

College*Life*

A magazine for the students and staff
of Carlow College and IT Carlow

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Why ideas matter ■

The joy of parkrunning ■

Ten fun things to do around Carlow ■

COLLEGES COME OUT IN SUPPORT OF UKRAINE

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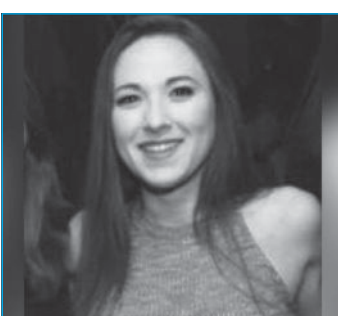
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A note from the editor

In your hands is the first issue of *College Life*, a magazine written and produced by the students of the new *Higher Diploma in Applied Journalism and New Media Content*. This is the newest journalism course in the state and the first in the southeast. Journalism courses in Ireland were traditionally centred in Dublin and it is very encouraging to see more and more students being offered the chance to study journalism.

In an age where misinformation and disinformation can be shared faster than the news can counteract it, quality journalism is more important than ever. New media has opened the door for anyone with a phone to broadcast to the world, but without courses such as this – and the skills and knowledge that we learn through them – how do we know how to send a message that will cut through the noise?

The course also marks an historic first by being delivered in joint collaboration between Carlow College and IT Carlow. Those of us on the course hope that we were worthy of such a distinction and that there will be more partnerships like this in the future.

If you notice a theme in this magazine, it is in the stories of the people around us. Our student journalists sought out the people in our communities who have amazing stories to tell but may pass unremarked. There is a wealth of human experience all around us and we only wish that we had more pages to fill.

Angela Ryan speaks to Eoghan O'Driscoll, an artist in Kilkenny who has struggled with mental health issues for much of his life and has found a measure of peace through his painting after being supported by Training and Support Kilkenny (TASK).

We have an interview with Father Yanbo Chen, who travelled from China to become a priest in Ireland, only arriving in Carlow in September 2020 as the second Covid-19 lockdown was imposed. He speaks candidly about the difficulties of immersing himself in his parish due to the social isolation, and also the problem of staying fit and healthy as we were all sequestered at home.

There are also stories of students from the two colleges who have attained prominence in sport and advocacy, and some lighter pieces to put a smile on your face.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my deputy editor Elizabeth Lee, our lecturer Conal O'Boyle for his guidance and patience, and also our advertisers for their very welcome support.

I hope you enjoy reading this magazine: it has been a learning curve for all of us since we began the course in September and I hope you will not have to judge us too harshly. We will be producing a second edition this term and you should see it around the campuses in mid-April.

Ruairi Doyle
Editor

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Megan is one of 50 young people to watch this year

By Luke Meany

A graduate from College Carlow has been named in a recent *Irish Times* article listing 50 young Irish people to watch this year. Megan Berry is a social care graduate of the college and was described in the article as an activist to watch in 2022.

Megan was selected alongside other activists, politicians, musicians, entrepreneurs and sportspeople who have all made a significant impact on society.

Reacting to the article, Megan said: "It's great, and it's nice to be recognised, especially coming into a new role, but for me there's no 'I' in team. We have a great wide team of people across all universities working together to create change."

Megan is a member of the Traveller community and the article named her for her work as a Traveller outreach officer at Maynooth University. Megan is also a community development officer with Pavee Point, a Traveller rights organisation, on its violence against women programme.

Megan's education and lived experience inform her work. Speaking about her own educational experience, she said: "We face discrimination in all aspects of society no matter where we're going in life. Within that system I was discriminated against, completely excluded from the curriculum, completely segregated."

She highlighted that her work as a Traveller outreach officer is particularly important because of



Megan Berry speaking earlier this year at the vigil for the late Ashling Murphy at the Liberty Tree in Carlow

Photo: michaelorourkephotography.ie

the barriers Travellers face in accessing education. She said: "There is discrimination and racism that exists within the school system; there are structural and systemic issues there".

Megan's role with Pavee Point is also very important. She describes her work as "making sure that the Traveller input is there as well, and that Travellers are not being left behind in any of the policies and procedures that are in place to support victims of domestic violence".

IT Carlow launches course on tackling gender-based violence

By Elizabeth Lee

IT CARLOW has just launched a new course which aims to help frontline workers respond appropriately when encountering victims of domestic abuse or gender-based violence.

The certificate course, *Understanding and responding to domestic and gender-based*

violence and abuse, will be delivered by the Faculty of Lifelong Learning in partnership with Carlow's Children and Young People's Service Committee (CYPSC) and Barnardos, the family support organisation.

The level 8 course is designed for frontline practitioners with a role in responding to people who experience or have experienced

domestic violence and abuse. It will provide participants with the opportunity to develop their capacity to appropriately understand, identify and respond to domestic violence and abuse.

In Ireland, one in four women and one in 10 men have experienced abusive behaviour of a physical, sexual or emotional nature from a partner.

"This is an important and very pertinent addition to our portfolio of programmes for the social care and community development sectors," said Lindsay Malone, deputy head of Lifelong Learning at IT Carlow.

The programme will be delivered on site at IT Carlow, subject to public health guidelines, from April to June 2022. To apply, contact Máiread Maddock at mairead.maddock@tusla.ie or 085 7897268. Alternatively, contact the Faculty of Lifelong Learning on 059 9175280 or email lll@itcarlow.ie.



Launching the new course were Michelle Hughes from Tusla, Máiread Maddock of CYPSC, Lindsay Malone from the Faculty of Lifelong Learning at IT Carlow, and Marian Dowd from Barnardos

'Gaslighting' makes first appearance in British court ruling

By Anita Moran

The term 'gaslighting' has been used in a published High Court judgment in the family courts for the first time ever in a milestone hearing in the UK. 'Gaslighting' refers to manipulating someone by making them question their grasp on reality by forcing them to doubt their memories and pushing a false narrative of events.

A leading human rights barrister who led on the case, Dr Charlotte Proudman, told *The Independent* that the judge's use of the term 'gaslighting' gives it "legitimacy and credibility" as she warned that abusers have long been warping victims' "realities" yet there has been no legal term to shed light on the problem.

"Finally, we have one," Ms Proudman said.

Mr Justice Stephen Cobb, the High Court judge who ruled on the case, helped write the law and guidance on how the family courts tackle domestic abuse. In his ruling, Mr Justice Cobb said: "Dr Proudman's use of the term 'gaslighting' in the hearing to describe this conduct was in my judgment apposite; the father's [partner's] conduct represented a form of insidious abuse designed to cause the mother [the woman represented by Dr Proudman] to question her own mental well-being, indeed her sanity."

Dr Proudman explained that the woman she represented in November and December last year accused her partner of subjecting her to rape and domestic abuse, yet a judge in the lower courts had told her that he would have her child removed from her, adopted and placed in care if she continued with her allegations.

"Her abuser convinced her that she had bipolar," Dr Proudman stated. "He told her repeatedly; he even convinced her family and other professionals. She didn't have bipolar. This is a form of insidious and corrosive abuse when women are made to question their own version of reality because of abusive men. What made it worse is that he is a mental health care worker."

The term 'Gaslighting' comes from a 1930s play, later turned into a film starring Ingrid Bergman, during which a husband manipulates his wife to believe she's losing her sense of reality, by secretly dimming and brightening a gaslight to unsettle and confuse her.



Some of the students and staff who took part in the anti-war rally at IT Carlow recently

Photos: michaelourkephotography.ie

IT students and staff hold anti-war rally

By Elizabeth Lee

UP to 100 students and staff attended an anti-war rally in IT Carlow to show solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

The rally was jointly organised by Dr Irene McCormick and Dr Pauline Flanagan, and students' union president Thomas Drury. It was also attended by college president Dr Patricia Mulcahy, head of development Dr Declan Doyle, and Maebh Maher, head of the IT's school of humanities. The demonstration took place on the campus last Wednesday and attracted students from all faculties.

"We organised it because we saw what was happening and we felt powerless about it. It felt like the right thing to do to stand up and say something about the situation," said Dr McCormick.

Mr Drury said that it was important for the students in IT Carlow to show support for their contemporaries in Ukraine. "As a students' union, we wanted to recognise our fellow students and to stand against what's happening on our continent. We took part to raise awareness about the situation and to show support for all the families who are suffering,"



Speakers at the anti-war rally at IT Carlow were students' union president Thomas Drury, Dr Irene McCormick, former media and PR student Anastasiia Bezkhmelnytska, Dr Pauline Flanagan and student Romain Trofymenko with his wife Katryna

he said.

Dr McCormick and Mr Drury spoke at the event, as did former IT Carlow student Anastasia Bezkhmelnytska, who said that her life has been "turned upside down" by events back in her home country.

She urged young people to be aware of what was happening in Ukraine and to support the Ukrainian people.

Another speaker was student Romain Trofymenko, who was at the protest with his wife. He became visibly upset as he addressed the crowd and said that seeing the word 'peace'

broke his heart, when there was no peace in his country. He then

asked people to pray for an end to the invasion.

... AND CARLOW COLLEGE FLIES THE FLAG, TOO



In a sign of solidarity with the people of Ukraine, Carlow College hoisted that country's flag outside the college on Monday 7 March. Pictured are college president Fr Conn Ó Maoldhomhnaigh and local Ukrainian nationals next to the flag of Ukraine



Ukrainian student Romain Trofymenko and his wife Katryna speaking during the anti war rally

'ARE WE THERE YET?'

Philosophy for children course returns to Carlow College

By Nicole Burke

The Philosophy 4 Children (P4C) training course has returned to Carlow College for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic arrived. Dr Noel Kavanagh, lecturer in Carlow College, along with Marelle Rice of Philosophy Ireland, ran the two-day training course at Carlow College last month.

Carlow College is the regional hub of delivery in the southeast for the P4C training course that aims to train youth educators to facilitate philosophical inquiry in classrooms or youth clubs.

According to Dr Kavanagh, the course aims to "gently jolt the participant into thinking about and interrogating their beliefs". Pre-pandemic, these training courses had taken place twice a year for the past four years.

Dr Kavanagh, who is a certified P4C practitioner, has also been guiding the 'Philosophy for Young People' programme held in the Visual arts centre. These sessions



Dr Noel Kavanagh: 'the pandemic really changed people's ways of thinking'

were a companion to 'The Corona', a series exploring young people's experiences of the pandemic through drawings, interviews and film.

There is a proposal among P4C practitioners for the programme to be renamed 'Community of Philosophical Inquiry' (CPI) to better reflect the more inclusive and accessible nature of the programme for people of all ages and from any occupation.

When asked about the role of P4C in aiding his own advocacy for public philosophy, Dr Kavanagh said that this is "bringing philosophy outside the walls of academia". He added that the idea of a philosophy that is accessible to the wider public "is beginning to get traction in recent years", not least due to the pandemic.

"It really changed people's ways of thinking," said Dr Kavanagh.

Carlow's Ye Vagabonds to release second album in May

By Joanne O'Brien

Carlow duo Ye Vagabonds will release their second album on Rough Trade's River Lea label on Friday 13 May.

Brothers Brian and Diarmuid Mac Gloinn have gained an impressive following since moving to Dublin from Carlow in 2012. Their acoustic act combining a range of folk influences with harmony-rich vocals is seen as a new wave

of folk music which has a distinct appeal.

Nine Waves is their third album and follows on from the success of their debut album *Ye Vagabonds* in 2015 and their second album *The Hare's Lament* in 2019. *The Hare's Lament* brought the brothers to a different level, earning them a BBC Radio Two Folk Award and three RTÉ Folk Awards in 2019.

Their new album, *Nine Waves*, was recorded in the

Dublin mountains at Hellfire Studios and produced by John 'Spud' Murphy. It features 11 tracks of both traditional and original songs or tunes.

Nine Waves follows the duo's standalone single *I'm a Rover*, which won them an RTÉ Radio One Folk Award for Best Traditional Folk Track. Ye Vagabonds were also named Best Folk Group for the second time at the 2021 ceremony, where they hold the record for most awarded artists.

The first single to be taken from the album is *Blue is the Eye*, and the brothers premiered the song on RTE's *Tommy Tiernan Show* last month to great acclaim.

Ye Vagabonds will be touring throughout Europe, the UK and the USA in 2022. They headline Vicar St, Dublin on Thursday 9 June. Tickets are available from yevagabonds.com.

Brothers Diarmuid and Brian Mac Gloinn from Palatine, Carlow are Ye Vagabonds



What's going on in the colleges?

By Ray O'Donnell

IT Carlow has achieved so much in recent times, from the Post-Graduate Fair open day held on 10 February in the CSB area of the canteen, where educational and job advertisement stands were set up for all students to view, to outstanding achievements on the sports fields.

Being chosen to host the higher education GAA finals was a very proud moment for the institute, with the Sigerson Cup final in football showcasing the excellent sporting facilities on offer, live on TG4, on the night of 16 February (see also pages 12 and 13). The Fitzgibbon Cup final on 20 February was also screened live on TG4.

WHAT'S DOWN THE ROAD?

A spring open day at IT Carlow is planned for May, with the date to be confirmed. This will be the first one back on campus in two years. Stands will be open for viewing to leaving cert students wishing to attend, featuring the HERE AND THERE scheme. HERE represents the regular higher education access routes, while THERE is a higher education disability access route. Head of academic administration and student affairs Shauna Whyte will be speaking on the day, as will access officer Aisling McHugh.

COMMUNITY GAMES FINALS

Meanwhile, over at Carlow College, a long-held ambition to one day host the national Community Games finals is set to be realised on the first and last weekends in August, with upwards of 4,000 children and their families expected to visit the town.

This is quite an achievement for the college and the hope is that it may become a consistent host for the games in the future, given its geographic location coupled with the excellent road and adjacent rail network connecting Carlow with multiple national routes.

WHAT'S DUE FOR DEVELOPMENT?

Some of the older buildings on the IT Carlow campus will be undergoing a full make-over and expansion during the summer break for students, as it continues its journey as the country's newest university.

Plans for the proposed new Dome facility, although currently being contested by some local residents, are also well underway, possibly with the dome at a reduced height.

Graduate Greg is playing a stormer with Connacht

By John Murphy

Former IT Carlow student and Wexford native Greg McGrath is making waves in Galway playing for professional rugby outfit Connacht. He joined the western province from Leinster during the summer, signing his first professional contract in the process.

Greg is a recent graduate of the Rugby and Business Management course at IT Carlow – and the course is paying dividends in helping his career as a professional athlete. It's one of three similar sports courses: Rugby and Business Management, Soccer and Business Management, GAA and Business Management, which teach students the techniques of sports management and coaching along with the principles of business and enterprise. Greg's involvement with the college was a fruitful one, with him winning both the All-Ireland League and the All-Ireland Cup in his first year with the college.

His is one of the few success stories from the club game, becoming a professional rugby player through the club system as opposed to the more conventional method of schools rugby. Greg played his club rugby with Wexford Wanderers up until the age of 18.

He then transferred to the highly-renowned Dublin outfit Lansdowne RFC. His performances with the AIL-based club were so impressive that he was picked up by Leinster on an academy contract.

As is often the problem with the Leinster squad, the competition for each position is fiercely contested. None more so than his own position of tighthead prop, a position that is currently filled by Tadhg Furlong. Furlong recently was voted third best rugby player in the world by *World Rugby* magazine.



Greg McGrath in action for Connacht

Knowing that starting spots would be few and far between, Greg decided to try his chances in the west of Ireland with Connacht. The move has been a roaring success, leading to McGrath's recent debut in the European Champions Cup for Connacht against Stade Français in Paris.

Speaking about his move, Greg said: "It was a no-brainer for me really. I didn't see much opportunity with the Leinster squad, so when the option came to join Connacht and sign a professional contract, I jumped at the opportunity."

The young prop had high praise for IT Carlow, saying his experience there was extremely enjoyable. "I absolutely loved my time in IT Carlow and because my course was a rugby course, I played with almost all of the guys in my class. We were never apart, and it led to a great atmosphere while I studied there."

McGrath is hoping that while players are away on international duty with Ireland in the Six Nations he can get more playing time. As this magazine is written for Carlow students, I am sure I speak for everyone when I say best of luck, Greg!

Library and Carlow College launch history video series

By Elizabeth Lee

AS PART of Carlow County Council's Decade of Centenaries Committee events, Carlow Libraries, in conjunction with Carlow College, are broadcasting a series of video interviews examining key events in Co Carlow from a century ago.

The videos feature Carlow College academics Dr Ida Milne and Dr Elaine Callinan. Dr Milne, a lecturer in European history, is an expert on the Spanish flu, so she interviewed genealogist Bernie Walsh about the 1918 pandemic. The interview was broadcast on 21 February and can be viewed on the library's YouTube channel.

The other academic featuring in the centenary videos is Dr Elaine Callinan, who lectures in history at Carlow College.

On Monday 28 February, *Revolutionary politics and propaganda: electioneering in Carlow and Ireland*, was broadcast on the YouTube channel. In this video, Dr Callinan discussed the watershed 1918 election with John Kelly of the Carlow Historical and Archaeological Society.

More episodes are promised in the coming weeks. These will deal with several topics relevant to events in Carlow and Ireland during the Decade of Centenaries period, 1912-1923.



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Declan walks the walk as he becomes the IT's latest PhD

By Kieran Murphy

He could have been looking forward towards retirement but instead a senior figure in IT Carlow has successfully studied for his doctorate and is continuing to have a major role in supporting the college in its transition from technological to university status.

Declan Doyle completed his doctorate in Higher Education Management at Bath University in August 2021 and was conferred in an online ceremony in December.

Now vice-president for development and research in IT Carlow, Declan had been always interested in further studies. He secured his master's in the late nineties and had it in his mind that he wanted to study for his doctorate. He did start, but family and work commitments prevented him from continuing.

He joined IT Carlow in 2001.

It wasn't until 2012 that Declan found time to pursue his doctorate. His ambitions coincided with the programme for government which set down the possibility of third-level colleges like IT Carlow achieving university status.

"That made me think. If I was to finish off my career in a university, I needed to have a doctorate," he said.

Up to 2018, Declan says the concept of university status was simply a concept and that was all. Then the *Technological Universities Act* of 2018 ensured there was a clearer pathway for third-level colleges such as IT Carlow to work towards university status. In one way that was good but, alternatively, Declan had little time to continue his research.

"Being here until 7 or 8 o'clock in the evening, the last thing you wanted to do when you went home was to pick up another book

and start studying or to be on the computer again," he recalled.

The arrival of the pandemic gave Declan a window of opportunity. Travel was limited.

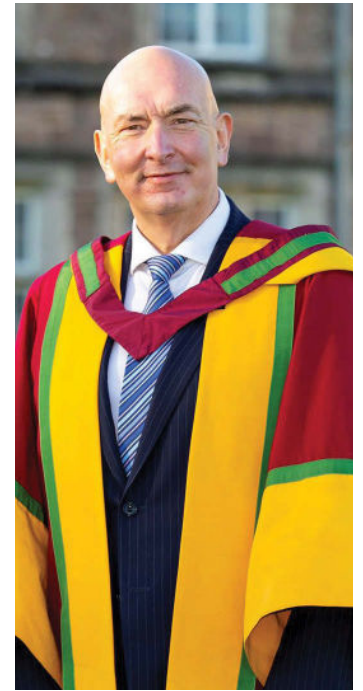
"I had the research done and just needed to sit down and write the 80,000 words I needed," he explained.

The year before, a new supervisor had come to work with him. "Charlie Larkin was an Irishman who had come from Trinity and was working in Bath. He knew the Irish set-up. He kept me focused," said Declan.

By the end of August, he had submitted his work for evaluation, which was accepted.

Now the vice-president for development and research in IT Carlow, Declan celebrates his 60th birthday in April. He reflects on his achievement.

"I learned so much more about higher education by going to Bath



Declan Doyle

and mixing with all those people from different countries than I would ever have known if I had stayed at home and done it," he says.

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Institute hosts Zero Waste festival

By Luke Meany

IT Carlow hosted the college's first Zero Waste festival last month. The event was organised by IT Carlow's Green Campus Committee and was held in the college at the World Café on Tuesday 15 February 2022.

The green campus committee organised the festival to educate students about the environment and green initiatives in the college. Dr Eleanor O'Leary is an assistant lecturer in the college and a member of the IT Carlow green campus committee. She said she wanted the event to show students "the small things they can do to make a difference".

Dr O'Leary said she hoped the event would "create an informal space where people can chat and learn in a relaxed environment". The event organisers said they wanted to use this as a platform for students to share ideas on how to make the campus more sustainable.

Darish Azhas, a volunteer at the event and a digital marketing student in IT Carlow, called the event "insightful". Darish welcomed the chance to speak to the green campus committee and advised them on possible eco-friendly workshops for students in the future.

There were some local environmentally focused businesses and environmental professionals present, including representatives from Bord Na Mona and Carlow County Council. Tony Finnerty from Bord Na Mona said it was a "great event" and was on hand to show students how best to recycle their waste.

The event was part of the college's plans to get a green flag on campus for litter and waste reduction. It is also part of a wider suite of green-focused events that will happen this year, including an event planned next month to mark Green Week 2022.



GaYeong Kim, Jade Broynen and Darish Azhas at the Zero Waste festival in IT Carlow

Holocaust survivor Tomi delivered harrowing lecture at Carlow College

By Joanne O'Brien

Carlow College hosted Holocaust survivor Tomi Reichental in a public lecture that was streamed online on 24 January.

Tomi has been living in Ireland since 1959 and published an autobiography in 2011 called *I was a boy in Belsen*. A recipient of Ireland's International Person of the Year Award in 2014, Tomi talked about his experiences of being a prisoner at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp during World War II when he was only nine years' old.

He recalled one of his earliest memories

when he started to realise that he was different. He was presented with a yellow star and was told he had to wear it from that day on.

Tomi was in Bergen-Belsen with his mother and older brother Miki and miraculously they survived this horrifying experience. Reichental's father survived, too, and joined up with resistance forces in their native Slovakia.

Tomi recounted memories like playing hide and seek with his friends around heaps of rotting corpses at the concentration camp and watching as emaciated inmates fell to the ground in front of him.

Tomi didn't speak of his experiences for almost 60 years but now dedicates his life to raising awareness of the Holocaust. Through his talks, he seeks to educate people about the dangers of prejudice and intolerance, and the importance of preventing another Holocaust from occurring.

His story is one of horror and despair but also one of indomitable spirit and strength. His kindness and compassion, despite harrowing persecution, is a mark of the man.

In the lecture, Tomi said: "You have to make peace with the past, so it doesn't spoil the present."

PARK LIFE!

A sheep-shearer's secret to a healthy life and so much more

By Joanne O'Brien

What do a sheep shearer, a teacher, a Palestinian native, a transition year student and vice-president of a third level college have in common? They are all regulars in parkrun, a VHI-sponsored 5km event that brings people from all walks of life together every Saturday morning.

The idea was born in 2004, when a group of 13 runners completed a time trial in Bushy Park in London. Since then, it's become a worldwide phenomenon with over 2,000 parkrun locations worldwide. Carlow town is one of the 75 parkruns that take place all over Ireland every Saturday morning.

As people gathered in Carlow town park overlooking the River Barrow, the fog was lifting from the river in an almost mystical way. An area that often gets bad publicity due to the anti-social behaviour of over-zealous teenagers was picture-perfect for the occasion. Covid-19 has meant parkrun was postponed for 18 months and giddiness rippled through the enthusiastic crowd, reflecting the newfound sense of freedom and a return to a sense of normality.

Early morning rowers were in full flight with an exuberant coach cycling along the riverbank shouting instructions. The dragon boat crew pass by, with the beating of their drum giving off an almost oriental feel to proceedings.

"I volunteer to help out in the community," said transition year student Emma, one of the runners taking part. Victor, a sheep farmer from Carlow, takes part to keep fit. He needs to keep his stamina up so he can shear up to 100 sheep in the space of several hours. He also enjoys the social aspect.

Malik, originally from Palestine and living in Carlow for three years, enjoys seeing people doing things that makes them happy.

And David from Kilkenny, who also happens to be the vice-president of IT Carlow, likes to volunteer as it gets him up early on a Saturday morning and says that "it's great to meet people and have a bit of fun on a Saturday morning".

One, two, three and they're off ... the faster runners bounding off like a speeding train, while the more leisurely runners and walkers smile and take in the atmosphere, some walking dogs and others making it a family occasion with their children. They're soon out of sight as they head along the scenic Barrow Track for 2.2km before making their way back into the town park for the last 600 metres and then run to the finish line to great applause by the volunteers and onlookers.

For many, parkrun is a way of life. Yes, it's a 5km run or walk, and people get their times recorded, but it's so much more than that. The sense of community is immense; it is run by the community for the community. Within one parkrun, there could be an elite runner going for a personal best, a young child running for the first time or an 80-year-old pensioner walking the route.

Christopher Davey, run director at Carlow parkrun, says that parkrun is a fantastic environment where everybody can start a healthier lifestyle, but it's not just about fitness or weight loss – it starts with the community. "It's getting out on a Saturday morning, feeling happier in yourself. ...you're connecting with people, it's a social occasion," he explains.

Martin, a Carlow native, speaks of his love for the event and he does the parkrun regularly, but he also likes to volunteer from time to time to give back to the community. He says: "There's definitely a sense of wellbeing, and I love to meet the same faces. It's great to get up and out on a



Carlow town hosts one of the 75 parkruns that take place all over the country every Saturday morning

Saturday morning."

Getting up and out on a Saturday morning is certainly a common theme among the volunteers and parkrunners alike. It really is such a brilliant way to start a Saturday morning. Tosin from Carlow says that she is doing a desk job from Monday to Friday and it's nice to get out on a Saturday morning and meet new people.

There are no hidden costs with parkrun: it is plain and simple – a free event that depends on the goodwill of volunteers from the community to run it every week. It can be easy to overlook the efforts that have been made for people to complete a parkrun. Karen, a blind runner with her running guide Patrice, is a regular at Carlow parkrun and depends on a volunteer guide so she can complete the 5km route. The willingness of people to help out is second to none and it restores your faith in humanity.

Parkrunners who are visiting from other parkrun locations are aptly called parkrun 'tourists' and people pride themselves on visiting as many parkrun locations as possible. A family of five from Naas, Co Kildare have popped into

Carlow for the parkrun en route to a First Communion in Wexford. This is the effect parkrun can have, and every effort is made to ensure that a Saturday morning parkrun is not missed. It's also a prime example of how parkrun is such a family-oriented event and how young and old can enjoy the benefits of it.

The volunteers pack up the equipment and head over to the local café for a cuppa. What an eclectic mix around a table in the local café afterwards!

Victor the sheep-shearer is looking very pleased with himself because he's improved on his time on last week; Karen is planning on being a tourist in a nearby parkrun next week and needs to find a guide.

Chris is busy downloading the results for another successful Carlow parkrun, and a good number of parkrunners have also made their way for vital refreshments after their early morning endeavours.

The banter is good, and all the problems of the world are solved over a cuppa and a hearty breakfast.

Is there a better way to start a Saturday morning?

Women's self-defence classes are becoming increasingly popular – for obvious reasons. Blaitnaid Armstrong visited one such class in IT Carlow

You could hear a pin drop among us. The thought struck me: here were ten grown women, healthy and physically strong, and yet putting ourselves forward to learn tricks to defend ourselves – learning to compensate for a physical 'weakness' that some are actively willing to take advantage of and use against us.

I had received an email from IT Carlow about self-defence classes in the college and decided to give it a go. I was spurred on by an article in the *Irish Independent* about the number of booking requests for such classes nationwide since the recent high-profile murder of 23-year-old teacher Aisling Murphy in Co Offaly.

The class was to take place in the Barrow Centre at the IT. I arrived early and was the first one there. But within a few minutes, there were ten of us gathered in a very airy, spacious room.

Our teacher Debbie Long arrived, accompanied by her friend Thomas Drury, president of IT Carlow's Students' Union. Debbie is a karate black belt champion and an IT Carlow gym instructor. She explained that this class was planned back in November, well before the tragic and horrific events in Tullamore on 12 January. She stressed that the purpose of the classes was not to make us into fighters but to give us, all women, a little more confidence in reacting to a situation in which we hope we will never find ourselves – namely, being attacked.

She stressed that the purpose of the exercises we would practice was not to be able to take on an aggressor but to have ways of getting ourselves out of a situation, long enough to get away, to escape.

We were all ears as Debbie introduced the first 'move' that we would learn. It was an easy one, which she demonstrated with Thomas.

So, if someone grabs you by

the arm below the elbow, you can break free by reacting swiftly, which might not be expected, and twisting your arm in the opposite direction to that with which you are being gripped.

Now it was our turn to practice, so we all found a partner to try it on. It was surprisingly effective but, as Debbie explained, in a real situation when you are taken by surprise, you need to have this move ready – like second nature – there will be no time to think about it. Otherwise, your chance will have passed.

We were all strangers to each other, so we were naturally a little too gentle to be effective at the start, but within a few minutes my young partner and I were giving each other permission to put more pressure into it to get a better outcome. Politeness was replaced by power very swiftly, and it was almost palpable around the room that everyone there really wanted a chance to develop these important, and unfortunately necessary, skills.

The class continued in this vein, with a demonstration of different poses and potential situations by Debbie and Thomas, followed by the participants practising. Debbie

has a wealth of experience in this area, and it showed. She fielded our questions effortlessly and knowledgeably, while exuding a sense of confidence, which I could feel passing to us.

One of the most shocking of the scenarios covered was the hair grab. Debbie outlined that if someone is pulling or pushing you while pulling your hair, you must rely on your arms and your feet to break free. The level of speed and force needed to achieve this is high, but when it worked, it was powerful!

The atmosphere in the room by the time we got to this move was electric. The noise, groans and laughter were good indicators of the engagement everyone had with the exercises, and how empowered we began to feel.

The hour-long class was zipping by, and we learned three or four strategies well. As the class was nearing an end, there was time given for a recap and questions.

One member of the class asked about how we could respond to a situation if we were knocked to the ground, as all the moves we learned this week were from a vertical position. Debbie gave a brief outline but explained that she

would be covering more intricate moves as the weeks went on.

The whys and wherefores of the need for classes on self-defence are a debate that will continue. The idealist in me would say that we women shouldn't have to do this.

We should be free to go about our lives without fear of an assault of any kind. But in light of two more recent assaults of women in Cork and Kilkenny, we all have to get real. For whatever reason, these attacks are happening at an alarming rate!

I urge all women – my daughters, my sister, my female friends and relatives – to take a small bit of action into our own hands so that we 'arm' ourselves with something that we can do for us. Take the opportunity to grow your confidence and authority, to fend off danger just long enough to get the hell out of a menacing scenario!

With further sessions over the next few weeks, and with a promise by the students' union to run more later in the year, I encourage all of you who are concerned in any way about self-protection to give it a go.

Forewarned is forearmed!

Hit and run

Self-defence instructor Debbie Long and Thomas Drury show the class how to break an attacker's hold





Carlow College, Ireland's second-oldest third level institution

Why ideas matter (and why Carlow College does, too)

'I spent the whole summer telling people I was starting in IT Carlow. You can imagine the shock on my face when Google Maps led me to the 200-year-old grounds of Carlow College'

By Nicole Burke

Along the path that borders the football field, so alive with cheers and yells, is a place of quiet reflection. It is a little burial ground, the final resting place of the earlier presidents and former staff members, some of who were initially students, of Carlow College, St Patrick's. The college was established in 1782 but did not open its doors to students until October 1793. The stone steps leading into the building have since been recast again and again over the past 200 years by the feet of future priests, scholars, teachers and care workers.

The college's motto is the Latin phrase *Rescissa vegetior assurgit*, which means 'That which has been cut back burgeons forth more abundantly'. Of course, at the time it was conceived, this was a reference to church teachings; one cannot separate the founding of Ireland's first Catholic college from its emergence in the period of the Penal Laws. After all, as one learns early in the philosophy lecture hall, no philosophy was ever born in a vacuum.

When thinking about the rich

history of Carlow College, and the wildly different categories of students that attended the place throughout the years, I am struck by something Fr Michael McCarty, the late poet-priest and former student of the college, said in conversation back in 2017. We were talking about his time as a young student compared to his latest experience as the first writer-in-residence. He said that the institution had "both changed and remained the same . . . I was a student during the height of Catholic Ireland. Now, lay students attend Carlow College, and they bring a different outlook with them. Their focus is different, but their humanity is the same. There is an underlying spirituality there, but it is expressed in a different way".

Humanities is a discipline often viewed as the misfit among the more popular science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects. It is the bohemian maverick overlooked in favour of the sciences, information technology and business management. It is under threat now more than ever in this era of ever-deepening neoliberalism, where if something does not have an

explicit marketable quality then it will not survive for very long. One could argue that on some level Carlow College embodies this quality, as its prestige can often be overshadowed by its larger counterpart, IT Carlow.

The humanities come from the Latin term *studia humanitas*, and simply means the study of humanity. Of course, 'humanity' is such an extensive term, and this lends the discipline its very best qualities: how broad it is; how collaborative and multivarious. The humanities not only function sufficiently as preparation to enter the workforce but inspire people to think outside of it. The humanities provoke creativity and insight. Essentially, the discipline is a well-spring to quench the insatiable human need to know.

President Michael D. Higgins wrote in his book of essays *When Ideas Matter* that 'we need to create the capacity to understand, critique and offer options and alternatives to changes [of our times], ones that will sustain and deepen democracy'. The study of the humanities aids us in this continuous endeavour.

During my time at Carlow College, there was always coop-

eration between the different programmes. Whether one studied arts and humanities, English and history, citizenship and community studies, or social care, these were all an expression of the values seen in the humanities in some way. We all mixed and got along; there was a tireless spirit of interdisciplinarity and openness in every aspect of life in Carlow College.

I didn't follow the usual path from secondary school to third-level education. My route went from a mediocre leaving cert to selling petrol and bags of smokeless coal to the often irascible general public.

From the window overlooking the forecourt littered with cans of red bull and the smell of *parfum de gasoline*, I would notice the bus stop across the road where college students got on the JJ Kavanagh bus to Maynooth University every morning. I always felt a spasm of jealousy, and after two years of pining I decided to fill out the intimidating CAO form one night in secret. I had no idea what I wanted to do, but I was always good at English in school. When I happened upon the BA in Humanities at Carlow College and

skimmed the English modules, I entered it on the CAO as my only option.

However, having never been to Carlow before, and being aware only of the Institute of Technology, I spent the whole summer telling people that I was starting in IT Carlow that following September. You can imagine the shock on my face when Google Maps led me to the 200-year-old grounds of Carlow College.

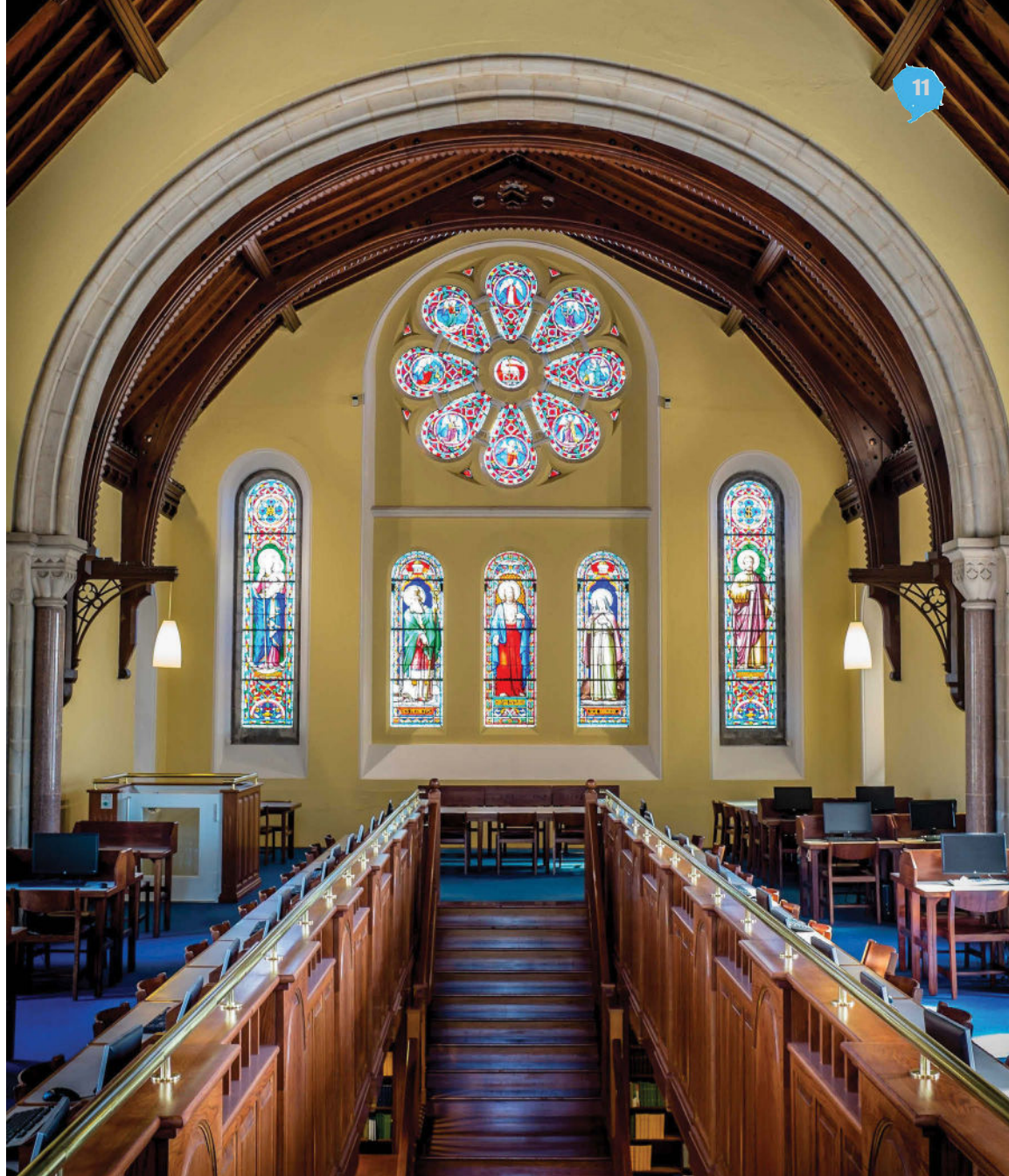
While English literature was my first love, philosophy is the one that will stay with me. I remember sitting in my first philosophy class, not knowing what to expect, and in comes Dr Noel Kavanagh like a tempest, somehow simultaneously destroying every certainty we'd ever held dear while helping to create new foundations for ways of knowing. It's safe to say that all past, present and future students of his will never forget the contagious and fervent devotion that he feels for philosophy, Carlow College and every single undergraduate who had and has the privilege of sitting in front of him.

The small, tight-knit community nurtured by Carlow College means that every student has their opportunity to shine, and has a chance to connect with each other and the lecturers in a way that just does not happen in bigger institutions. When I graduated from Carlow College and moved on to Trinity College Dublin, the culture shock was staggering, and I'm not above admitting that I struggled greatly in those first few months.

In Carlow College, there were no cracks to fall through, and there was always someone there to believe in you.

In a recent chat with a fellow alumna about our undergraduate experience, she said, quite poignantly, "Carlow College was and still is a home away from home, and a family away from family. I really couldn't have asked for a better college experience than the one [Carlow College] St Pat's had to offer". I couldn't have put it better myself.

In this age of disinformation, misinformation, deep fakes, conspiracy theories, opinion pieces presented as facts, we need more than ever to cherish the skills of critical evaluation, objectivity, community and care-giving. At a point when societies and governments are looking to the past for the answers in an



The beautiful library in Carlow College

attempt to "take back control" or to be "great again", now more than ever we desperately need those with a pioneering vision and the will to take a strong step forward.

This is what the humanities equips us to do.

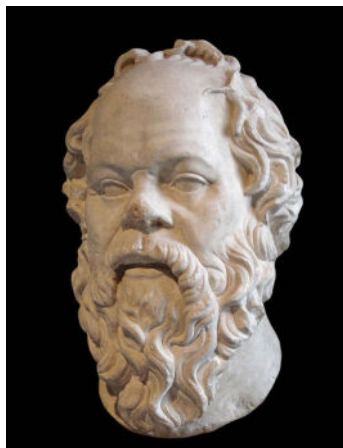
To cite an oh-so-apt quote from

Dead Poets Society delivered by Robin Williams, "medicine, law, business, engineering – these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love – these are what we stay alive for".

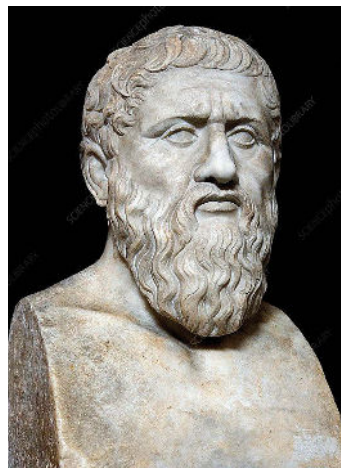
These values flourish in the fecund greenery of Carlow

College. In his posthumously-published memoir *Like a Tree Cut Back*, Fr McCarthy wrote of the college that 'I had loved Carlow College from the day I entered it. That love had stayed with me throughout my life'.

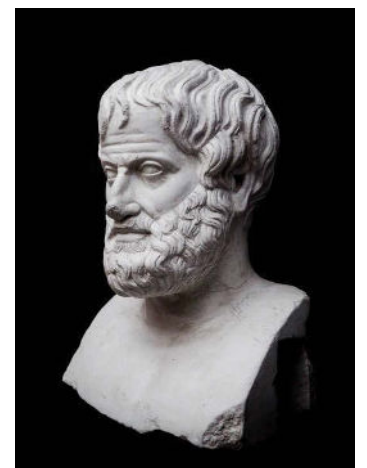
Many of us who have passed through the college would agree.



Socrates: was aesthetically challenged



Plato: couldn't get a girlfriend



Aristotle: a bugger for the bottle

The best of both worlds

There's something special about the Sigerson and Fitzgibbon Cups. Kieran Murphy speaks to past and present players to find out why the two competitions mean so much to third-level colleges

By Kieran Murphy

This year, IT Carlow hosted the third-level All-Ireland GAA finals. It was indeed appropriate that in the same year that IT Carlow and Waterford IT were putting together the final touches for merging into the latest technological university, these most prestigious of sporting events should take place at the IT Carlow grounds.

The Sigerson (football) and Fitzgibbon (hurling) cups are the marquee GAA inter-varsity sporting events. Up to the late 1980s and early '90s, the competitions were confined to the established universities such as UCD, Trinity, UCC, UCG and Queens University. Then the regional colleges, which were subsequently renamed institutes of technology, were allowed to enter the competitions. Tralee Regional Technical College (RTC) won two Sigerson Cups in 1996 and 1997

before going on to complete a glorious six-in-a-row under its new moniker, IT Tralee.

In 1992, Waterford RTC won a first-ever Fitzgibbon Cup and repeated the feat three years later. Around the time of its renaming from an RTC to Waterford IT, the Decies college won back-to-back titles in 1989 and 1990. Between them, Waterford RTC and Waterford IT have won nine Fitzgibbon Cups.

IT Carlow contested the Fitzgibbon Cup finals of 2017 and 2020, but sadly was beaten by Mary Immaculate and UCC respectively.

Eighteen college finals were played in Carlow on the third weekend of February this year. Apart from the two premier finals, there were division 1, 2 and 3 league and championship deciders. The Ryan Cup (hurling) and Trench Cup (football) may be second-tier competitions, but they are as vigorously contested as the



A young Marty Kavanagh gets a hug from his mum after a typically stellar performance on the field some years ago

tier one finals.

When Carlow won the Ryan Cup in 2010, it was considered a major breakthrough. The Barrowside college was due to host the finals two years ago but then Covid-19 came and put an end to those plans. Time didn't quench its appetite to host the finals. Two years on, and with the opening of the college's new South Sports Campus, the organisers didn't have to use pitches belonging to clubs in Carlow.

In the lead-up to the finals, Alan Nolan spoke about the desire to host the finals. He is a former Carlow student, played Sigerson Cup and is now a Games Development Officer in the college. He is also a tutor and a lecturer.

"We would have loved to have hosted the finals a couple of years back, but with the South Sports Campus coming on board, it is a great opportunity to show off the new facilities. They are not officially opened yet, but it will be one of the first student sport competitions to be played in the South Sports Campus and obviously in the main pitch in the main campus," he said.

"We are delighted to host it. There will be a bit of work in terms of organisation, planning, personnel, fixtures, programmes, food. There are a lot of people around the college who are interested in sports who will step in and help out from an organisational point of view.

"Without the facilities, we would have had to focus in and use the club pitches around Carlow. I am sure they would have given us them, but it would have been a little bit messier."

For the last number of years in the Fitzgibbon Cup, Kilkenny hurling legend DJ Carey and former Laois intercounty footballer Mick Dempsey have managed the IT Carlow hurlers. When Kilkenny was winning ten All-Ireland titles in 14 years, Dempsey operated alongside Kilkenny hurling manager Brian Cody, with many astute observers suggesting the Laois man was as much responsible for the success of The Cats as Cody himself was.

The IT Carlow Sigerson Cup team is managed by dual player and former hurling All-Star Pat Critchley. He led them to a Sigerson Cup final in 2020, where they were narrowly beaten by DCU.

Nolan says college football and hurling give students a platform to express themselves.

"Our coaches are people-people and all about developing the player. We have been lucky enough to have player development high up on their list. Everything that they are doing is to help players' mindsets; help better tactical awareness; better preparation. It is all about getting the best out of themselves and giving players a platform to do that."

He points out that players are also given a sense of freedom.

"There are not the pressures of intercounty managers. There is not the pressure of trying to win and having massive crowds on your back. It is a good platform for players to go out and enjoy themselves, to show off their skill levels, embrace the whole social side of things in terms of developing new friends, and developing themselves from a playing point

Mikey Kiely scores the dramatic winning goal that broke IT Carlow hearts in the Fitzgibbon Cup sem-final

Photo: INPHO/Evan Treacy





UL captain Bryan O'Mara lifts the Fitzgibbon Cup after his team beat NUIG at IT Carlow

Photo: INPHO/Tommy Greally

of view."

No doubt he's correct when he says college GAA is a stage on which players from the smaller counties are given an opportunity to mix it with colleges that have the best hurlers in the country.

"You look at the likes of Chris Nolan and Marty Kavanagh from Carlow playing with Kilkenny hurlers, Wexford hurlers. They are going to develop their hurling skills. They are going to develop their knowledge of tactics; their preparation. It is invaluable education for players to be able to engage with players from other counties and other clubs. Just to come together and have an enjoyable experience without the massive pressure that comes with intercounty hurling and football," he says.

Such are their county obligations in January and early February that college players don't get a chance to train together.

It is frustrating for college management teams, but they are used to it now. Nolan says the college management teams rely on the players to think for themselves.

"A lot of players come up with their own strategies, come up with their own plays, and the coaches are there more as facilitators to let players come out and do what they want to do in terms of enjoying the game."

In his first year in college, Carlow

intercounty star Marty Kavanagh won a fresher's hurling league and a few years later played in the 2017 Fitzgibbon Cup final. This year, as a mature student, he is back in the college where he's also playing Fitzgibbon Cup again. Kavanagh loves the competition.

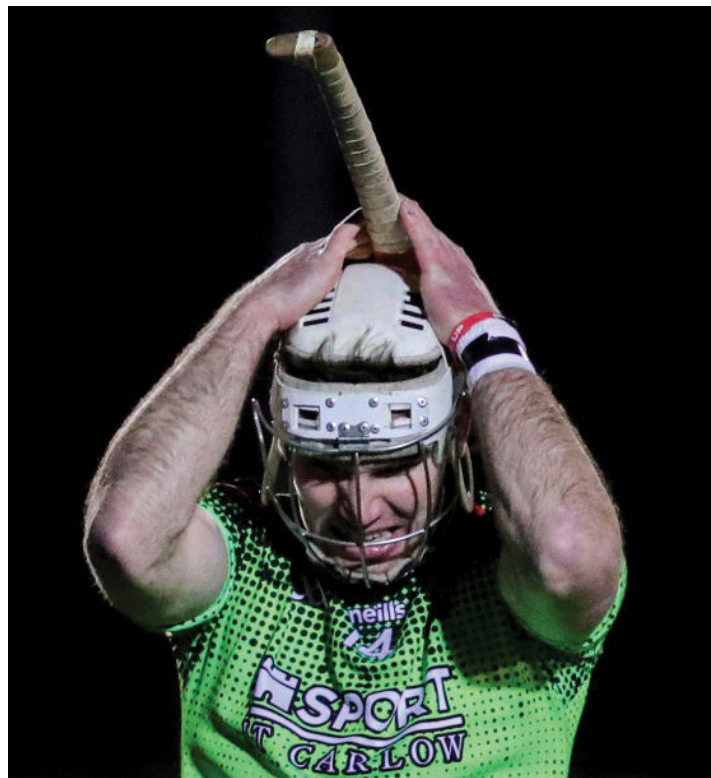
"You are playing against the best players in Ireland. You are playing with the best and coming up against the best. It can only improve you as a player and a person. There are no tactics. You hurl and you create a special bond," he says.

He came up against Limerick, Clare and Tipperary hurling legends who have all pocketed All-Ireland senior hurling medals with their counties. He didn't fear any of them.

"Cian Lynch, Aaron Gillane in Mary Immaculate. Sean Finn, Gearoid Hegarty, Jason Forde, John McGrath, Tony Kelly – all on the one team in UL Limerick, and we gave them every bit of it. We mixed and matched with them. We were just as good as them and just fell short in the end," the St Mullins man recalled.

His hurling friendships endure outside of college and intercounty hurling.

"In Carlow itself, Colin Dunford and Jack Fagan of Waterford. Cha Dwyer, Stephen Maher, Enda Rowland of Laois. All these are unbelievable hurlers. Kevin Kelly, Chris Bolger of Kilkenny. My own



The anguished look on Chris Nolan's face says it all after IT Carlow's heartbreaking defeat to UL in last month's Fitzgibbon Cup semi-final in Carlow

Photo: INPHO/Evan Treacy

club man, James Doyle.

"We stay in touch. I was down with a few of them in Waterford recently. It's brilliant. That is what it's all about," emphasises Kavanagh.

As for Alan Nolan he is still as close as ever to the Sigerson and

Fitzgibbon cup competitions.

"It is a great position for anyone who loves sport and GAA. You are working with teams, you are working with players. That is the GAA side of things, but I am also tutoring and lecturing. I get the best of both worlds," he says.

Eoghan's novel is a story of survival, hope and endurance

By Elizabeth Lee

Author and lecturer in Carlow College, Dr Eoghan Smith, didn't have very far to go when he launched his second novel in the Visual arts centre in February.

Eoghan wrote the book *A Provincial Death* while Ireland, and indeed much of the world, was in the throes of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was a poignant evening for the writer as he walked across the lawns of Carlow College and up the steps of the arts centre to deliver his work to the outside world.

At the reception in the centre, before he read a passage from the book, he reflected that it was a "tough couple of years" and added that he was honoured to invite his friends, colleagues and students to the arts centre.

The book centres around a character who wakes up to find himself clinging to a rock in the middle of the sea. He has memory loss, so he has to figure out what led him to be clinging on for dear life while surrounded by a deep, undulating ocean.

"The reason he's there is because he followed a woman, who believes that the moon is going to crash into the Earth. It's not a realistic piece of fiction," explains Eoghan when he speaks to *College Life* from his office in the college. "It's about a sense of catastrophe and how you endure that feeling of being overwhelmed.

"It's a story of survival, of trying to keep hope, of trying to endure in a world that can be overwhelmed by narratives of individual or societal or planetary



Dr Eoghan Smith reading from his latest novel, *A Provincial Death*, at its launch in Carlow's Visual arts centre Photos: Joanne O'Brien

catastrophe. It's a book about how we are sustained by memories, about how humans find consolation in books and art and philosophy, about how we cope with the human struggle," continues Eoghan.

Although Eoghan wrote the book during the pandemic, *A Provincial Death* is not about Covid-19.

"It's not about the pandemic as such, no-one mentions Covid-19, but there is a heaviness in the atmosphere. It's about isolation, but there's also hope. The character clings on; he doesn't give up hope," says Eoghan.

He drew on his vast knowledge and love of literature when he was writing the novel. He's an English lecturer, having first come here in 2011. He teaches Gothic literature, literary criticism, creative writing

and mainly modern Irish literature.

His room is suitably garret-like, complete with a dusty, half-moon-shaped window and shelves of books. Many Irish authors' names are written on the spines, including James Joyce, Samuel Beckett and John Banville, the latter being the subject of his doctorate. He chose Banville because of his ability to write literature that are also page-turners, like his Booker-nominated *The Book of Evidence*.

"I started reading him when I was a teenager; I loved his style. His books could be gripping and thrilling, but still literature. *The Book of Evidence* is a crime thriller that's also interested in larger questions such as truth and authenticity," continues Eoghan. "He can speak to the intelligentsia as well as tell a really good story.

I owe my career to John Banville, because my PhD is based on him, and without that, I couldn't work as a lecturer. Having that spark as a teenager has led me to lecturing, and even writing myself," he smiles.

Eoghan grew up in Ballyteer, Dublin and attended school in St Benildus College for boys in Kilmacud. As a teenager, he developed a love of reading and devoured any book that fell on his path.

"I read everything from fantasy to science fiction to horror, to Jane Austen and Emily Bronte," he recalls.

He attended Trinity College Dublin for two years to read history but took time out before he went to University College Dublin (UCD) at the age of 22.

"By the time I went to UCD, I knew what I wanted to do. I didn't want to make a mess of it, so I was very dedicated to my studies. I loved it all. I loved the lectures, the reading, the learning and being a student," says Eoghan.

He studied English and philosophy there and did his master's in Maynooth. During his studies, he developed a love of philosophy that still informs his life and his work.

"Philosophy gave me a new sense of how the world works. In a way, philosophy remade me. My books are philosophical, too. Like, what does it mean to exist? What do you do now that you're here, but you know that you're going to die one day?"

How do you not get overwhelmed by that?" he asks. He seems perfectly suited to Carlow College, which is Ireland's



Fiona McGuill, Denise Dowling and Nerilie Duffy



Mike Stanley, Bridget Flannery and Robert Frazier

second-oldest college, having begun life as a seminary back in the 1790s.

“It’s a privilege to work in a place like this. There’s a huge respect for the humanities, for the discipline of enquiry. It’s more than just a place of work. There’s an environment where you’re thinking and asking questions that have been asked for centuries. Some see education as utilitarian, but it’s very important to serve a spirit of inquiry, too. As one of my lecturers used to say: ‘study philosophy not to get answers but to get better questions.’”

Although his role in Carlow College has shifted somewhat and he’s now a development project manager, he still teaches modern English and clearly loves his subject.

He describes Sally Rooney’s *Normal People* as an “era-defining novel”, just like Joyce’s *Dubliners* or Edna O’Brien’s *Country Girls*.

“They all capture all the tensions in society at the time. With *Normal People*, no-one had really been able to write about that generation before. The book is set in 2011, so the characters were born in the early 1990s; they were the children of the boom, but they were going to college during the bust when the Irish economy had collapsed. Marianne (the character) seems to speak for her generation and



Eoghan Smith reading from his novel *A Provincial Death*

their values. There’s a real sense in the book that society has failed them. There’s an overriding feeling at the end of Rooney’s book that things are unresolved and murky.”

A Provincial Death is his second novel, having already published *A Failing Heart* in 2018. Both are published by Dedalus, and Eoghan has already started his

third book.

Although he’s reluctant to say too much about the work-in-progress, he does reveal that it’s a “gothic crime story set during the Irish famine”.

He would advise anyone harbouring ambitions to write a book, to go for it, but to be as true to yourself and what you want to

say as possible.

“Just do it! The great thing about writing a book is the stimulation that comes from doing something creative. It’s most important that you write the book that you want to write.”

■ ***A Provincial Death* is on sale at the Visual arts centre and all good book shops.**



Angela Kirwin, Lourda Delaney and Claire Cunningham



Enjoying Eoghan’s book launch in Visual



Chloe Sweeney and James Condrón



Anne Marie Dunne and Lisa Benson

Healing through art

Artist Eoghan O'Driscoll has been an alcoholic, homeless and locked up in a psychiatric ward. Here he speaks to Angela Ryan about how painting changed his life

It's harvest time in the walled garden of the old Auxiliary Hospital in Kilkenny. The spoils include juicy tomatoes rosy red as bit lips, humble spuds mottled with earth and pearly onions bursting through crispy, paper thin skins.

There are polytunnels, allotments, beehives and an orchard. Donated furniture is made anew in a workshop near the garden. An art studio and renovated gallery space are upstairs in a building where, decades ago, the feeble and infirm came to convalesce. Now this is a recovery project for people with mental health issues. Twenty individuals share their days here, observing the seasons – cultivating, creating.

Artist Eoghan O'Driscoll is one of them. "It's the answer for a lot of people with psychiatric issues, having somewhere to go, to be around like-minded people, to be safe, and not to be locked up in a lunatic asylum, which is where we all were at one stage," he says.

Training and Support Kilkenny (TASK) saw potential in this building for an outpatient project to help people improve and maintain their mental health. Eoghan has been here for ten years. His art studio is surprisingly warm and bright; winter light filters in through the large windows that frame views across the chimney tops and steeples of the medieval city.

In his lilting tone, he confesses that his space is the messiest of all the studios. Tubes of paint, jars, oils, and brushes crowd the old round table next to his easel. Slathers of yellow paint bleed into red and grey.

"I spent a year and four months of my beautiful life in a psychiatric ward, mainly locked up. I was heavily medicated and given a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia. I had my breakdown when I was twenty. I still deal with that and the whole what-could-have-been."

At 21 years of age, Eoghan was living in the south of France, drinking from the moment he woke up to the moment he went to sleep. He returned to Ireland



Eoghan O'Driscoll in his studio in the old Auxiliary Hospital in Kilkenny

defeated. A psychiatrist warned he would be in the grave within 12 months if he continued drinking, so he gave up alcohol on his twenty-first birthday for eight years.

His 20s were spent travelling and learning. He worked in the National Library, went to UCD at night and studied American

hostel. People who I wanted in my life were gone."

His love affair with poems, short stories and novels endured. He wrote five books of poetry and had a few publications.

"The same energy, the same story telling, despair, darkness and woe, as well as the joy

natural gift or anything like that, but I feel blessed to have discovered that with a work ethic I could make myself into an artist."

It is this work ethic that gets him up and into the studio at 9 o'clock five days a week. So far, he has sold over 500 paintings.

Eoghan identified with the Outsider Art tradition, having learned about painting whilst in psychiatric care. "The amazing thing is any mental hospital I was ever in – I was in St Pat's, St John of God in Dublin, the Old Canice's in Kilkenny and then the new Department of Psychiatry in St Luke's – they all had these really cool art rooms. I met some real creative souls over the years in mental hospitals."

In 2015, he was featured in a documentary about Outsider Art in Ireland, which screened on RTÉ. It highlighted the rawness and emotion conveyed in art made by those on the margins who've had no formal training and who may have experienced difficult personal circumstances. Each

“I was a very lost person for much of my life and now I feel like I've come home to myself. I'll always be an outsider in my own soul, but I'll acknowledge I've come into a more mainstream world now with selling the paintings’

poetry. He feels fortunate that he was surrounded by ideas, philosophy, spirituality; principles that became the cornerstones of his life.

"Then I had one glass of fucking wine and went back to alcoholism, and honestly three months later in Dublin I was living in a homeless

and laughter, comes out in the paintings. It's coming from the same creative source: the wild thing in me created the painting as it created the poems."

He completed a few paintings and people started buying them. He was emboldened.

"Maybe I don't have some great

of the three large canvases he exhibited featured an imposing face with ruby red pursed lips, dark almond shaped eyes and asymmetrical features: solitary figures on black canvases calling out to passers-by to see them, to notice them, to engage.

He felt he was ostracised in Kilkenny in some part due to his alcoholism, and he knew he had to ask himself why he felt so different to other people. Now, though, his journey has taken him inwards, to seek shelter and connection in the place he was born, to be tethered where once he had been cast adrift.

"I was a very lost person for much of my life and now I feel like I've come home to myself. I'll always be an outsider in my own soul, but I'll acknowledge I've come into a more main-stream world now with selling the paintings."

Canvases are stacked against one another near a bookshelf in his studio. Three seated males look out from one painting with hands clasped on their laps; three brothers united: The O'Driscolls. His new works reflect his changing circumstances; he lived independently at the back of the Good Shepherd homeless hostel for five years, and now he has his own house, for the rest of his life. His relationship with his parents has improved.

"I think my life is more peopled. I felt very alone most of my life and now I feel I do participate. I have something to say."

The piece on the easel is titled 'The Embrace'. Two figures hold each other's gaze, their arms outstretched embracing one another. It captures a tender moment, made resplendent by

the generous use of bright yellow paint.

"When I was eighteen, I went to university in Wales and I said goodbye to my mother in Rosslare and there was the saddest, beautiful moment where she was saying goodbye to me and I remember she held me and said 'my darling, darling son!'" Gesturing towards the easel, he says: "I think that idea is here. That's a female, that's a male; it's a very important moment; they're connected; they're one."

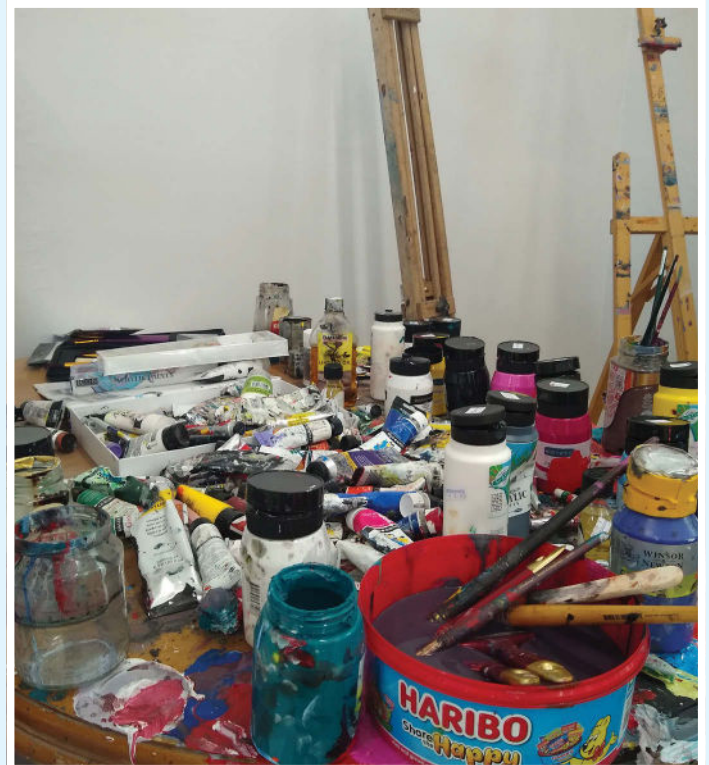
Earlier this morning, he put the painting on Facebook and within ten minutes it had sold for €200. Being able to directly access people who want to purchase his art, without having to rely on galleries, democratises the process. He wants enthusiasts of his work, irrespective of their financial situation, to be able to buy his paintings.

"That's a part of being an artist. There's no point in having a house full of your own paintings – you want them on people's walls, you want people to react to them."

Sitting in the walled garden, working in the studio or chatting to others who have found sanctuary here is akin to counselling for Eoghan. He also goes every week to a group called Grow, where healing comes through fellowship and friendship. The experience is very positive.

"That's one thing you'll notice about people with mental health issues: if they're telling you it's the truth, there's none of this bullshit. We're real people and sometimes hardship brings you to that real place."

He takes medication. He has tried to come off it a few times but went straight back into psychosis,



His space is the messiest of all the studios, he says

so he knows he needs it. "I'm 23 stone; it's a huge side effect, but I've tried everything to be more active but for now it's what I have to do. Unfortunately, the weight is the price at the moment – but, sure, I eat a lot as well!"

At 46 years of age, he is self-admittedly middle-aged, although he's not grieving his youth or the decisions he has made. "The kids in the pub are looking over at me like 'who is that uncool old lad?' 'Hey man, I'm Dricky, I'm the king of this town!' You know what I mean? That's gone. We're not cool anymore."

Being an artist validates Eoghan. "I thought I was a wino for a long time, and that being a down and

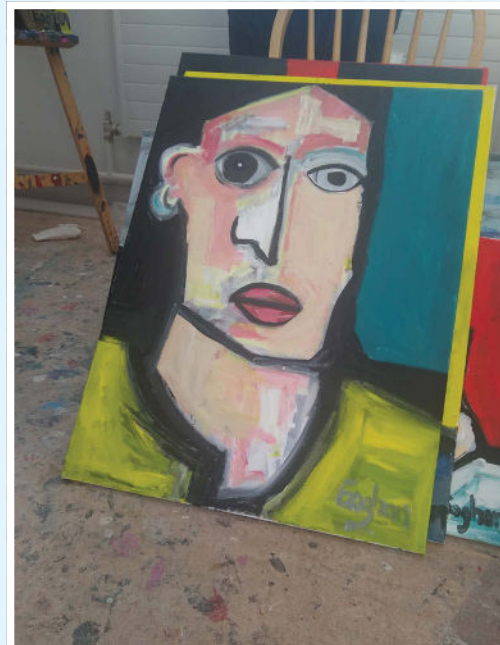
out alcoholic was my identity, but I thought I'm better than this and I rose above it. If I want to be a fucking wino, I'll be a wino – but I don't want to be one. So that's the answer, I suppose: it's my lot now, it's what I want to do with my life. Get better and better and better."

The art in his studio is testament to that, as are the paintings that hang on walls across the world.

"I'm always struggling, and even though it can be quite dark, I have an absolute belief in life, an absolute belief in humans, that we are all here for beautiful meaning, to overcome our struggles.

"I do that as an artist. I feel like I want to tell my story, I have something to say."

Some of Eoghan O'Driscoll's striking artworks



A life less ordinary

Father Yanbo Chen left China to follow his vocation to be a Catholic priest. Here he talks to Kieran Murphy about his remarkable journey and how he has settled into Carlow

Father Yanbo Chen still remembers the day he announced to his parents that he wanted to be a priest. It was quite a shock for them. He was 17 years of age.

Perhaps they should not have been as surprised. There had been signs. Talk of the priesthood did arise at different stages of his life, yet it was never something that was taken that seriously. Now there was a major discussion taking place about the priesthood.

"You cannot go. You have a possible wife," his father said.

Many years previously, a marriage had been arranged for him. Yanbo's future bride lived nearby.

By the time the couple were in their early teens, the pair had been told about those plans. When they were out and about, his mother pointed out the young girl to Yanbo telling him that this was to be his future wife. That presented difficulties.

"We played together. At that time, I had no idea about women or men. Since we knew we were to get married, we were both embarrassed and found it hard to talk to each other."

Going back to that conversation with his parents, Yanbo says he dug his heels in about his desire to join the priesthood. His father demurred. One of the topics of their conversation was the proposed marriage.

"You are going to be a priest? You do what we want you to do. What are we going to say to that family?" asked his father.

"That is your problem; not my problem," Yanbo replied.



Father Yanbo Chen

While it was a dramatic conversation, it was only one of many barriers that a young Yanbo faced on his way to the priesthood.

He grew up in Shijiazhuang, the capital of the province Hebei in China. China is a Communist country with a population of 1.4 billion people. In China, Catholicism (Tian Zhu Jiao) is linked to the Anglican Church. The total Christian population numbers over ten million. That sounds big but is a drop in the ocean of 1.4 billion people.

Catholics have been persecuted

“They always talked about two things: money and women. They thought I was weird. I thought they were weird”

by the Communist dictatorship. There are no churches. They go to religious services in houses. It was in this setting that the young Yanbo Chen served Mass and received Holy Communion. He was once asked if he would like to be a priest. "Definitely not," he replied. "I am going to get married."

His mother quizzed him about his religion and if had he any desire to be a priest. Again, Yanbo said no. But there must have been something in his behaviour that triggered those questions.

There is a story of a conversation he had with a picture of Our Lady. Yanbo felt She was asking him about the priesthood.

"I said to her, 'I don't want to be a priest. It is my Mummy who wants me to be a priest. She asked me this. Don't give me that!'" Yanbo scolded Our Lady.

The years went by. He wasn't

At 17 years of age, his parents asked him what he was he going to do. He toyed with the idea of going to Beijing, which was 300km away.

"They didn't want me to go. I didn't know what I wanted to do."

Then came that moment when he announced he wanted to be a priest. Things moved quickly after that.

Two weeks later, he liaised with the local diocese contact, where he was accepted. He studied psychology and philosophy. Yanbo's determination was tested when a priest made life difficult for him. He banished any thoughts of joining the religious life and told the senior cleric that he was leaving and didn't want to pursue his studies for the priesthood.

"I told him I disagreed with him and I told him I was going to leave. I didn't want anything to do with his diocese and that I was a free man now."

Yanbo still finished his three-year philosophy and psychology course. In 2008, he got a job as an instructor in Ali Pay, an online company similar to E-Bay. The 25-year-old earned the equivalent of €3,000 a month but found

the perfect student in secondary school.

"I was a naughty boy. I talked back to teachers. With other boys we didn't want to study. We wanted to play. I didn't want to go to university and I had not got good marks in what was the equivalent of the Leaving Certificate in China."

industrial life unsettling.

"They always talked about two things: money and women. But I am not interested in talking about this. They thought I was weird. I thought they were weird," explained Yanbo.

He continued to practise his religion, attending Mass at Christmas. There, he found himself in a secluded room. A nun held a jar with slips of paper and words of scripture written on them. The nun suggested to Yanbo that God might want to communicate with him.

He pulled a slip of paper out of the jar. "Come Follow Me," it said.

Yanbo took another. "I Would Like You to be a Fisherman!"

Yanbo said that if the third slip of paper continued in the same vein, he would listen. It said: "Don't test your Lord!"

Yanbo was sure this was a calling from God.

A month later, he took the option of a year's probation when joining the Divine Word Missionaries, where he would train to be a priest. Stationed 1,000km from his home town of Shijiazhuang, he found that hard. Then everything changed.

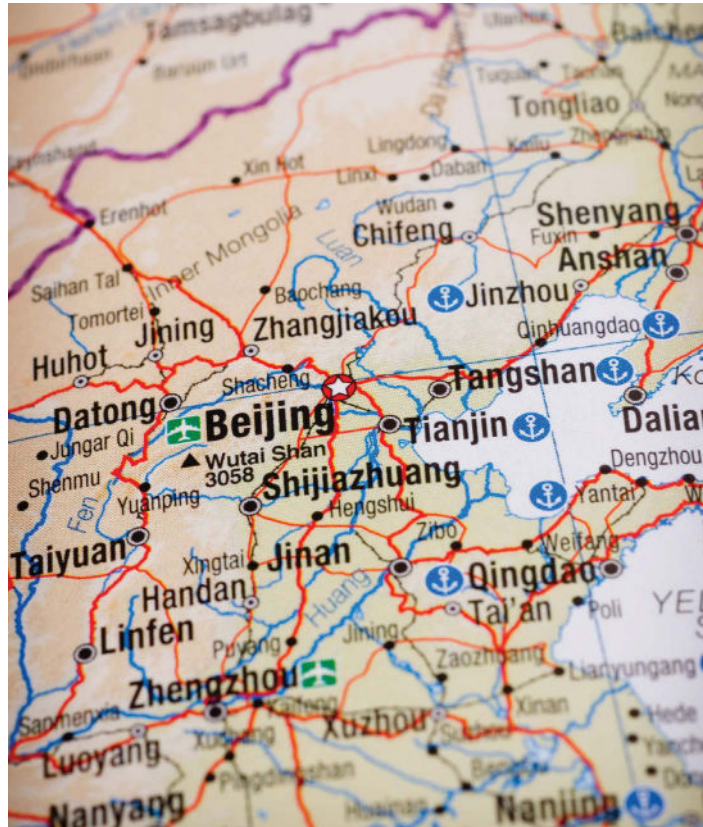
"The doubt I had was gone. I wanted to be a priest. When the year was over, the Order told me they wanted me. I wanted it, too."

He was told he would be leaving China and given a choice of Ireland or Australia. Because his English wasn't good, his application to get into Australia was delayed. Getting into Ireland was not as difficult. He was accepted into Maynooth College in 2014 and went on to complete his three-year course in Theological Training at St Patrick's College. He was appointed a deacon for Ballyfermot in 2018. On 16 June 2019, his father and mother, Jin Jind and Chum Miam Pan, attended his ordination in Ireland.

"They stayed for a month. I brought them to Knock, Glendalough, Dublin Castle, Roscommon. They were so happy," recalls Father Yanbo.

The new priest arrived in Carlow in September 2020. It was just before the second Covid-19 lockdown.

"You could not visit families and the churches were closed. Mass took place online. People knew my face, but I didn't know them," Father Yanbo remembers.



Restrictions were eased at Christmas, but everything closed down again in January. Covid-19 changed many people's lives. Father Yanbo took the opportunity to reassess his own lifestyle.

"I was fat. I was over 16 stone," he said.

For the first time in his life, he took regular exercise. He walked 10km a day, staying within the limits imposed by the government's Covid restrictions.

"I went around the town, Graiguecullen and into Oak Park. I saw that I could walk 5km into Oak

Park."

He changed his diet. In total, he lost 30lbs.

A retired teacher, Mary Lyons, encouraged him to play tennis, which he did. He has since established himself in the Carlow Lawn Tennis Club.

"It was the first time in my life I tried to play, but I was told I was a good beginner. I wanted to get to know more people," he explains.

A chaplain in St Leo's College and a member of the Scoil Mhuirgan Smál board of management, he has immersed himself in

Carlow life.

He initiated a Two Hearts prayers of devotion, which takes place in the Cathedral of the Assumption on the first Friday of the month. Devotions open with Mass for the Sacred Heart at 7pm followed by Confession at 8pm. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and the rosary follow. Benediction takes place at 11.45pm, with Mass of the Immaculate Heart at 12 midnight.

It has been really successful. 150 people attended on the first night.

"To see the faith and to see such a response! It was very good," says Yanbo.

Settling well in Carlow, with his broken but rapidly-improving English, he tells stories of telephone conversations with his mother when she rang him and asked him what was he having for dinner. "Potato," he told her.

She rang him the next day and asked the same question. "Potato," he said.

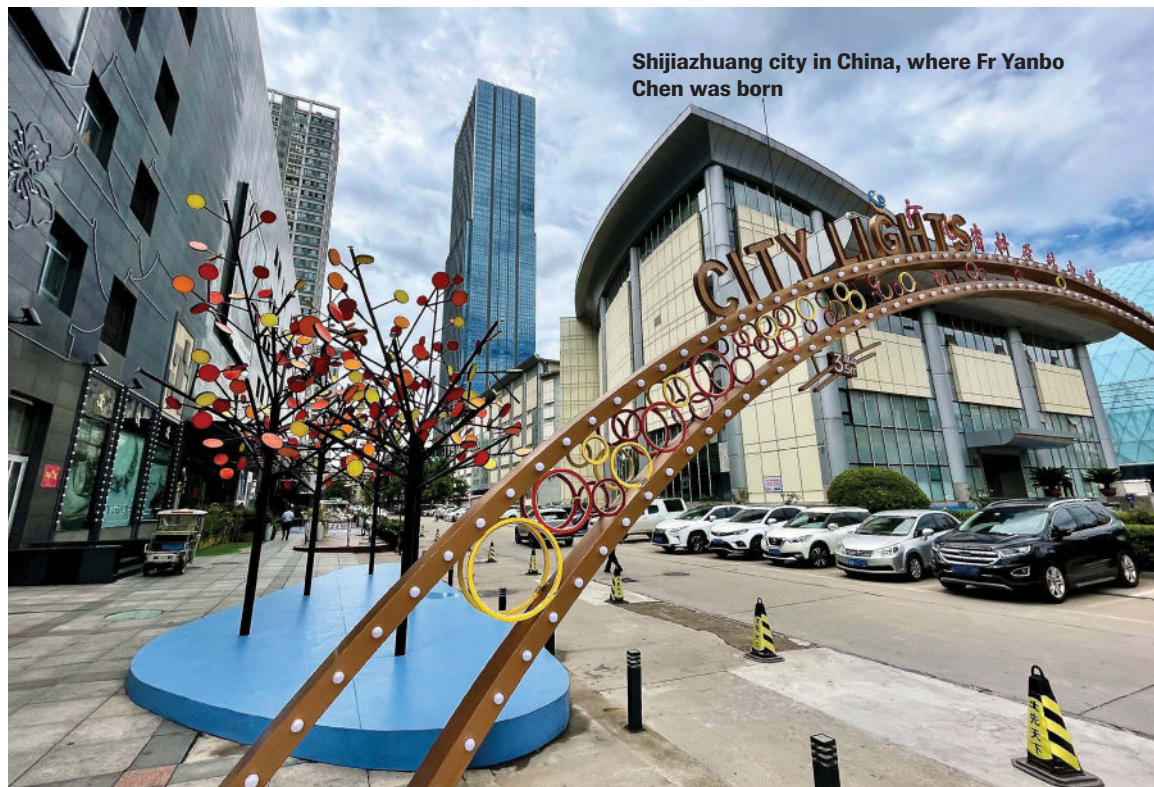
She queried whether the Irish eat anything else but potato.

Father Yanbo smiles when recalling that conversation. Mothers are the same the world over. He is still a mammy's boy.

The Irish eat a lot of potatoes. Yanbo eats a lot of potatoes and is enjoying a new life in Carlow. All is good.

He wouldn't be the first visitor or raider to Ireland who became more Irish than the Irish themselves!

And what about the girl that he was supposed to marry? The last Father Yanbo Chen heard, she had gone to university and found a boyfriend of her own.



Shijiazhuang city in China, where Fr Yanbo Chen was born

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Managing ‘the juggle’ as a mature student

William Rainsford tells Emily Clarke about how mature students can benefit from re-entering education and the difficulties in striking a good life balance

William Rainsford is the Mature Student Officer in Carlow College, where he is also studying Arts and Humanities. William notes a broad spectrum of mature students in Carlow College, observing an age variance of those in their twenties to forties and even older. A mature student is anyone in third-level education over the age of 23.

It has been a difficult two years for students, considering the restrictions of Covid-19. Engaging full time on a digital platform has been stressful and isolating. William took up the role of Mature Student Officer during Covid-19 restrictions when all classes were online. Drawing on personal experience and after discussions with other students, he notes: “Many people were feeling worn out. The digital platform wasn’t sufficient because they lost out on real-life interactions. Others found it okay and could easily engage with online learning. I think it was ultimately a very varied experience. I feel being on campus is vastly better.

Being fully immersed in the learning with fellow students is

crucial; digital engagement is not as good.”

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) conducted a study in 2021, which suggests the barriers to mature students returning to education include: insufficient financial resources, family commitments, a lack of flexible study options and the inability to commute long distances. William says: “Despite these barriers, many mature students want to improve themselves by seeking a new positive direction and a sense of self-purpose.”

William recounts the challenging aspects of studying as a mature student: “When listening to mature students talking, they discuss ‘the juggle’ and how sacrificing time is a primary concern. On the one hand, they’re trying to benefit themselves. On the other hand, they have responsibilities, whether it be children, partners, a job or all of these things. Mature student priorities become mixed and it can become overwhelming trying to juggle their life and the new path they are walking. Nevertheless, when we are bettering

ourselves, we can then be more beneficial to everyone around us and to society in a broad sense.”

William continues: “I think drawing from previous life experiences, as a mature student, creates a greater depth of learning. However, many mature students may find the initial re-engagement with education difficult as they have been away from the typical format of academia for so long, such as preparing, researching, writing essays, and referencing. Younger students may be more familiar with standard structures as it is fresh in their minds, having just left school.”

The HEA reports that only half of the mature students could access the SUSI grant or the Back to Education allowance. The HEA study emphasises the importance of investing in and supporting mature students from disadvantaged and diverse backgrounds when accessing and participating in further education.

Carlow College welcomes students from all backgrounds and abilities. Some of the support

available on campus is an onsite nurse with access to a local GP and a counselling service. The Academic Resource Office offers ongoing tutorials and educational support, and the faculty, library, and administration staff are always there to facilitate any questions or requests for assistance. Many mature students can avail themselves of financial supports such as the mature student grant or the chaplaincy grant. These supports may help to lessen some of the financial pressures.

When asked if he would advise other mature people to return to education, William says: “I believe that everyone should go back to education regardless of age. Everyone should find something that drives them or catches their attention. You will never know you’re a musical genius if you don’t pick up an instrument! Nowadays, we have access to large quantities of information on the internet. However, we are often guided by digital algorithms that encourage engagement with restrictive narratives, which can lead to stubborn views, extreme beliefs or opinions. Formal education broadens horizons, exposing us to things we don’t know and opinions we haven’t heard. Suddenly we find ourselves having different conversations in every aspect of our life.”

William highlights the transformative and empowering aspects of education: “When speaking to some of the mature students on the social care course, they initially began the course as they wanted to care for people. However, the more they study, they realise the broad spectrum of what can be achieved, so now they want to effect great change in society. The true gift of education is that it breaks us out of old patterns and shows us new worlds that we weren’t aware of before.”

William has many hopes and ambitions for the future and has plans to continue his own education. Is the future bright for all mature students?

William says: “In general, I’d say they have this vibe, they’re now aware of the world in a new way, they want to do better and be better. Somehow this is less isolating, being in the middle of things and understanding the world differently. Unbeknownst to ourselves, we can be starving and there’s part of us that isn’t happy. Then we get into education, and that is nourishment for the soul.”

Ten fun things to do in Carlow (or near it!)



Not for the faint-hearted: skydiving above Kilkenny

By Joanne O'Brien

If you're new to Carlow and looking for fun and interesting activities to do in the area, look no further! We've come up with a list of ten fun and random things to do in Carlow and the surrounding areas. From hiking through the Blackstairs Mountains at night to trying to escape from a locked room, there is an abundance of activities to suit your interests in Carlow and around. The world is your lobster – go for it!

River Adventure Sports – Clashganny Lock, Borris

You've tried a few land adventures but now you're ready to hit the water. All roads lead to Clashganny Lock near Borris in Co Carlow, where there is a good choice of companies offering kayaking, canoeing, or stand-up paddle boarding adventures on the River Barrow. If a calming paddle is a little too tame, you can head off on a guided adventure

kayaking through weirs and waterfalls and down the rapids of the River Barrow. Companies offering water adventures include: **Go with the Flow River Adventures:** www.gowiththeflow.ie **Paddle Your Own Canoe:** www.paddleyourowncanoe.ie **Pure adventure:** www.pureadventure.ie.

Sky dive at Kilkenny Airport

Just down the road brings you to

the beautiful city of Kilkenny. As well as having a lot of lovely sights and tourist attractions, what people might not have known is that it also has a skydiving club at Kilkenny Airport, just 3km outside of Kilkenny city. First-time skydivers can get to experience a tandem skydive, freefalling from up to 10,000ft.

Dropping through the skies at 200km an hour is an adrenalin junkie's dream and certainly not for the faint-hearted. If you think

this is the experience for you, log onto www.skydiveclub.ie, where you will find everything you need to know about taking the plunge!

Horse riding – Bagenalstown

Carribeg horse riding stables is in Carribeg, Bagenalstown and offers horse riding lessons for children and adults from beginner up to competition level. It boasts an indoor and outdoor area and a cross-country course. If you've always wanted to try horse riding but never got the opportunity, now is the time. It's also a great way of keeping fit and spending time in the fresh air. Contact carribeg@gmail.com for all you need to know about saddling up.

Chocolate Garden of Ireland – Rath, Tullow

A 25-minute drive from Carlow, the Chocolate Garden of Ireland is located five minutes outside Tullow. It's a dream experience for the chocolate lover and for those who want to take their chocolate obsession to the next level. Learning how to make chocolate in a fun environment and then sampling it afterwards will leave you in chocolate heaven! A fun activity to do with friends or family makes it the perfect day out for groups of friends or team-building days. A bonus is that it's beside Rathwood, where there is a gorgeous, wooded trail if you want to burn off the chocolate overload. For all you need to know, check out its website on www.chocolategarden.ie or email info@chocolategarden.ie.

River surfing on the Barrow.
Image from gowiththeflow.ie



only does it offer ziplining but an octagon high ropes course, an adventure walk and a climbing wall. Finish off the day with a nice bite to eat in the Canopy Café or the Jarrow Restaurant in the visitor centre. Everything you need to know about the park is available online on www.discoverypark.ie.

Night hikes on Mount Leinster, Carlow

Tullow Mountaineering Club organises guided night hikes on Wednesday and Friday evenings where the club's more experienced walkers act as walk leaders. On a Wednesday, departure is from Askea car park in Carlow at 6.15pm (contact Barry on 086 1098244) and on Fridays from the co-op in Bunclody, Co Wexford at 7pm (contact John on 086 2772633). Transport is by car-pooling. Proper hiking gear and a head torch are essential. A reasonable level of fitness is required. Hike locations vary and include the beautiful Mount Leinster, which is the highest mountain in the Blackstairs mountain area. On a clear night, stopping off for some stargazing is a special experience. Nothing beats a crisp night on the hills, that's for sure.

Escape Room, Kilkenny City

So, you enjoy challenges and solving puzzles and are looking for a challenging yet fun activity to do with your friends. Look no further: the escape room concept has taken Ireland by storm. The nearest escape room to Carlow is in Kilkenny city. A great way to spend fun time with your friends to work together to escape from



Nice arrows! Check out the archery club in Carlow



Unleash your inner Clint Eastwood with a bit of clay pigeon shooting

Woodturning – Garyhill, Co Carlow

You've been holding back on that creative streak and are looking for something different to express your creativity? The Glenn Lucas Woodturning Centre in Garyhill, Co Carlow offers you a chance to try your hand at woodturning. A one-day beginner's workshop shows you all the skills necessary to create a hand-turned piece and you will go home with your creation. Masterclasses are also offered for those who wish to bring it to the next level. Log onto www.glannlucaswoodturning.com for more details.

Archery – Carlow town

What many people might not know is that Carlow has its very own archery club. Known as the Dolmen Archers, the club has been running since 2003. To become a member, it is necessary to undergo a beginner's course. These are run regularly by the club. If you feel you have an inner Robin Hood in you, this could be your sport! The club operates out of the Presentation College in Askea, Carlow. For more information, check out the Dolmen Archers Facebook page or email dolmenarchery@gmail.com.

Ziplining – Castlecomer Discovery Park, Co Kilkenny

A 20-minute drive from Carlow, Castlecomer Discovery Park offers a range of activities including ziplining, a firm favourite for the more adventurous type. Not

the room. There is a limited time allocated to escape from the locked room which could symbolise a castle, a prison, a pirate ship and so on, depending on the scenario you are presented with. For this novel activity, check out www.knowwayout.ie.

Clay pigeon shooting – Lougharbour, Athy, Co Kildare

The sport of clay pigeon shooting has taken off in Ireland in recent years. Harbour House Sports Club

is in south Kildare between Athy and Kildare town, a 25-minute drive from Carlow. It offers the opportunity for individuals to participate in the sport of clay pigeon shooting in a safe and controlled environment. It's a fun way to let out that inner Clint Eastwood in you! The club runs training days and workshops on a regular basis. If you think that this is the sport for you, check out the harbour house sports club Facebook page or you can email info@harbourhouse.ie for more details.



THE WAY WE WERE

College students 20 years ago

By Deirdre Broughan

Sometimes it's interesting to look back at others who studied and worked before us, so let's take a look at the student and graduate of the early 2000s. They finished college just before the social media boom took off.

In the years 2000 to 2005, Ireland was doing well economically and job prospects were looking good. About 100,000 new jobs were being created every year in Ireland. More than 50% of graduates gained employment in their skill sector after finishing studies in 2005. Some popular courses were Business and Accounting, Engineering, Law, Science and construction-sector-focused courses.

Computers and IT were well attended, but the major changes in this area were yet to take hold in Ireland. Social media, web design, focused online services and shops, cloud computing were yet to come. The large web and social media giants Facebook, Google and LinkedIn were only just setting up offices in Dublin.

The Institute of Technology Carlow (ITC) was well known for its strong practical focus in learning. There were just over 4,000 students and 200 lecturers. Courses included

Science courses, Business and Accounting, Computing, Construction, Engineering, Media and Design courses. Many IT Carlow students went on to good employment or to further study after.

Laptops were very costly at the time and most students worked on a fixed computer station at the college in the library or computer classroom. Some were lucky to have a desktop computer at home. Queues for a spot at a college computer and time slots for usage were the norm.

Research and information for assignments and study still had to be accessed from hardcopy books, journals and microfiche systems in the library. Lots of photocopying was necessary.

The ability to study and undertake courses remotely from home was not yet an option. This made the college campus more sociable at times, and a busy place for people.

Most students did have access to a mobile phone or email. Mobile handsets were pretty simple with just text and calls features. Some had low quality cameras. The Nokia 3000 series being a staple of the day. Email was used by all but was still a more formal way of communication and similar to a letter. Faxes still existed as a



The cutting edge of communications technology in the early 2000s

means to send written or image information quickly.

Being a student on a college course involved visiting the campus most days to physically attend lectures and tutorials. Lectures were presented on overhead projectors on white screens, some advanced lecturers had just begun to use PowerPoint presentations. Handwritten notes had to be taken and photocopies of lecture handouts were not to be missed. It took some time to get an essay typed up and was often handwritten first due to lack of access to a computer.

On the plus side, the lack of access to internet and social media meant that there was more personal contact between students. Meeting up for a coffee to catch up was a must, and going to college social events and night outs were a way to meet new people and develop friendships. IT Carlow was a good hub for students from all around Ireland and many alumni keep in close contact with their far-flung friends years after.

The popular Carlow student

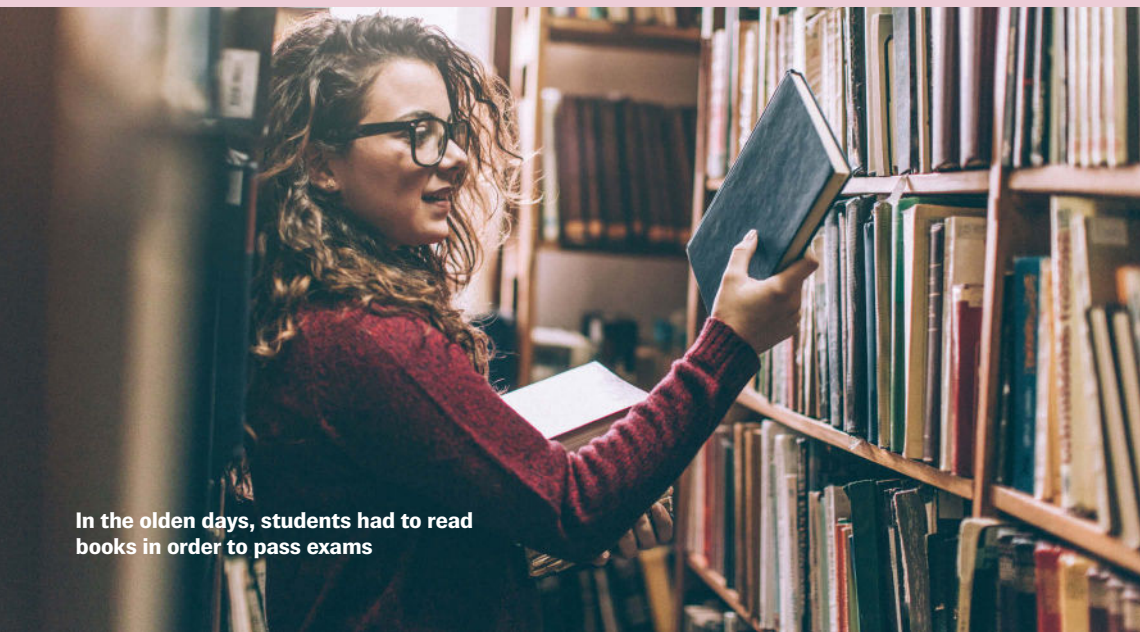
social spots of the day included Tully's Bar on Tullow Street, Scragg's Alley and the Dinn Ri on Tullow Street. Thursday night was still the big night out then, with many students travelling home to other counties at weekends on a bus or train (not many students had their own cars yet).

The fashions of the day were not too dissimilar to now with jeans, casual tops and sportswear the norm, but in different degrees of colours and bagginess. Skinny jeans and tight tracksuits had not yet appeared. The brands of trainers stayed in the region of Asics, Reebok and Nike at the time.

A lot of students took part-time jobs at weekends, and summer jobs abroad were popular in places like the UK, Germany, or a J1 Visa to the USA for those who could afford it. There was also good summer work available in Ireland at that time. The big summer music festivals and concerts included Slane Castle, Witness and its renamed offshoot festival Oxygen at Punchestown. Bands like U2, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Moby, Foo Fighters and Stereophonics played at Slane. The Prodigy, Beck, Coldplay and White Stripes all headlined at Witness.

Getting back to the focus of student life: overall, the personal input and effort to undertake study was similar to today, but college courses were more general in subject, less technology savvy and gave a broader scope for graduates at the end of their studies.

The mass changes of web- and media-focused communication and tech working were on their way, but the students of that time were embracing the changes and global culture which were coming into view.



In the olden days, students had to read books in order to pass exams



It is an honour to have been elected IT Carlow Students' Union President three years running. The two largest pieces of work in my three years include the TU merger for the southeast and ensuring no student was disadvantaged due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It has been a privilege to represent students at the highest level during those busy and uncertain times, I will never forget my time here with IT Carlow Students' Union and I wish my successor the very best of luck in the role – Thomas Drury

VP For Education and Lifelong Learning for ITCSU

Hello Everyone, Mark Dunne is my name and I'm the VP For Education and Lifelong Learning for ITCSU. Over the past 8 months I've had the privilege of being in this position and I've put my heart and soul into it. Some of the things I'll never forget include sleeping outside Leinster House for USI's Campaign on the Student Accommodation Crisis, Speaking on behalf of ITC Students at a USI Cost of College Protest in Cork and the Campaigns that I've ran including Upskill Week and Recharge Week. Also keeping things transparent by keeping Students updated on my personal social media stories.

Entertainment and Communications Officer

Throughout the year as Entertainment and Communications Officer I have worked on many different projects and campaigns. Starting with gaining sponsorship, I recorded the largest amount of sponsorship ever from an SU officer, this allowed us to work with some really great businesses in Carlow Town. I also organised Freshers Week, 2020 Grad Ball, Race Day, Christmas Day, Raise and Give Week and many Student Nights Out. I have also greatly improved our social media in terms of followers and reach and communications with the student body!

Welfare & Equality Officer

As Welfare & Equality Officer, my job is to ensure that the needs of students, outside of their academic needs, are met. This means that I help students with their; accommodation, finances, representation, inclusion, and their health; whether it be mental, sexual or physical. I also work closely with the Institute's EDI Department in developing and creating new EDI Policy to help make IT Carlow as progressive and inclusive as possible.

As this year's Welfare Officer, I held a number of campaigns and events to help promote a number of initiatives and campaigns to the student of IT Carlow, such as SHIFT (Sexual Health In First Term) and SHAG (Sexual Health and Guidance) Week to help promote the importance of maintaining good sexual health and to destigmatise sexual exploration and enjoyment. I held the Institute's first Pride based event, show students that IT Carlow and The Students' Union are inclusive to all.

Campaigns such as Mental Health Week and Disability Awareness Day were held to encourage students to learn how to about the many different disabilities and mental health issues that may affect us all and how to support themselves and other who may be struggling with a mental health issue or disability.

In terms of policy, I am working closely with the Institute to develop the existing Gender Identity and Expression policy to further the Institute's accessibility to trans-gender and non-binary students and have proposed a policy to introduce free sanitary products to all women's bathrooms within the new Technological University.



**CARLOW
COLLEGE**
ST. PATRICK'S



OPEN DAY

5th
April

Register for Carlow College Open Day 10am - 1pm Tuesday 5th April 2022

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B.A. in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care)
B.A. in Arts & Humanities

LEVEL 8

B.A. (Hons) in Arts & Humanities
B.A. (Hons) in English and History
B.A. (Hons) in Social, Political & Community Studies
B.A. (Hons) in Applied Social Studies
(Professional Social Care)
B.A. (Hons) in Psychology
B.A. (Hons) in Philosophy, Politics & Sociology
B.A. (Hons) in Media, English & Culture

LEVEL 9

Postgraduate Diploma in Irish Regional History
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