

The Safe-Home Programme

St. Brendan's Village, Mulranny, Co. Mayo
Co. Mayo

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August
2015
Issue No:
166

From the Chairman's Desk

Greetings,

It's not often one comes across something very unusual but it can happen nonetheless. When it does it gets one to thinking. Many of you will have memories of carefree days in your youth maybe when you stumbled on some wild mushrooms in the fields which you brought home and enjoyed fried up with some crispy bacon and butter. This happened to me on more than one occasion when we lived in the countryside especially in fields where sheep graze. It was always a tasty treat. Imagine my surprise on a balmy summer's evening last week when I was walking on the Great Western Greenway behind St. Brendan's Village and the Safe Home HQ when my interest was aroused by what I thought was a large white flat rock in the grass verge or maybe the top of a large football. But lo and behold the flat rock turned to be a wild mushroom measuring 20 x 23 cms in diameter and weighing 189 grams. I contacted Matthew Jebb of the National Botanical Gardens Glasnevin, Dublin who told me that books state that a wild mushroom can grow up to 10cms across, but he could not find any evidence of a 'record' mushroom size for Ireland. I'm told unofficially by him that I can claim that mantle!

I was wondering since this is so unusual and since it looked a bit like a large football - is this an omen that Mayo are going to win the Sam Maguire this year when they finally beat Dublin and Kerry? Further evidence of this is the (I'm not sure how reliable is the latter) information that the Croagh Patrick Annual Pilgrimage was cancelled this year due to bad weather conditions on 31st August 2015. The last time this happened was.....wait for it....1951the last time Mayo won the All Ireland Senior Football Championship. So there you have it – Mayo is going to win the Sam Maguire this year and you heard it here first on the Safe Home newsletter!

So long for now, **Dr. Jerry Cowley** - Chairman.

**The Safe Home Programme is supported by The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade,
Emigrant Support Programme**



AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA AGUS TRÁDÁLA NA hÉIREANN
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE OF IRELAND

Entitlement to part- Contributory Pensions from other countries

Late last year we were contacted by a gentleman who was referred to us by his local Age Action office in Co. Galway. He had worked in the UK for five years during the late sixties/early seventies before returning to Ireland where he has lived ever since. He wondered if he was eligible for any UK state pension. He worked in the construction sector and had paid contributions during this time.

He did not have his National Insurance Number so our first step was to retrieve his number. This involved completing a form "CA5403", which is now the only way for people living outside of the UK to retrieve their National Insurance number. Six weeks later he received his number so we were able to make a state pension application. We also applied for a winter fuel payment based on his contributions. Four months later he was informed that he was not eligible for a winter fuel payment, the decision was based on his contributions and on the length of time he was absent from the UK. However he is entitled to a small weekly pension payment of £37 and he received a substantial back payment, which he was delighted about.

If you or anyone you know worked in other countries in the past and are unsure if you are eligible for a pension, it is always worth checking out whether or not you have any entitlement. You can contact us here at Safe Home or contact your local advice centre for assistance.

Of course, everybody's circumstances and eligibility is different so there may not be a 'windfall' in store for everyone who applies!

Noreen Mulrine - Safe Home Development Officer

Sharing in the journey

We had an email recently from Colette in Cyprus. Colette enjoys hearing the stories of other Irish emigrants going through the same experiences.

Colette says "We, the Diaspora need to know about one another, it's that sense that we are OUT THERE and sensing all our needs.... loneliness is so often a factor in old age".

Anyone who would like to contact us with relevant stories, memories, tidbits, and experiences, do send them into us and we will be happy to share them with our readers.

Island Hopping on Free Travel!

Thanks to **Bridie** (Inis Mór, Aran Islands) for contacting us as a follow-up to article on Free Travel in last month's newsletter. She reminded us that Free Travel Pass holders can also use their pass on approved ferry services to off-shore Islands here.

Ireland Reaching Out – launch of new and improved website

Ireland Reaching Out is a nationwide Diaspora programme that connects people of Irish heritage around the world to their ancestral parishes and counties in Ireland. Their re-vamped website was launched by Minister for Diaspora Affairs, Jimmy Deenihan T.D. Do have a look: **www.irelandxo.com**

Senior SmartPass for travelling in Northern Ireland

The All Ireland Free Travel Scheme allows a Free Travel passholder (those aged 66 and older) to travel free of charge on all bus and rail services within Northern Ireland using a Senior Smartpass card. Similarly, Northern Ireland Senior Smartpass holders are entitled to travel for free on services in Ireland using their existing Senior Smartpass. If your Free Travel Pass allows you to be accompanied by a spouse, civil partner or cohabitant or companion they may continue to travel with you for free on cross-border journeys but they cannot accompany you for free on public transport within Northern Ireland.

Free Travel Pass holders wishing to avail of the All Ireland Free Travel scheme within Northern Ireland must first obtain a Senior SmartPass card. To get a Senior SmartPass card you must fill in an application form (FTNI1). (It is **not possible to get this form online**, to get a form you must contact your social welfare local office).

The application form must be filled in with **black ink** only and returned **in person** (not posted) to your social welfare local office. You must bring the following items with your application form to your social welfare local office:

- Your current Free Travel Pass and
- Evidence of your address, (for example, a gas, electricity, phone bill or bank statement) and
- Evidence of your identity, (for example, your drivers licence, passport or another form of photo identification) and
- A recent passport standard colour photograph.

It may take up to six weeks to process your application.

You should continue to use your current Free Travel Pass for travel in Southern Ireland.

Renewing a Senior SmartPass

Your Senior SmartPass will expire after 5 years.

- If you have electronically used your card within the last 2 years you will get a new card automatically in the post from Translink when your card expires.
- If you have not used your card in the last 2 years you will be sent a renewal application form to fill out. (The renewal form is not the same as a first-time application and you do not need to supply a photograph.)
- If you have never used your card you will not hear from Translink at all. If you wish to get it renewed, you must contact Translink on on 048 9075 9129 who will send you a renewal application.
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Housing Opportunities:

For Cork Applicants: Cluid Housing Association has vacancies available in the following areas in Co. Cork;

1. Bandon: One two bedroom 2nd floor apartment (there is lift access in this scheme)

2. Newmarket: One bedroom bungalow property. Transport links in the area are not good so it is likely that this property would be most suitable for people who can drive, or those with family close-by.

For Mayo Applicants or those with strong family connections in Swinford:

A Housing Association in Swinford, Co. Mayo has a one bedroom bungalow available. This property is set in a central location, close to shops and services in the town of Swinford. It would be most suitable for single occupancy.



St. Vincent de Paul Housing – Swinford



Dromin Athlacca Voluntary Housing, Limerick

For Limerick Applicants only:

A Housing Association in **Athlacca** has two 2 bedroom properties available.



Lisdoonan, Co. Monaghan:

This Housing Association in Lisdoonan has a two bedroom bungalow available. While priority will be given to applicants originally from Monaghan, they will also consider people from other counties for this scheme.



For additional information on any of these vacancies, please contact the Safe Home Office.

Commemoration of the 1916 Rising: Global and Diaspora Programme

Details of planned cultural events across the world were announced recently by Foreign Affairs Minister Charlie Flanagan and Arts Minister Heather Humphreys.

Speaking at the launch, the Minister said, "The Global and Diaspora Programme is one of the seven strands of the overall Ireland 2016 programme. Through our network of Embassies and Consulates, we will mark this historic anniversary by organising an extensive range of events all around the world".

The Programme includes flagship events that will showcase the best of traditional and contemporary Ireland across the full range of the arts, including theatre, literature, music and dance.

The following are just some of the events that are currently being planned around the globe:

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in **Washington D.C.**, in partnership with the Embassy of Ireland, will host a three-week festival of Irish arts and culture entitled 'Ireland 100: Celebrating a Century of Irish Arts and Culture' from 16 May to 5 June 2016.

A concert featuring Irish classical musicians and singers will take place at the renowned **London** venue, the Wigmore Hall, in April 2016. Led by the Wigmore Hall's Irish Director, John Gilhooly, this major concert will showcase the Irish contribution to classical music as part of the 2016 commemorations.

Glucksman Ireland House at **New York** University (NYU) will present a series of public events commencing in autumn 2015 focusing on music, film, poetry, and prose. This series will culminate in a major academic conference on April 21-23 2016, which will explore the relationship between America and 1916, and will involve over twenty academic speakers from Ireland and across the United States.

From March to July 2016, the Irish Embassy in **Buenos Aires** will hold schools' essay and art competitions, which will encourage participants to reflect on themes that include the Easter Rising and Irish-Argentine relations. A schools' 'Gaelic Football Blitz' will also take place.

The Irish Embassy in Dubai, in partnership with the Danú theatre group, will host a series of cultural events to mark the 1916 Rising at The Madinat Theatre, in **Dubai**, on 22-23 April 2016. The programme will consist of a Seán O' Casey play along with Irish dancing, traditional Irish music and singing centred on the poetry and last letters of the leaders of the 1916 Rising.

In **Sydney**, a series of performances of Seán O'Casey's The Plough and the Stars will take place during the annual St Patrick's Day Festival.

Next year's **Paris** International Beckett Festival will run for the entire month of March 2016 and will include a focus on the 1916 Rising. The Sixteen16 centennial programme will involve performances that respond to Samuel Beckett's work by sixteen Irish artists or artistic groups from Ireland's theatre, dance, literature, visual arts, music and film sectors.

Glór na nGael and our Consulate General in **Boston** will hold a conference in June 2016 bringing together Irish language groups from across the US

A range of commemorative events are planned for **Rome, Berlin** and other European cities including film screenings, writers' events and theatre performances.

Keep an eye out for events being organised in your area. We will continue to report on further events as they are announced. More information on the commemorative celebrations can be found on **www.ireland.ie**

Supporting our work

Pictured below is Safe Home's Brenda at Manchester University recently being presented with a cheque donated from the proceeds of box office takings from "My English Tongue, My Irish Heart", a play based on a book written by Dr Liam Harte (pictured left), *The Literature of the Irish in Britain*.

The play toured the UK and Ireland earlier this year to glowing reviews. Also pictured (far right) is Professor James Thompson, Associate Vice-President for Social Responsibility at the University and Alex McDonnell of the Ashling return to Ireland charity who were co-recipients. We were delighted to be one of the chosen charities to benefit from the proceeds of this play and we would like to thank everyone involved for thinking of Safe Home and supporting our work.



As always if you wish to contact us:

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Dr. Cowley, Karen, Mary Ann, Brenda & Noreen