. "We have a strong membership and would like to make it stronger; we would encourage each member to 'bring a friend' to support us in our future endeavours."

## Giants Grove trees grow taller, stronger

By Clara Clark

**W**INTER IS upon us and life is gently turning in the grounds of Birr Castle, where the Giants are quietly growing, taller and stronger. Since planting in April 2017, they have coped with severe drought and heavy rains but both the giants and coastals, Sequoiadendron and S. Sempervirens, are finding their feet in good Birr soil.

Many of the first planting of 300 redwoods have already been sponsored, but we invite people to sponsor one in memory of family here and abroad, living and passed on. Some of the sponsors' stories are moving and emotional reminders of how much planting a tree in their memory means to these families.

We are also receiving



Left: The Mollan family redwood, with Charles Mollan and Clara Clark

Right: A 100-year-old coastal redwood alongside a 2-year-old coastal (beside the lady on the left)



enquiries from corporates keen to offset their carbon emissions by sponsoring aspects of Giants Grove, whose carbon sequestration will continue for thousands of years.

Giants Grove, www.giantsgrove.ie at Birr Castle Co

Offaly, is a voluntary partnership between Birr Castle and Crann – Trees for Ireland, www.crann.ie.

The project includes an understory of native Irish trees, holly, rowan and birch, for biodiversity and extra visual interest. Sponsorship of the redwoods

supports the maintenance of the Grove as the redwoods mature.

For more details email info@giantsgrove.ie

Clara Clark is chairperson of the Project Management Group of Giants Grove



# 2019 HAS BEEN A GOOD YEAR FOR TREES



A group of Scots pines on an island in Connemara with the Twelve Pins in the background



Peadar Collins holding one of the rare and unique magnolias at Glenveigh. This is a *Magnolia tripetala*.

**I** HEARD once that a state has different stages of development, like a human being. Infancy, childhood, slowly through adulthood, maturing into a state. How is this reflected in our trees? Trees and their history, just like a lot of our valuable records, were and have been destroyed. However, there remains a delicate but very valuable skeleton of tree legacy which we must take notice of and rebuild from.

Recently, a Crann contingent visited what I would regard as one of Ireland's champion university arboretums, University College Cork. We were taken on a very informative tour of the grounds and president's garden by Dr Eoin Lettice. The lasting impression I took from the afternoon wasn't just to be in the presence of such a wide variety of magnificent specimens but the story behind their inception: a collaboration between Cork's merchant princes of the day and people resigned to a

PEADAR COLLINS heads off on the summer school holidays and is blown away by the wonderful places all around us in Ireland

life of research, forming values in education and developing what trees and plants had to offer in medicine as well as their aesthetic inspiring presence on the campus. There was at that time, in the 1800s, a revolution far greater than any media-driven hysteria that we seem to constantly suffer today and that was the wonder of trees. One needs to imagine oneself restricted by travel and communication to feel what these plant lovers must have felt when stories arrived back of trees that were hundreds of feet high, like the giant redwoods of California or laden

with tulip-like flowers such as the magnolia from China. Or the bizarre trees of the plant kingdoms of South America.

This really was an amazing time and, without us taking stock of what happened back then, we really can't value what we have so easy today. That is why I believe we need a new, just as long-lasting, revolution and that is to reinstate our existing arboretums with new plants and trees and to build and develop new ones. The architects of Ireland's wonderful arboretums did not exist in an isolated way. They were driven by highly ambitious people feeding from a well-organised and disciplined centre of excellence, Kew. It was the quintessential gift that kept on giving, feeding knowledge, expertise and a forum for learning and enthusiasm that was the catalyst for spreading the value and beauty of trees and plants to all.

Every year I try to take time during the summer school holidays to travel around

Ireland with my charming kids while there is some trace of innocence left in them. We are lucky in Ireland to have so many wonderful estate gardens that, for the most part, are accessible and laden with mature specimen trees. Naturally I am concerned that in the last 100 years of developing our state we have understandably been busy dealing with building our place as a nation in a modern competitive world, where we have done a lot of good. Now, however, we need to go back over these arboretums and future-proof their legacy.

In Ireland we have two main sources of investors in this future: the OPW and the private sector. Given that it has thousands of sites throughout the country to maintain, the OPW has, to its credit, done its best. However, just keeping the gates and pathways free isn't what I believe will sustain these great places. We need not just a current government

to champion tree planting but successive governments to do so and, most importantly, to raise up the numbers of collectable trees being installed. It is all very fine to be talking about numbers but arboretums need substance and that comes from diversity of plant kingdoms here on our island. Otherwise we will revert away from the inspiring legacy created by those wonderfully ambitious far-seeing people in the 1800s.

Getting back to this summer's holiday trip. We started in Co Clare to visit a dear friend who, from his formative years, learned the value of trees from his father who planted a copper beech many miles for Co Clare. This tree can now clearly be seen on Google Earth. Here in Co Clare this man retreats to reflect amongst his magnificent beeches and in the presence of one very particular oak that serves as a fond memory companion of a great person gone to God. I'm always delighted to meet

with this man; his appetite and ambition for living life is infectious.

As we travel north, destination Connemara, it starts to feel like I am leaving Munster and the landscape is changing. One needs to make the journey west of Galway to realise how diverse our island's landscape is, from the rich tillage country of North Cork to the vast open hard landscape of Connemara. Here, as always, my tree antennae are up. More and more I notice how happy the Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) sits. As we say in Crann, the right tree in the right place. If I were able to paint, I cannot think of a more striking tree than to see fully mature Scots pines silhouetted against a backdrop of crystal water and the Twelve Pins of Connemara.

After we nested in to our rented house in the wilds of Cashel, not far from Recess, my pony-enthusiastic daughters insisted that we needed to visit the Connemara Pony Show.





A lake in Connemara with a *Quercus petraea* surviving on it

This took us off the beaten track and, to our surprise, unexpectedly we happened across a very decent hotel country house completely surrounded by magnificent trees from all over the world, Ballynahinch Castle. I was quite taken aback by the range of unusual trees flourishing here in the heart of Connemara. It is obvious that this place was carefully selected, not only for its unique picturesque views and bountiful rivers of trout and salmon but also for the local micro climate and soils that would have been the foundation of such a fine collection of trees. It was very encouraging to see how much effort and investment was put into reinstating the gardens there. For plant and tree lovers (or indeed for lovers), you have got to stay and wake up here! The avenue of mature trees, winding woodland river pathways and extensive refurbished to

the highest standard walled-in garden with functioning formal and vegetable gardens, this place will take your breath away.

Heading north again, we were destined for one of Ireland's most inaccessible treasures: Glenveigh National Park in Co Donegal. It had been a long time since I was in Donegal but that's another story. I had only heard of Glenveigh from a friend of mine who had visited there and the whole idea and history of the place intrigued me. Fortunately, we brought the bikes with us on our trip. The walk from the carpark is quite considerable but, oh boy, is it worth the effort!

There quite simply isn't any place like Glenveigh, on many fronts. One must imagine that this is a most unforgiving environment for plants. And yet! Here nestled into the side of the mountain in the presence of a striking



The castle at Glenveigh with the lake and Scots pines

castle with panoramic views out over the lake and mountains is a plant haven cocoon. As you leave the harsh sharp climate where heather and Scots pines struggle to exist, you walk right smack into some of the finest magnolias I have ever seen growing. This garden is the



The walled-in garden at Ballynahinch Hotel

greatest contradiction to environments for plant growing that I have come across.

Apart from the uniqueness of this place, one other thing struck me: the management and staff were most friendly and knowledgeable. I was delighted to be able to have a meeting

with the man who manages Glenveigh, Sean O Gaoithin, who took me on a tour of the garden's treasures and spoke at length of the importance of this place in the national context. Here in Glenveigh, Sean has been responsible for the saving and development of very rare and unique Irish trees. In particular, two of our whitebeams. The *Sorbus rupicola* or the rock white beam is only found in a few locations in Ireland. At Glenveigh, Sean and his team have been responsible not only for protecting this tree but also for successfully saving its seed and reintroducing over 100 more back into Glenveigh. As well as *Sorbus rupicola*, Glenveigh has also one of Ireland's rarest unique-to-Ireland trees, *Sorbus hibernica*. Again, well-managed and doing well there.

You can not visit Glenveigh and not marvel at the presence of its Scots pines. Here you will

find Ireland's premier *Pinus sylvestris*. It takes real character to grow and be happy and look well as a tree, I'm sure, in tough conditions and these pines are excellent. The pines form almost a buffer to the inner gardens where you find rare and unique magnolias such as *Magnolia tripetala* in full bloom. There are many more unusual flowering species there. I would strongly encourage you when up in Ireland North-West to go there.

So, as I write this towards the end of October while our trees go into hibernation or semi-hibernation, it is time to get your boots on. Find a local tree nursery and start your own tree revolution. Working with and in the presence of nature, absorbing its calmness, it will answer what hysteria cannot explain. We are only at one when we allow nature be our boss.



# A week in the life of ...

ORLA FARRELL of Easy Treesie, a Board Member of Crann

I AM TELLING the Editor about the week ahead for the Easy Treesie/Crann Project. "Tree Day launch, Leinster House visit, a workshop Wednesday with the Rotary Club for secondary pupils, revisiting school children in Kilkenny, Environment Ireland Conference and a Green Flag raising. And all the while organising the planting parties for 30,000 saplings in November donated by Coillte for Science Week."

"Well, I have a brilliant idea!" says Paddy. "A week in the life of the Easy Treesie project. Just make a list of your week and I'll put it in Crann magazine."

Here, then, is a week in the life of Orla Farrell, teacher who retired early last year for a dare from a nine-year-old boy called Felix. Young Felix said in his German primary school to his classmates, "Come on, let's plant a million trees in every country!" starting with an apple tree in their own school. They ran a competition with neighbouring schools and finally a million were planted. Then a 3-million-tree project in Mexico. Today, 70 countries are working with their school children on this now trillion-tree challenge with 15 billion trees listed on our UN counter already.

## Day 1

Our biggest planting event this week for Tree Day: the Central Bank staff are coming out. I load up the electric Leaf (which can easily fit one helper, 30 children's spades, 1,000 saplings,

a box of gloves and a picnic basket) and pack my bag with the Hazelnut chocolate I was given at Plant-for-the-Planet HQ in Munich, along with some of our Crann magazines and calendars to remind the schools and helpers we visit of our good work.

But first I check that the eight grant applications for the Local Authority Community Environment Action Fund, all due for submission today, have been received. It turns out one Council had a new way of sending in the form, not too tricky but now there is a character-count so the whole input needs editing down. Which is more important? Planting trees or looking for grants? They are both important! Luckily one of our able volunteers can be trusted with this task so the application goes in with time to spare.

We had a TREE-mendous day with the Central Bank staff. You can find the details on Pg 35 of this issue.

Later there are several calls to be made; along with volunteers from Swords we will be meeting with the new Fingal Parks Manager, Therese Casey. I am looking forward to

**Sponsor a tree in Ireland at [www.crann.ie](http://www.crann.ie) €10 and/or abroad at [www.plant-for-the-planet.org](http://www.plant-for-the-planet.org) for €1. Send us a tree-mail at [orla@easytreesie.com](mailto:orla@easytreesie.com) and [www.easytreesie.com](http://www.easytreesie.com) if you can help out in any way; it's a volunTREE project and we love a helping hand. In a favourite saying of Crann Patron President Michael D Higgins, *Ní neart go cur le chéile - No strength without coming together.***



Apple trees for Biodiversity Week wait to be planted by children in the new orchard



Orla Farrell has a bucket list, gearing up for Climate Action Week



Planting trees with Easy Treesie/Crann at Dublin City Farm

updating Therese as it is she who sourced our original project of "a tree for every primary school in Ireland" which we finished planting last year. And a number of schools have been in touch through the Climate Ambassador Programme where I am a mentor, wanting to participate in some tree-planting which require responses.

## Day 2

I wake up next day to the very exciting news that we have received a grant from Patagonia, the outdoor clothing company, as one of their charity partners. The staff at their Dublin store had recommended us to their global head office as we have been running joint events. I cycle

to town to thank them all in person (it is an \$8,000 grant!). Two weeks previously, children at our joint Culture Night event planted an oak tree in their shop! I am also visiting the Dublin City Council Parks Manager, Les Moore, and Tree Officer Ludowic Beaumont to discuss expanding our project in the city from last year's successful start.

Later I attend a briefing in Leinster House on a Private Members Bill promoting tree-planting where I raise some of the obstacles currently in place. Soon after, it is passed!

## Day 3

Our Tree Day Event! I am really looking forward to today with the children at St

Malachy's in Finglas who have already planted over 1,000 trees in two mornings with us. Planting was in the nearby Tolka River Park where great nature restoration is happening with the river, now home to wild brown trout and kingfishers. I arrive with a beautiful big oak tree from the nursery for the ceremony. Surprise: the Lord Mayor of Dublin is coming! He had joined us at the earlier planting in the park to do the work so it is only fair that he comes to the party. He invites us to come and plant trees in the Mansion House garden! The Green Committee have the whole school assembled as well as many community members who had helped. Ruth, who teaches Room 1, hands me a note. "Thank



Lord Mayor of Dublin Paul McAuliffe with Cllr Caroline Conroy and members of the Green Committee of St Malachy's School, Finglas, who have planted 1,000 saplings with their school in Tolka River Valley this year as part of the Easy Treesie/Crann Project

you for the opportunity to plant trees. Our class really enjoyed it. We show our parents and our friends the trees we planted every time we are in Tolka Park. For years to come we can watch the trees grow while we grow too." It says it all!

Later I drop into the Science Foundation Ireland office to meet Rebecca Wilson with whom we are co-ordinating Science Week tree-planting events around the country. It's exciting to be teaming up with this organisation, who got in touch with us through the Plant-for-the-Planet office in Germany. Professor Yvonne Buckley of Trinity College is hoping to hook up with us and with The Royal Irish Academy for an event in the coming





Thanks, Patagonia, for hosting our Tree-athon Culture Night, with Poe-Tree from Dublin poet Anto Kerins

months to build on the buzz our Science Week activities will generate.

#### Day 4

I attend the annual Environment Ireland Conference in Croke Park. This was addressed by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Richard Bruton, who focused on identifying and delivering climate solutions. During question time he gives a shout-out to our project: "I know Orla's work and I absolutely endorse her call for people to get involved with the project. I think planting of trees teaches children about the sustainability of the world but it also is in very practical terms a very significant way of abating carbon and helping our challenge." Throughout the day I chat with lots of attendees who want to know more. Among these is a delegation from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) who, with many others, are considering the best ways to offset carbon from their essential travel. I recommend that, even if they are offsetting carbon anyway through carbon capture, why not have the added value of involving children in the tree-planting process in their own areas and even have some fun giving them a hand digging the holes?

During the lunchtime break I unplug my Leaf and travel over to a nearby De La Salle school. Their student council is going to plant a ceremonial sapling with us. We are joined by the local Rotary Club and by REEL, a research group empowering educational leaders based

in the Drumcondra Teacher and Education Centre. Networks such as these have been really important to the project. The teenagers have an impressive knowledge of scientific issues – Climate Change is a big concern for them and two-thirds of the pupils took part in the recent Climate Strike and are going back to talk to their schoolmates to arrange some further tree planting.

Back at the conference I add our trees-for-bees to the National Pollinator Plan and have a chat with a team from the EPA informatics group, COMPASS, interested in carbon offsetting for their essential travel. The Ordnance Survey offers help with mapping our trees; they like that we've been using envelopes made from old maps! I'm equipped with my stack of Crann calendars and recent issues of Crann magazine which explains our million-trees-on-public-land-with-youngsters mission and I present one to John Fitzgerald, Chair of the Climate Advisory Council, after his presentation where he urged a move to timber-frame construction to save on cement emissions.

#### Day 5

We ran projects in six counties this year; it's time to tap one along for next season. I travel to Goresbridge, Co Kilkenny, where we have already planted apple trees in the primary school and in their community orchard. The children have made a wonderful Kindness Tree in their school hall where I meet with Infants

and Seniors – they already have impressive knowledge about local trees. We decide to plant more in their town in the months ahead, hopefully one for each of its 330 residents. We make a start by planting up a tiny oak grown in a classroom milk carton. I also meet with the new director of the Kilkenny Teacher and Education Centre (where we have more apple trees!) and the chairman of Love Kilkenny Tidy Towns, Peter Bluett. We will have trees being planted with the Office of Public Works in Kilkenny Castle this season and we aspire to extend children planting trees beyond a small project in one of the city's 80 estates, Duke's Meadows.

A tree per resident in Kilkenny City: that is something to aspire to!

There is more excitement when I get home; our new class set of children's spades has arrived, funded by the Dublin Airport Authority. These will be used for Fingal projects with the Swords Woodland Association.

#### WEEKEND

And it's the weekend! In the morning, some helpers are walking with me to St Anne's Park after morning coffee to see how our new fruit trees are getting on in the City Farm. We will deal with correspondence and our social media, label the spades, match some gloves and plan next week.

Then it's time to relax with my husband, family and friends who do so much to keep the tree-show on the road

# The lime tree is in Ireland for more than 800 years!

By GEORGE CUNNINGHAM

**R**ECENTLY I wrote a lengthy book review of Professor Pádraig Ó Riain's elegant translated life of St Ailbhe of Emly for the Tipperary Historical Journal.

Along with recounting the saints' miracles and travels – many for political reasons – it contains much peripheral environmental information on the late 12th century Irish landscape, the time in which it was written.

Trees are, of course, mentioned in Ailbhe's and other lives and although the references are scanty they add to the incomplete, evolving jigsaw of what trees were at large or growing in the environment from those times. But some references are puzzling in Ailbhe's life and seem to be out of kilter with what is the perceived sequence of the evolution of tree species in Ireland.

One in particular refers to the presence of the lime tree, *tylia* (tilia, the linden tree). To date, the accepted theory is that at that time we had only native species of trees (the main ones form the Irish alphabet) and that exotics like beech, lime, horse chestnut, sycamore, plane, cypresses, cedars and such like were introduced into Ireland from the late seventeenth century onwards. This is mainly what the pollen record shows.

But surely colonising monks, say from Tintern in Wales to Tintern Minor in Wexford, to mention just one colonising religious order, would have brought seed or even young trees or saplings with them? And so too with other foundations but probably not in sufficient numbers to show up in the pollen records. Both the lives of Colum of Terryglas and Ruadhán of Lorrha also mention the lime tree and its honeyed sap, 'that sated the whole community'. Fionnán of Clonard's life also describes how the '*tylia*' provided food and drink.



This big lime tree in Co Limerick provides shelter for these horses (Picture: Raymond Norris, [geograph.org.uk/p/516513](http://geograph.org.uk/p/516513))



The pleached walk of lime trees in the Italian Gardens at Heywood Estate, Ballinakill, Co Laois (Picture: Oliver Dixon [geograph.org.uk/p/4685031](http://geograph.org.uk/p/4685031))



The leaf of a lime tree in Helen's Bay, Co Antrim (Picture: Albert Bridge, [geograph.org.uk/p/567872](http://geograph.org.uk/p/567872))

Were the biographers correct in their tree-naming? If so, it brings a new dimension to trees in Irish history, and a rethink of what we had growing here in medieval times. Mostly trees are just so-called in the saints' lives (not unlike present-day Ireland where most of the population have a woeful ignorance in naming any other than the most common trees): 'under the shade of a certain tree', 'a large tree', 'a tree across the road'. But we also have many mentions of apples, and some of oak and hazel.

One intriguing reference in the life of Mochaomhog of Leigh (the church ruins are

near Thurles) tells that 'a certain tree full of fruit that was so useless to people because of its great sourness', probably refers to the so-called strawberry tree, *Arbutus unedo*, now extinct in many Irish counties but continuing to flourish in Cork, Kerry and Sligo. One wonders if it was widespread in Tipperary in the 12th century?

We dearly need more primary research into the whole question of trees in Irish history and how and when they evolved, particularly at this time when more than a few use the mantra of 'native species' to decry the planting of other diverse species.



# Wicklow man walks away with this year's prize

By PADDY SMITH

**K**evin Barrett loves taking his camera for a walk. And he likes nothing better than getting lost in his meanderings.

That's how he managed to win the first prize of €250 in this year's Crann Photographic Competition, sponsored by Coillte.

In September 2017, he was walking through Crone woods near the Powerscourt Estate, not far from his home in Co Wicklow. "I thought I knew where I was going," he recalls, "but I took a wrong turn and found myself at the end of a narrow track which just petered out into a rocky outcrop. And there it was, this picture of Powerscourt Waterfall. It was like looking through a window in the trees and, through it, I could see this really striking landscape."

Capturing the magic of the scene was not simple. Kevin's decision to keep the foreground in sharp focus while allowing the distant waterfall and woods to be blurred was a risk – but it worked. The resulting image is impressionist, with the far-off trees being 'painted' in broad brush strokes that provide an arresting suggestion of trees without any real detail at all.

Kevin took up photography as a hobby and finds that it fits in exceptionally well with his other hobby, walking. He has two women supporting him in these leisure pursuits: his daughter, Kate, who encouraged him to buy a decent camera, and his wife, Michelle, who keeps him informed about photographic competitions and events.

His first camera was a Canon 70D, which cost about €500 a few years ago, and he has since upgraded to a Canon 6D, which he

The 2019 Crann/Coillte Photographic Competition is sponsored by Coillte, Ireland's largest commercial forestry and land solutions company.



bought second-hand for about €1,000. He joined his local camera club in Greystones and finds it a big help to be able to learn from more knowledgeable members.

Woods are his favourite location for his photography. "They are constantly changing and providing me with new challenges," he says. "I can come back to a place a few hours after being there, and find that it's totally different because of the changing light. Then, as a bonus, there are the changes brought by the seasons."

A native of Cork, Kevin finds woods the ideal place to clear his head, to pray and meditate and get away from the pressures of his job as an accountant in the IFSC in Dublin city centre. "I'm lucky to be living where we do, in such a mountainous, wooded region of the country," he says. "I can be in a great location 20 minutes from home and before I know it I have taken anywhere between 50 and 100 photographs trying to capture that special image."

The competition was judged by **Mark Wilkinson**, LIPF (Licenture from Irish Photographic Federation), who happens to be Crann Chairman. He judged the competition "blind". His general comment is:

#### JUDGE'S COMMENTS

Well done to all those who entered the Crann/Coillte photographic competition.



The Crann/Coillte Photographic Competition is the first major competition he has ever won. He came third in last year's competition with a picture from Glendalough and came first in the Towns & Villages category of The Wicklow Uplands Council competition in 2018. He has also been an occasional winner of some of his camera club's competitions.

We expect to be hearing more from this enthusiastic and gifted photographer in coming years!

We were a tad disappointed with the number of entries (55 in total, compared to last year's 90-plus) but we were pleased with the quality. We would love to see more hedgerow shots in future as hedges are becoming more important than ever in providing both cover and safe corridors for our wildlife. They also add to our biodiversity **Mark Wilkinson**, LIPF

## CRANN COILLTE PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 2019 RESULTS

### 1st PRIZE €250

**THROUGH THE TREES**  
Location: Powerscourt Waterfall, Co Wicklow  
**Photographer: Kevin Barrett**, Kilquade, Greystones, Co Wicklow

### 2nd PRIZE €100

**HEDGEROW AUTUMN BOUNTY**  
Location: Deerpark, Sixmilebridge, Clare  
**Photographer: Joan O'Neill**, Deerpark, Sixmilebridge, Co Clare

### 3RD PRIZE €50

**HEAVENS ABOVE**  
Location: Glenabo woods, Fermoy, Co. Cork  
**Photographer: George O'Keefe**, Springfield, Fermoy, Co Cork.

### HIGHLY COMMENDED

**BLACKBIRD FEEDING ON ROWAN BERRIES**  
Location: Deerpark Forest, Co Laois  
**Photographer: Richard Duff**, Deerpark, Ballyfin, Portlaoise, Co Laois

### MORNING MIST

Location: Phoenix Park, Dublin  
**Photographer: Alan Laighleis**, Kilbride, Mountnugent, Co Cavan

### A WALK IN THE WOODS

Location: Deerpark, Co Sligo  
**Photographer: Catherine Bushe**, Biscayne, Malahide, Co Dublin

### AUTUMN AT ERRIFF

Location: Erriff (between Westport and Leenane)  
**Photographer: Frank Fullard**, Curry, Milebush, Castlebar, Co Mayo.

### FROSTY MORNING

Location: Walkway on Tramore Rd, Waterford  
**Photographer: Pat Whelan**, Avondale Lawn, Waterford.

### RED SQUIRREL EATING A HAZELNUT

Location: Deerpark Forest, Co Laois  
**Photographer: Richard Duff**, Deerpark, Ballyfin, Portlaoise, Co Laois

### PHONE PHOTOS

#### 1st PRIZE €50

#### WINTER COLOUR

Location: Bellinter, Navan, Co Meath  
**Photographer: Elizabeth Murphy**, Meadow View, Summerhill Road, Dunboyne, Co Meath

1st PRIZE €250  
**THROUGH THE TREES**



Photographer: **Kevin Barrett**  
Buiochas, Kilquade, Greystones, Co Wicklow  
**JUDGE'S COMMENT:** A lovely photograph of trees in a natural setting: trees, trees and lots more trees! The focus could have been a bit sharper but the composition more than makes up for it.





2nd PRIZE €100  
**HEDGEROW AUTUMN BOUNTY**  
**Location:** Deerpark, Sixmilebridge, Clare  
**Photographer:** Joan O'Neill, Deerpark, Sixmilebridge, Co Clare  
**JUDGE'S COMMENT:** This photograph of a hedge is pin sharp and full of interest, lots of different species on display, blackberries, rose hips, whitethorn and ivy flowers so important for honey bees. We don't get many hedge photos in spite of them being a listed subject for the Crann competition.



**BLACKBIRD FEEDING ON ROWAN BERRIES**  
**Location:** Deerpark Forest, Co Laois  
**Photographer:** Richard Duff, Deerpark, Ballyfin, Portlaoise, Co Laois  
**JUDGE'S COMMENT:** I liked this photo with the shiny eye of the blackbird.



3RD PRIZE €50  
**HEAVENS ABOVE**  
**Location:** Glenabo woods, Fermoy, Co. Cork  
**Photographer:** George O'Keefe, Springfield, Fermoy, Co Cork.  
**JUDGE'S COMMENT:** This photograph has so many things wrong with it, but I love the composition, the beams of light bringing one's eye to the clearing in the middle (pity about the dog!). If the focus had been pin sharp with the spaniel facing us in the sunbeam it would have a winning photograph



**FIR CONE**  
**Location:** Mountnugent  
**Photographer:** Alan Laighleis, Kilbride, Mountnugent, Co Cavan  
**JUDGE'S COMMENT:** We get few enough snow photographs. This one is pin sharp and well composed. I like it!





**AUTUMN AT ERRIFF**  
**Location:** Erriff (between Westport and Leenane)  
**Photographer:** Frank Fullard, Curry, Milebush, Castlebar, Co Mayo.  
**JUDGE'S COMMENT:** I just love love the autumn colours, the gentle stream, the autumnal bracken and the small holly bushes dotted around.



**FROSTY MORNING**  
**Location:** Walkway on Tramore Rd, Waterford  
**Photographer:** Pat Whelan, Avondale Lawn, Waterford.  
**JUDGE'S COMMENT:** A wonderful photograph beautifully composed with a super sky, but the alder in the middle is out of focus and that is where the eye is drawn.



**BIG LEAF MOON**  
**Location:** Cow Park, Dollanstown Stud, Kilcock, Co Kildare  
**Photographer:** Peter Bjoerk, Dollanstown Stud, Kilcock, Co Kildare  
**JUDGE'S COMMENT:** I like this picture for its impact, and it's nicely composed.



**RED SQUIRREL EATING A HAZELNUT**  
**Location:** Deerpark Forest, Co Laois  
**Photographer:** Richard Duff, Deerpark, Ballyfin, Portlaoise, Co Laois  
**JUDGE'S COMMENT:** I wish I had taken this photo. It is an excellent nature photograph. No trees or hedgerows, though.



**A WALK IN THE WOODS**  
**Location:** Deerpark, Co Sligo  
**Photographer:** Catherine Bushe, Biscayne, Malahide, Co Dublin  
**JUDGE'S COMMENT:** I liked the path leading your eye around the corner. Maybe someone walking away would have improved the shot.

**PHONE PHOTO WINNER**



**1ST PRIZE €50 WINTER COLOUR**  
**Location:** Bellinter, Navan, Co Meath  
**Photographer:** Elizabeth Murphy, Meadow View, Summerhill Road, Dunboyne, Co Meath  
**JUDGE'S COMMENTS:** Lovely sharp photo of the early sign of spring's arrival.



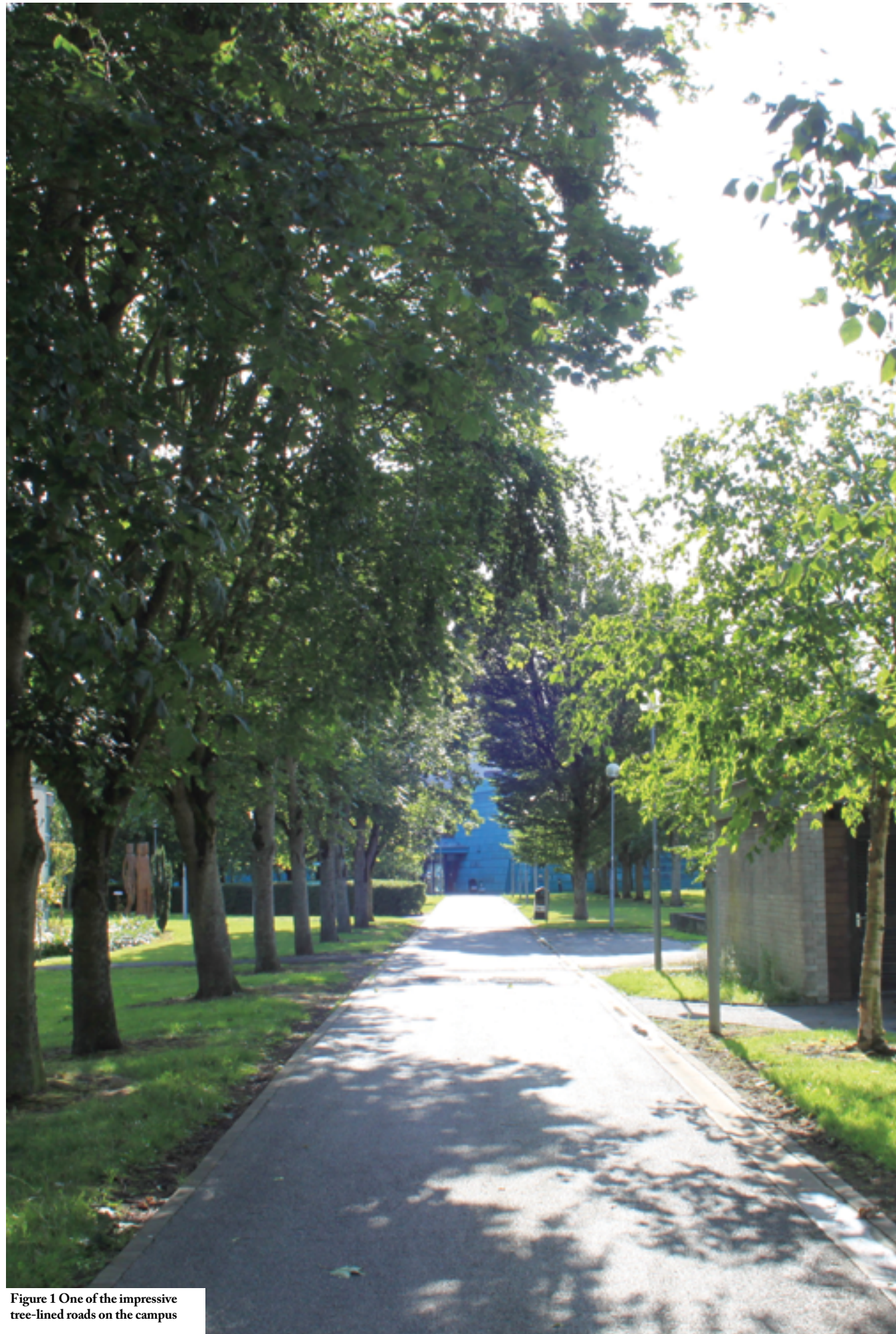


Figure 1 One of the impressive tree-lined roads on the campus

# THE HIDDEN GEM OF MAYNOOTH COLLEGE

By MICHAEL YALLOP

**M**ost of us have passed through the town of Maynooth in Co Kildare many many times. Known for its stately home of Carton, seat of the Duke Leinster, and of course the National University of Ireland.

Broken into two sections of St Patrick's College and the newer campus of the National University of Ireland. The St Patrick's campus is steeped in history, with the old Maynooth castle just on its boundary at the main entrance. A college was established here in 1518 and St Patrick's college was founded in 1795.

Recently I caught up with Stephen Seaman, the ground maintenance supervisor at the college. He is a current judge for the Green Flag Scheme with An Taisce and he has been working here for a number of years. He was recently appointed to the roll of supervisor for both campuses. Stephen has a drive, passion and enthusiasm about his work which is clear from the minute you meet him. He brought me around to show me some hidden gems that you just wouldn't know are there. For the budding gardener, horticulturist or arboriculturist this is a fascinating place to spend a day exploring.

We began on the Maynooth University campus, known as the North Campus. The busier side, you could say, with a more modern styling in architecture and layout. Construction works continue across the campus as the need grows ever greater for more teaching and student accommodation with campus space continuing to grow. Trees on this side are, of course, still young to early mature. This campus being less open than the St Patrick's side means the trees have a smaller area to grow between the buildings and, as Stephen pointed out to me, this may



Figure 2 The new student accommodation and new department/teaching buildings in their sylvan settings

**Michael Yallop** works for a local authority on the 'tree crew', undertaking general arbour work of pruning and felling large-to-small park and street trees

cause issue in the future. For now, the trees give body and life to the stark surroundings of the towering buildings. The original part of the campus still contains many of the original trees that were planted, such as horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), lime (*Tilia sp*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), ornamental apple (*Malus sp*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), birch (*Betula pendula*), pine (*Pinus sp*) and many others.

Many of the larger trees here grow on green spaces and in groups which allows them space to grow.

Mirrored from the St Patrick's side are one or two tree-lined roads (Figure 1). Towards the rear of this campus there is new student accommodation and new department/teaching buildings (Figure 2). New limes (*Tilia sp*) and cherries (*Prunus sp*) have been planted around these areas as part of the new landscape plan. This choice, Stephen points out, is carefully planned out for the new landscape, so it is suitable for the space.

To compare St Patrick's side, or the south campus, the trees here have a lot more to deal with. For a start, the busier campus leads to more damage. Services and utilities go everywhere and some are close to trees, some having been planted near street lights which may need to be removed going forward. Space is the key difference in these two campuses which affects everything from buildings to people to trees. Space for construction is tight on the Maynooth university campus which makes growing trees difficult but not impossible.

Stephen also tells me about the college's tree management plan to protect existing trees and to expand the tree population.

When you come to the main Killocock-Maynooth road which divides the two sites, you see an immediate change. The St Patrick's College campus begins at the new library building. More open spaces are clear with a significant difference in the trees and vegetation. Mature trees surround the whole campus. Stephen shows me a woodland area which he has been working on rejuvenating. Any old large dead timber has been kept and stored for wildlife. Fallen branches are allowed to decompose naturally. He has begun planting new native trees to continue



the wooded area. The trees also offer good screening to the campus. Wooded areas on the campus are for the most part left for nature to take its course and to cause as little disturbance as possible. If a tree is felled on campus, the policy of the college is to try and replace with it up to three trees. The river Lyreen runs along the edge of the campus here and it is well shaded by the dense woodland.

It's a joy to walk around the St Patrick's campus and to see the famous Silken Thomas tree, reputed to be one of the oldest trees in Ireland, going back to the time of the castle being occupied. The buildings here open into large squares. When you look around here it's hard not to cast your eyes onto an interesting tree. The main entrance near the castle has some imposing copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica 'Purpurea'*), a yew line dating back to the time the castle was occupied, containing the Silken Thomas tree.

Formal gardens greet you as you enter St Patrick's Square. The buildings are laid out to surround the centre formal gardens of trees and rose beds (Figure 3). Several more formal trees such as a dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) are to be found here.

As we moved on from St Joseph's Square, we came to the bicentenary garden. This is a naturalised limestone garden built to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the creation of St Patrick's College. The garden creates quite the view as you walk the corridors that look right out onto this wonderful garden.

Stephen then shows me the 'back lawn' (Figure 4), a large area of grass surrounded by lime tree (*Tilia sp*) avenues. The pathways here bring you on a long walk around the edge of the grounds along the railway line, down towards the old farmyards, towards the old handball walls and back to the main buildings. The trees here are in abundance. Stephen shows me several horse chestnuts (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) which have horse chestnut leaf minor (*Cameraria ohridella*) issues, a real problem due to the number of chestnut trees on campus. Bleeding canker (*Pseudomonas syringae pv. Aesculir*) is also an issue on both campuses.

Several tree blocks had been planted on both campuses; this large area contains three of them. They were part of a plantation programme rolled out a number of years ago to plant 15,000 native trees between both campuses. These tree groups have been allowed to naturalise without interference.

In the middle of this area, hidden within the trees down a yew-lined avenue, is the old cemetery (Figure 5). Stephen has worked very hard to restore this area and it really has paid off. It in itself is a hidden gem of history



**Figure 3**  
Formal gardens greet you as you enter St Patrick's Square



within the area. The pathway covered with yews is like something from Harry Potter. The cemetery is used for clergy members from the college and its history is vast. A Celtic cross and a crypt building are key features.

A short walk away is the orchard and walled garden. Both originally supplying the kitchens of the college, the orchard is still bountiful with a large crop this year. The orchard contains around 35 trees (Figure 6). The trees are in great condition and well looked after by the grounds maintenance team. The apples from the trees go for a number of sources such as culinary use while waste or slightly unsuitable apples go for animal feed. The walled garden (Figure 8), or Junior garden as it is called, was used to supply cut flowers and some vegetables to the college. With its giant redwood (*Sequoiadendron Giganteum*, Figure 7) in the middle it is a glorious place to have a quiet walk and take time to relax. The formal lines of the borders are still there today and

**Figure 4** The 'back lawn', a large area of grass surrounded by lime tree avenues

are planted with herbaceous planting and wildflowers. A rockery containing alpine plants brought back by a clergyman who travelled the globe creates the centrepiece.

Tree maintenance works on campus are confined to the period from September to February, unless a tree is a risk or has been storm damaged. If possible, the timber is left onsite, creating great space for wildlife. Trees within the high footfall areas are monitored closely for safety. Trees within the wooded areas are allowed to follow their natural processes more frequently. A native-tree-first policy is being adopted in the college to try and replace or plant new trees from native Irish selections. Specimen trees that fall foul to storms or removal for health and safety are replaced.

Recently the college has won the Green Flag award from An Taisce, joining the green

**Figure 5** Down a yew-lined avenue is the old cemetery



**Figure 6** The orchard in the walled garden contains about 35 trees

campus award it already holds. Of course, a huge part of winning this award was the management that goes into maintaining the trees on campus and having such a large number of veteran trees also.

Biodiversity and Maynooth College really go hand in hand. Huge work is put into it as a whole project, with wildflower meadows, a 'don't mow, let it grow' campaign, bee boxes, bat boxes, bug and insect hotels, planters and planting specially for bees, and areas fenced off for larger wildlife. As the development of the campus grows, it is very important to them that they try to create space for wildlife without removing it altogether from the campuses.

#### **Don't be late for class, call in!**

Stephen and his team are going above and beyond to keep the Maynooth campus in tip-



**Figure 7** The Junior garden with its giant redwood in the middle is a glorious place to have a quiet walk

top condition. The college itself is something special and really deserves a visit. I have only covered a tiny portion of the vast information on this place; I wanted to give an overview of all that is to be seen. Stephen has great plans to continue his work in planting more trees around the campus, especially as the building takes place to nestle it into the landscape. The challenge of maintaining the trees of the campus is that north and south campuses are so different and, even though they are both maintained by Stephen and his team, the



**Stephen Seaman (right), Maynooth College, with the author of this article, Michael Yallop**

trees have to be considered different for each site. For instance, in the past the university campus had chosen trees for its landscape that mirrored the St Patrick's College campus, a nice idea on paper but in reality the trees chosen a couple of hundred years ago for the original landscape of St Patrick's College may not be suitable for the urban buildings of the 21st century. Stephen is developing a palette of trees that is more suitable for the urban setting of a modern campus. His work on biodiversity will link into this, with tree planting and encouragement of wildlife. So my advice is (as I've done myself) to grab a coffee in Starbucks on campus and go a-wandering and see where it will take you along the many paths and trails. You might see Stephen and say hello. I can promise you he'll give you plenty of interesting informative information about a hidden gem.



# Doing business with *Trees By Crann*



Crann Director Diarmuid McAree (right) with Philip Beck, Ballycoe Woodlands

**C**RANN – Trees for Ireland is to go into partnership with Ballycoe Woodlands in a new scheme to help companies achieve their sustainability goals by planting native woodlands.

Called *Trees by Crann*, the scheme aims to satisfy the demand from businesses in Ireland to become active in environmental projects, as a result of their growing awareness about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). This integrates social and environmental concerns into their mainstream business operations on a voluntary basis.

The scheme will work through a Forest Service pilot project called the Woodlands Environmental Fund (WEF). The WEF provides for a payment from a business to a landowner to plant native woodlands, on top of the standard afforestation grant from the Forest Service, thus encouraging the planting of a native woodland which otherwise might not have been planted. The business can then communicate their contribution to national afforestation goals, as well as increasing carbon sequestration and other environmental benefits such as restoring local biodiversity and

reducing soil erosion.

Crann Director Diarmuid McAree said: “Companies increasingly recognise that environmental projects such as planting trees for carbon sequestration and biodiversity improvement enhances their public image, gives a positive message to their shareholders and improves employee satisfaction. Woodland establishment projects also contribute to the Government’s commitments to climate action, and especially with the goal of planting 8,000ha of new woodlands annually under the recently announced Climate Action Plan.”

Philip Beck of Ballycoe Woodlands said: “Taking part in the *Trees by Crann*, scheme allows a business to communicate to their stakeholders that they are partnering with Crann – Trees for Ireland, which has been a household name for decades in the promotion of tree planting in Ireland. The company may also avail of a corporation tax exemption as Crann – Trees for Ireland is a Revenue-registered charity.”

This is how it works:

- A business registers its interest in taking part with *Trees by Crann*, Ballycoe Woodlands are registered WEF Natural Capital Facilitators.

- Ballycoe Woodlands contacts foresters around the country and finds a native woodlands project which has been approved by the Forest Service, and which matches the size of project the business wants to support. Currently, a range of projects is available from 1-5 hectares upwards.

- The business pays Crann – Trees for Ireland the WEF contribution of €1,000 per hectare, plus a fee to cover outlays by *Trees by Crann*.

- Once the native woodland has been planted and approved by the Forest Service, Crann – Trees for Ireland will pay the WEF contribution to the landowner.

- The business may optionally wish to commission Ballycoe Woodlands to produce an Environmental Services Report for the project, covering topics such as the likely carbon sequestration by the woodland, biodiversity improvements and soil erosion mitigation.

- The business may use their participation in the native woodland under WEF in their promotional materials, including photographs taken during site visits.

Further information: Philip Beck, Ballycoe Woodlands, Philip.Beck@Ballycoe.com or 087 9125164.

## Woodland book for Christmas

Badgers, Beeches and Blisters by Julian Evans and Ken Gill make an ideal Christmas present.

Copies of Badgers cost €18. In a special pre-Christmas offer for all orders, postage and packaging is FREE. Orders and payment to Crann – Trees for Ireland, PO Box 860, Celbridge, Co Kildare.



## Arboretum features in Dovea book

All Star and Tipperary champion hurler Noel McGrath has launched ‘From Landlords to Genetics’, the historical and modern story of the Trant estate at Dovea, compiled and edited by Crann director George Cunningham. The 380 A4 size book has over 600 illustrations and a short chapter on the arboretum at Dovea which has been surveyed by Dr John McCullen, with a professional assessment carried out by arborist Felim Sheridan.



George Cunningham and Noel McGrath are seen here with two Tipperary treasures: the Liam McCarthy and the new book.

# Family outings x 3

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

**M**OST woodland in Ireland takes the form of monocultural stands of sitka spruce, Norway spruce, lodgepole pine and other conifers. They grow exceptionally well in our climate and therefore are more productive/profitable than our native deciduous trees. Our ancient forests are now few and far between, having been cut down for agricultural expansion and pressure for timber over hundreds of years. In terms of natural native woodland we are left with a tiny percentage of native/semi-natural woodland with 100,000 ha of pioneer woodlands of willow and birch.

Many foresters have recognised the fact that some woodlands are quite biodiverse but underperforming. This has led to the silvicultural process of Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) being implemented in certain circumstances. Luckily, many of the woodlands suitable for this practice have been amenity woodlands. These woodlands are no longer treated as wood-producing stands. They now have a dual function for amenity/biodiversity and to a lesser extent for wood production. Decent trees of value would, of course, be removed. This opens up the canopy and young native trees are allowed to develop. Gradually the woodland will develop in terms of biodiversity with gentle management.

This type of silviculture is visible in three woods in my locality: Littlewood outside Slane, Co Meath, Balrath just off the N2 and Girley bog on the N52 just outside Kells, Co Meath. I visited them

Over one dream weekend, EMMA REEVES visits three Continuous Cover Forests in her locality



The boardwalk at Girley Bog, near Kells, Co Meath. Inset: The birthday boy, Fox, at Littlewood, just outside Slane

the woodland so you would think I’d not have lost any children but there’s always one adventurous one, found thigh-high in a duckweed filled ditch.

So Saturday 19 October was my husband’s birthday and we decided on another walk. Off we went to Balrath Wood. This wood is almost designed for families. There are several walks through the wood; we decided to go on the short walk as my daughter didn’t seem to understand the importance of wearing socks with wellies. Most of the path is tarmac so this is a great place for parents encumbered with a buggy. There is a staggering mix of trees in this little wood. The most notable to me are the beautiful sweet chestnuts and the veteran beech tree, likely to be over 200 years. Balrath Wood is a forager’s dream with an abundance of fungi, chestnuts, beech nuts, hazel nuts and acres of raspberries.

Sunday 20 October we visited Girley bog, for no particular reason! It really is a gem.

Much of the woodland around the bog is birch, a pioneer woodland, acting as a highly effective buffer around the delicate bog habitat. The raised boardwalk through the woodland and out over the bogland protects these habitats by limiting access almost subconsciously. The boardwalk keeps you trooping forward and your knees dry when picking blueberries and cranberries!

all recently over the course of a weekend for one reason or another.

On 18 October we visited Littlewood. It was my son’s birthday and about 25 people came along. About eight of us were parents, without whom I’d have been lost. The wood itself is in some places largely sitka spruce but in other more natural parts, is a mix of hazel, oak and birch. Large areas have been clear-felled and left to regenerate naturally. The woodland forms a ring around the clear-felling. There is plenty of deadwood throughout and the children set about

constructing a hazel branch village! The woodland was full of mushrooms the day we visited and my attention was drawn by the kids to all sorts of toadstools including plums and custard, fly agaric, the deceiver and false chanterelle. Incidentally, Littlewood was for many years cursed by a plague of grey squirrel. In recent times, however, pine marten have taken up residence and have reduced the grey’s population significantly.

There are good paths throughout

Pictures by Patrick Moran



# My adventures as a beginner at forestry

By DECLAN MURPHY

**A**LIFETIME ago I was reared with a mature native wood as our nearest neighbour. Each day after school I snuck through a gap in a barbed wire fence and into its whispering embrace. I followed the tiny trails created by woodland creatures, climbing over long-fallen trees and old stone walls. After climbing one of the magnificent beeches I would head for the half-ruined limekiln bordering a large pond. Small wonder, then, that when I came to retirement a few years ago, the thought of re-creating such a treasure was one of my aspirations. However, the route to Aghamucky was indirect and other ambitions crowded in ahead, into my uncharted schedule.

An attempt to buy some land and find a partner to develop a solar photovoltaic (PV) farm fortunately fizzled out, but the possibility of planting a sustainable forest of native trees seemed do-able. I went on a local walk organised for a group of farmers by the local Teagasc adviser on a recently-planted farm. It was a young ash forest with trees all up to waist height and planted in orderly rows. I wondered about the wisdom of a monoculture plantation, reminded of the words of a well-known financial investment adviser whose constant mantra is 'diversify'. The farmers whom I had joined on the bus journey were interested but somewhat sceptical. What would the yield be? they asked. What were the forestry premium payments, how long do they last? I knew from reading the Teagasc website that there was an official promotion of native forests under the Native Woodland Scheme. However almost all



newly-planted forests are conifers, mainly sitka spruce. Historically most farmers earn their living by harvesting a crop or selling livestock (in addition to EU subsidies) – and forestry is seldom considered. However, a new generation of farmers (and the public, and its politicians) are very aware of the climate change and biodiversity implications of present farming practice, and change will be inevitable.

I had worked as a family doctor all my life, most of it in Ireland. GPs in Ireland are treated as self-employed private contractors by the Revenue Commissioners and do not qualify for an employee-type of state pension

*A stream runs along the boundary and through the fields, which have beautiful high hawthorn, blackthorn and elder hedges.*

– in contrast with hospital consultants or public health specialists. Fortunately I had made financial arrangements for retirement throughout my career and I was now in the happy position of having created a steady retirement income, with some surplus funds left over. My wife and I had a choice of buying an apartment in Portugal or of buying land in Ireland and planting a forest. We agreed on the latter and after three or four years searching we found a near-ideal site for sale within a 30-minute drive.

I started my research at the Teagasc website: [www.teagasc.ie/crops/forestry/grants/](http://www.teagasc.ie/crops/forestry/grants/) for information on forestry schemes supported by the Forest Service, for the contact details of a Forestry Adviser, and much more. I was a member of Woodlands of Ireland where Declan Little is Project Manager for the state-supported not-for-profit plc [www.woodlandsofireland.com](http://www.woodlandsofireland.com). He is an organiser of forestry training, continuing education and general information sharing, and his passion for trees is infectious. I attended a training course in Co Galway with about 60 others, where almost all except me were professionals, and it was an invaluable experience.

A friend who is a land auctioneer and former farmer introduced me to the site at Aghamucky. It is situated about 20km from our home, a short distance outside a county town north of Kilkenny city, and over 17 acres in size. It comprised three fields in a slightly upland area at about 200m, sloping from east to west. There is a small entrance from the road, and the land is largely hidden behind some houses and other farmland. Some high voltage electricity cables cross the site at a couple of points, and planting is forbidden under them. These areas will become areas



The Aghamucky forest comprises three fields in a slightly upland area at about 200m, sloping from east to west  
Opposite: The author, Declan Murphy

of flowering plants or glades and paths to traverse the forest when it matures. A stream runs along the boundary and through the fields, which have beautiful high hawthorn, blackthorn and elder hedges. It had been planted about five years previously under the Forest Service and Teagasc forestry scheme, with ash in two fields and alder in the smallest field. It seemed ideal in all respects except one. Ash dieback, due to *Chalara fraxinea*, a fungal parasite, was spreading steadily throughout the country, is incurable and un-stoppable. The field of alder was completely healthy and

growing prodigiously. Nevertheless I had no wish to buy an early-stage forest and wait for the inevitable destruction of most of it.

I continued to look for suitable sites and did discover a couple of possibilities, but each had other problems that ruled them out. About a year and a half ago my auctioneer friend contacted me to say that the forest had, as predicted, developed the infestation (since renamed *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), that the seven-year old ash trees had all been cut down before going into leaf, and the site was still for sale.

It was a week later before I was able to travel out to look at it again – and, in horror discovered that the owner had replanted it almost immediately, but this time with sitka spruce. I despaired at my delay in viewing it. It was now well into spring and I had foolishly assumed that there was no emergency since bare-rooted trees would not be planted until the growing season was over. However I later learnt that it is usual practice in the trade to keep saplings in freezer storage for just such an eventuality. I decided to see if it would be possible to remove the tiny sitka saplings



and replant with native trees at my own expense. Communication with the relevant Forestry Inspector in Forest Service was very positive, and my plan was in principle acceptable. As soon as I became the registered owner I would be paid the remaining twelve annual maintenance premiums dating from the original planting in 2011, based on a 20-year scheme. It would be re-classified under the recently revised Native Woodland Scheme. However, I would not qualify for the more substantial planting premium since that had already been paid at the time of the original planting in 2011. In addition, following the destruction of the ash plantation the site was completely replanted at Forest Service expense. It is obligatory to work with a registered forester (who is therefore fully trained and carries professional indemnity insurance) from the list on the website. I contacted Manus Crowley of Enfor Ltd, who lives locally, and we walked the site together, discussing my plans. The forester is one's consultant in dealing with all aspects of the forestry project so it is important to have a mutual understanding and belief in the project. Manus was enthused and very supportive. He confirmed the details of the contractual arrangement with the Forest Service. He then drew up a planting plan of

*The forester is one's consultant in dealing with all aspects of the forestry project so it is important to have a mutual understanding and belief in the project.*

native trees appropriate to the site and its soil and physical characteristics, and submitted it to the Forest Service. He gave me an estimate of the financial cost to include the cost of buying the various saplings, the cost of the sub-contracted forestry work team, and replanting the entire site other than the field of 8-year-old alder trees. I was still comfortably within my initial budget.

On completion of the legal and financial processes, I was in a position to take over the site and start the planting. I looked forward to seeing the forestry work-team's methods for what I assumed would be at least a one-day job. Manus phoned me one morning and said that they would be coming at some stage that day. I was delayed an hour or two and on arrival I was lucky to find the team of Romanian workers climbing into their jeep, job finished! Communication was very limited and as their jeep pulled away I reflected that these guys are a long way from

Oak planted in May 2019 are among the multiple groups of different species, which also include downy birch, cherry, Scots pine, birch, hazel, rowan, whitethorn, spindle and holly



home, are here to earn enough to return to their village and build a house for themselves in somewhere like Transylvania.

I walked the fields and all the trees were planted as specified, in multiple groups of 100 oak, 400 downy birch, 20 cherry, 25 Scots pine, a mix of birch and hazel throughout, and scatterings of rowan, whitethorn, spindle and holly. There was no planting of any sort under the ESB cables or within 10 metres of the stream. By mid-summer those areas would become an almost impenetrable jungle of meadowsweet, tall grass, willow herb and flowering plants of all descriptions – formerly called weeds!

The previous year was the memorable summer of 2018 when we had two months of high temperature and no rain, and newly planted forests lost large numbers of freshly-planted saplings. There was no risk of that this past summer of 2019! I arranged for an old friend and ecologist, Roger Goodwillie,

to do a baseline ecology report, which is extraordinarily thorough. I hope that, in the future, updated reports will show the impact of the planting on the overall ecology of the site. I was surprised to discover that glyphosate (Roundup) is often spot-sprayed at planting points for new saplings, especially sitka, to eliminate competing vegetation around the saplings. I was told that this could have impacted the 'wood-wide-web' of inter-tree communication through fungal chemical messaging via the mycelium. This is the basis of the astonishing communication system between trees providing mutual cooperation and diversion of nutrients to less healthy neighbours; warnings about leaf mining beetles and other dangers, and described so vividly in Peter Wohlleben's book 'The Hidden Life of Trees'. I did a search on the academic research aggregator site PLOS but did not discover any relevant reports on such spot spraying, and I don't have access to other

aggregator research websites.

The story of Aghamucky forest and my role in it properly began in the last millennium. In the 1980s, sustainability was a developing issue, and my wife and I dreamt of building and living in a passive solar house. The Centre for Alternatively Energy in Wales – since renamed as the Centre for Alternative Technology or CAT (cat.org.uk), is situated on the site of a former slate mine on a Welsh hillside bordering Snowdonia. It was started by a group of enthusiasts including engineers, physicists and ordinary citizens converted to the notion of sustainability. In 1983, our family of six took the car ferry to Holyhead and drove to Machynlleth over the St Patrick's Day holiday break. The CAT site is large and very diverse with different examples of house design, renewable energy systems and suchlike, and an amazingly comprehensive shop. At that time it had an outdoor demonstration of a large number of

water-heating solar panels erected on the side of the hill. On a sunny but chilly morning we put our hands under the outflow tap from a variety of these panels and scalded ourselves with the near boiling water that emerged. A well-known British construction firm – Wates – had built a demonstration super-insulated house including quadruple-glazed windows, spring-loaded doors to cut down drafts, and sensors throughout the building to measure the effects. Four years later in 1987 the UN published the Brundtland Commission report on world sustainability 'Our common future' chaired by the former Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. That report had a huge impact on the public but failed to motivate governments to begin a weaning-off process from fossil fuels. Over 30 years later, governments at last appreciate the threat to our planet and are beginning to produce robust time-bounded plans to avert the existential threat to Earth and all creatures

that live on it.

Following our memorable short break in Wales we began a process that resulted in building a new passive-solar house in 1985. By the time I retired nine years ago we had made incremental upgrades to the insulation and heat-performance of the house. With children educated and mortgage paid off, we did some of the sexy (but expensive) renewable energy stuff – bought an electric Nissan Leaf (one of our best-ever decisions) and erected photovoltaic solar panels on the house roof.

I reflect on the woods that I played in as a schoolboy and realise that the person who planted it could not have lived to see it fully grown. That applies to all the forests and woods that we love and enjoy, which were planted as a legacy to future generations. Aghamucky Forest will be in good company, and I thank my wife and children for their support on this exciting journey to become foresters.



Top: By mid-summer, we had an almost impenetrable jungle of willowherb (seen here) as well as meadowsweet, tall grass, and pollinators of all descriptions – formerly called weeds!

Above: Guelder rose and holly in one of the hedges

Right: Badger pawmarks and scrapings were evidence of the abundance of wildlife to be found on the site





# ANOTHER WAY TO APPRECIATE THE BEAUTY OF TREES

FIONNUALA BROUGHAN writes about a group of very patient people!

IT'S LIKELY that readers of Crann magazine are also listeners to 'Mooney Goes Wild' on RTÉ Radio 1, so many of you may have heard the recent programme (from 7 October) which included a special feature on the launch of the Herbarium in Focus exhibition at the National Botanic Gardens. Included in the programme was a visit to the NBG library where librarian Alexandra Caccamo introduced the guests to some of the botanical art in the library's collection. While the art they were admiring was done in the past (orchids painted by Lydia Shackleton for Frederick William Moore, for example), Dr Richard Collins commented that botanical art and illustration still have a very important role to play in portraying plants, being able to show in one portrait all the salient features of a plant. Indeed, the value of botanical illustration is reflected still today: the Royal Horticultural Society Orchid Committee employs an Orchid Artist (since 2005, this has been an Irish artist, Deborah Lambkin) to record award-winning orchids and new cultivars, and Curtis's Botanical Magazine has featured the work of two

**Fionnuala Broughan's** background is in botany and geology. In recent years she has begun drawing plants, trees in particular, and she currently looks after online communication for the Irish Society of Botanical Artists. Find her online on Instagram @fionnualabroughan.

centuries of botanical illustrators and continues to use illustrations rather than photography to this day. **What is botanical art and illustration?** Botanical illustration combines art and science to present botanically accurate portraits of plants. Botanical art also combines truth and beauty but with more emphasis on the beauty. Both art forms have been going through something of a revival over the last few years.

#### **The Irish Society of Botanical Artists**

Here in Ireland, the revival of interest in botanical art has been helped in no small measure by the formation of the Irish Society of Botanical Artists (ISBA), which formed in the National Botanic Gardens in 2014. Since a small group of artists came together in 'the Bots' just five short years ago, the society has gone from strength

to strength, running three very successful projects, each of which, in its own way, has celebrated Irish plants, including trees.

'Aibítir, The Irish Alphabet in Botanical Art', was our first exhibition (in 2014) and featured three Irish alphabets (each with 18 letters), each letter having its own associated plant. For the project, the 18 letters were designed for us by noted calligrapher Tim O'Neill and each artist then wove the letter and its plant into one painting. Tree portraits included in that exhibition included *Feoras* (spindle, *Euonymus europaeus*), *Iúr* (yew, *Taxus baccata*), *Caorthann* (rowan, *Sorbus aucuparia*) and *Trom* (elder, *Sambucus nigra*).

For our next project, we moved from native species to garden plants and we teamed up with the Irish Garden Plant Society to publish 'Heritage Irish Plants, Plandaí Oidhreachtá'. With eight chapters – each focusing on a different group of plants and their Irish-bred cultivars – the book included over 60 plant portraits, including *Sorbus* 'Autumn Spire', *Betula* 'White Light', *Acer palmatum* 'Sago-kaku' and *Cornus capitata* 'Kilmacurragh



*Malus sylvestris*, crab apple, *crann fia-íll*, water colour painting by Marie de Lacy Clancy, from trees in Co Waterford



Rose'. We launched the book with another very successful exhibition, opened for us by Dr Martyn Rix in the National Botanic Gardens in late 2016.

Our most recently published book, 'Éireannach, Celebrating Native Plants of Ireland', returned to portraying our native species as part of a larger project, Botanical Art Worldwide. We published the book in 2018 and held an exhibition in May of that year at the same time as exhibitions across the world in 24 other countries – from Australia to the Republic of Korea, from Chile to Japan. Irish trees that made it into this collection were oak, ash, hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, rowan, crab apple and the strawberry tree. An online exhibition featuring selected plant portraits from each country ran simultaneously in venues all over the world.

**How do botanical artists work?**

Botanical artists traditionally work in watercolour, but pen-and-ink illustrations, graphite drawings and, increasingly, coloured pencil portraits are also used. While representing flowers with accuracy and beauty takes a great amount of skill, portraying trees can bring particular challenges. Botanical illustration must portray a plant at life size, but clearly this is not going to be possible for your average oak tree! To meet this challenge, an artist will usually portray the leaves, flowering parts, seeds and bark of the tree at life size and then provide either a small portrait or sometimes just a silhouette of the whole tree in the same painting. Where a painting is not required to provide a complete representation, the artist will sometimes simply show the most notable or beautiful aspects of the plant.

The process of creating an accurate, representative and beautiful portrait of a plant can take some time: botanical artists need to be patient people. Artists may start their work in spring but may need to wait until late autumn or winter to complete the whole picture. Artists must work from life where possible, and so will make many sketches over quite a long period to capture colours, habit and habitat. Bringing these together in the one painting will then happen at their desk or easel, sometimes helped out by reference material: sharing a house with a botanical artist may mean you find unusual flowers, fruits and seeds in your fridge or cones and branches in the back bedroom (aka the 'studio').

Our current ISBA project, *Scitise*, will provide insights into how botanical artists work. We're asking members to take time to sketch in Irish gardens throughout 2019, showing how they prepare their work –



*Corylus avellana*, hazel, coll. water colour painting by Giulia Canevari, from trees in Co Clare where Giulia now lives



*Fraxinus excelsior*, ash, *Fuinseog*, water colour painting by Diane Davison, painted from a tree growing in Enniskerry, Co Wicklow



*Pinus ayacahuite*, Mexican white pine, graphite drawing by Fionnuala Broughan. The cone in the drawing (30 cm long!) was collected, with permission, in JFK Arboretum, Co Wexford. The tree was drawn in the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.



*Betula* 'White Light', a cultivar selected by the late John Buckley at his nursery near Birdhill in Co Tipperary. It's a cross between *B. costata* and *B. utilis* var *jacquemontii*. Coloured pencil portrait by Fionnuala Broughan, based on trees in the garden of Paddy and Mary Tobin in Co Waterford and Glasnevin Cemetery

drawings, colour matching, dissections, habitats – in graphite, watercolour or coloured pencil. Some of these will be rough sketches, some not so rough. What we want to do is provide insights into the background work that artists carry out to arrive at their final plant portraits. And we want to celebrate the richness and variety of plants available in Irish gardens, big and small, throughout the island. The resulting pages will be displayed in an exhibition of sketchbooks in the National Botanic Gardens in 2020 and will be accompanied by a sale of small works from participating artists.

**Where can you see botanical art?**

Many Irish botanical artists exhibit their work at the juried exhibition of Botanical and Floral Art at Bloom in the Park every June. This is followed by the annual exhibition of Botanical Art at the Claregalway Castle Garden Festival every July. Botanical artists from Ireland and abroad also take part in the 'Art in the Garden' exhibitions which have taken place in NBG Kilmacurragh, Tourin House and Burtown House over the last few years. The next such exhibition is planned for Birr Castle in August 2020.

If you would like to find out more about botanical art and artists in Ireland, visit the ISBA website [irishbotanicalartists.ie](http://irishbotanicalartists.ie) or find us on Facebook (@botanicalartistsireland). Our website features a Members' Gallery, an online shop where you can purchase our recent publications, as well as information about our projects and some general 'news and views'. You can contact us by email too: [info@botanicalartists.ie](mailto:info@botanicalartists.ie), Do get in touch – we'd love to hear from you!

**All images are copyright of the artists**





## Climate Change Award for Shankill TT

**C**ongratulations to Shankill Tidy Towns on winning the 2019 Climate Change Award in the recent Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council (DLRCC) Tidy Districts competition. The award was for their ambitious 'Trees for All' project – an initiative commenced in 2012 to plant one tree for every resident in the south Co Dublin village. In co-operation with Crann – Trees for Ireland, DLRCC Parks Department, Coillte and the local community, the planting target (13,910) was achieved in 2016 and now more than 17,500 trees have been planted in the environs of Shankill.

The objective of this undertaking was to help offset the carbon emissions of the community and to contribute positively to Ireland's greenhouse gas abatement strategy outlined in the National Mitigation Plan. It also augmented DLRCC's nature-based climate change solutions by the increased carbon sequestered by the planted trees.

It is hoped that this scheme will become a nationwide initiative that Tidy Towns and



Crann members of Shankill Tidy Towns 'Trees for All' project team with their awards: from left, Diarmuid McAree, Crann Director, with Joe Larkin and Dermot Lynch.

PPN groups elsewhere will emulate in future years. The trees will also help contribute to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in the Shankill area and, with this in mind, the group is setting up a local nursery as a tree conservation gene pool for future generations.

The 'Trees for All' project itself has the

benefits of community engagement and co-operation and is helping to foster a sense of belonging, ownership and pride in Shankill. It offers an opportunity for all to volunteer and get involved in a worthwhile, positive and green initiative. It is about people in the community taking action today to combat the adverse impacts of climate change. This will establish a positive link between the community and our environment, creating a thriving carbon sequestering and biodiverse landscape, enriched with abundant flora and fauna.

DLRCC has announced Shankill Tidy Towns as the overall winner of its Tidy Districts 2019. It says: "Shankill Tidy Towns are a dedicated and enthusiastic team of volunteers, who were recognised for their outstanding anti-graffiti and anti-litter actions. The group also demonstrate a dedication to environmental protection and have recently implemented a new hand-weeding policy at road edges and paving."

Shankill Tidy Towns have recently launched a tree public awareness campaign and have already planted 1,000 birch, alder, oak, rowan, pine and hawthorn trees so far this year.

## Trees bring vital extra points to overall winner

**I**n case anyone doubted the importance of trees in the Tidy Towns context, there was a deadly little aside in the report on this year's overall winner, Glaslough, Co Monaghan.

This was a comment by one of the judges on the town's Tree Survey and Management Plan, commending the committee on their decision to invest in expert advice to guide their endeavours on this important subject.

That bears repeating: highly commended for investing in expert advice. In a competition where, at the higher levels, a single mark can make a world of difference, this is music to the ears of Crann people.

The judge in Glaslough said the assistance and technical support given by the gardening

team associated with Castle Leslie Estate regarding tree management was invaluable. Which ties in very nicely with Crann's service. Not everybody can have a Castle Leslie Estate to draw upon for expertise. But they have Crann (see below).

The judge in Glaslough

### 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](mailto:info@crann.ie) or PO Box 860, Celbridge, Co Kildare, with your details.

continued with his/her enthusiasm for trees, as follows: "A word of caution: the biggest threat to trees in public spaces is mechanical damage by grass cutting equipment and most notably strimmers. During my visit the use of strimmers was witnessed, although

no significant damage to trees was detected. However, a dead tree was observed to the front of Tullyree and consideration should be given to removing this tree. A significant number of oak trees have been planted on all approach roads to the village which will provide scenic tree-lined avenues to the village for future generations."

Obviously a tree lover, this judge felt it necessary to administer a mild ticking-off to the committee, as follows: "Among the appendices included in your application was the Glaslough Village Green guidelines that gives very good guidance on planting suggestions covering hedges, bedding plants, etc. However, no information guidance was given in respect of trees." Ouch!

# Banking on the future



Central Bank of Ireland staff enjoying their volunteering day out with Crann, Easy Treesie and Shankill Tidy Towns

By PADDY SMITH

**A**n impressive turnout of more than 50 staff from the Central Bank of Ireland participated enthusiastically in a team-building corporate day out organised for them by Crann/Easy Treesie and Shankill Tidy Towns in September.

Some 250 saplings were planted in the course of the exercise, which extended over a period of nearly four hours. The location was Stonebridge Park, Shankill, Co Dublin, and the trees were donated mainly by Coillte, with some also supplied by Shankill Tidy Towns. The project was conducted with the co-operation and support of the Parks Department of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (DLRCC).

Crann Director Orla Farrell from Easy Treesie said the Central Bank staff were in good humour and looking forward to getting out in the sunshine and volunteering for such a great cause. "After a demonstration by Crann Director



Diarmuid McAree and myself showing them how to plant the saplings safely, they got down to work and really enjoyed their day with us."

Diarmuid added that he lost count of how many people asked if they could come back and do it all again sometime!

The proceedings included a

### Corporate activities

**M**ORE and more corporate enquiries are coming our way in Crann – Trees for Ireland as companies need to fulfil their green agenda objectives. We urge our members to be on the alert in identifying likely companies to participate in this form of corporate activity.

Crann – Trees for Ireland has partnered with corporate clients in various ways. For example, we 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. We also 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: 01 6275075, [info@crann.ie](mailto:info@crann.ie)

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

brief talk by Diarmuid about the benefits of trees, covering all aspects from the health of the planet down to benefits at community and family levels. Orla spoke to them about the work of Easy Treesie and about the importance of biodiversity to our climate and the reduction of our carbon footprints.

The generosity of the Central Bank volunteers extended beyond their day in Stonebridge Park as they raised money to donate to Crann through a bake sale.

Six species of trees were planted on the day – alder, willow, birch, oak, beech and rowan – all tubed plants, not bare root so that there was no need for big holes for the roots.

DLRCC scarified the land beforehand and prepared the ground for the planting. Diarmuid, who is from Shankill, explained that the Stonebridge Park site used to be a landfill site in years gone by and was later zoned as industrial but the local community persuaded the council to make it a green belt. "About 3,000 trees have now been planted there over the years by the council and the Tidy Towns," he said.



# Extinction rebellion: No, Ireland doesn't do green!

**P**roof of this sweeping statement can be found in the vicinity of nearly every raised bog in Ireland. There you can study the history of the automotive industry and the development of household appliances in the last century, by all the disused examples just dumped by our fellow citizens whose understanding of being green extends to dumping their (and others') household waste in the nearest roadside ditch. This is a national disgrace which reflects badly on us all.

## Lip service

We pay smug lip service to our environment on so many fronts. How often do we hear that it doesn't matter what we do. "Sure Ireland is only a small country; we couldn't make any difference to the world's climate." This sentiment appears to be endorsed by our government who seem to put everything on a very long finger.

Every time there is an environmental discussion on radio and TV, or an article in the newspapers, you will find people extolling the virtues of offshore wind farms or tree planting to sequester carbon dioxide. Yet in the last 20 years we have only built one wind farm in the Irish sea consisting of seven turbines.

There have never been fewer trees planted than in the last two years; 2018 was the lowest for years and in 2019 tree planting has dropped even further. I would argue that both have been strangled by bureaucracy.



Here's how we pay lip service to our environment: Picture: C O'Connell, Irish Peatland Conservation Council

to 15 years, especially when you consider that the land must remain in forestry in perpetuity.

Recently on BBC Autumn Watch while discussing Scottish forestry and the role of conifers for timber production, they proposed a mixture of tree species including Scots pine and Norway and Sitka spruce which gave a spread of cone ripening dates that would suit red squirrels and forest birds such as crossbills. I would

add European larch to that mixture, mainly to let some light onto the woodland floor allowing ground cover to grow.

Getting farmers to grow more wood either as a crop or a shelter belt is probably the quickest way to get more tree planting. Maybe paying carbon credits for forestry would have a positive effect also.

Every time I see a pie chart on the telly showing that farmers worldwide are responsible for 24% of carbon emissions it makes me want to pull my hair out (what hair?). I just don't believe it. I'm told it's all down to what my grandchildren call 'bottom burps'!

MARK WILKINSON

## 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.

Lots of people want to invest in both, but are wisely put off by talk of red tape of one sort or another.

## More trees

Those of us who grow trees under the National Forest Scheme seem to get remedial work notices on a regular basis on quite spurious grounds but they have the effect of holding up payments. For example, in one of my remedial notices it was suggested that I had caused pollution on a large scale where in fact someone (without my permission or knowledge) had trespassed into my plantation to clean out a livestock trailer 100 metres from the nearest water course. This caused a 2-year delay in grant and premium payments. The same thing can happen when a few sheep are grazed when it is obvious they don't belong to the forest owner. I think inspectors should be encouraged to be flexible and use a bit of discretion when no great harm is being done.

I have reservations regarding the reduction in the forest premium period from 20 years



