

Edition 33, February 2017

## President Trump

On January 20<sup>th</sup> 2017, Donald J Trump became the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. In his speech, he vowed to make America great again creating more jobs and protecting its borders.

No sooner had he set foot in the White House than he set about bringing in many of the changes he had promised before his election.



Picture courtesy BBC.com

He has signed an order refusing entry to the United States to all refugees. The order

also refuses entry to anyone from seven named Muslim-majority countries. He has begun the planning of building a wall along the US-Mexico border and has said that he expects the Mexican government to pay for it.

He has signed orders that all illegal immigrants living in the US with a criminal record are to be deported immediately. With 50,000 Irish people living illegally in the US this is of great concern to their families and to the Irish Government.

It has been the tradition for many years that on St Patrick's Day the Taoiseach visits the White House and presents the US president with a bowl of shamrock. This is seen as a symbol of the close relationship between the two countries.

More than 30 million Americans have Irish ancestors. Irish immigrants have played a big part in in American politics and in the police force. Many US companies have set up businesses here in Ireland employing many thousands of workers here. Shannon and Dublin airports are the only airports in Europe that offer immigration pre-clearance for people travelling to the US.

Pre-clearance means that those passengers won't have to queue for a long time when they arrive at the US airport.

People here in Ireland are divided in their opinion of whether the Taoiseach Enda Kenny should or should not visit with President Trump on March 18<sup>th</sup>. Many believe that the visit should not take place to show we do not agree with what he is doing. Others believe that the close bond between our two nations needs to be kept up. They believe Mr Kenny could use the visit to voice Irish concern about President Trump's actions and to speak for the Irish living illegally in America.

## Martin McGuinness retires

Martin McGuinness, Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland and Sinn Féin leader, has retired from politics because of ill health.



Mr Mc Guinness, who was born in

Derry in 1950, was a member of the IRA in the 1970s and spent a short time in prison during the Troubles. He was first elected as a Member of Parliament in 1997 but he refused to take his seat in Westminster, the home of the British Government.

Many tributes have been paid to him for the part he played in the Northern peace talks which led to the Good Friday agreement in 1998. He played a major role in the peace process and worked to build bridges between the nationalist and unionist communities.

He was made Minister for Education in a power-sharing government and in 2007 was made Deputy First Minister for Northern Ireland. Ian Paisley, one of Sinn Féin's main opponents for many years, was First Minister. In 2011, Mr McGuinness ran in the election for President of Ireland but lost out to Michael D Higgins.

We wish him well in his recovery.





Edition 34, March 2017

## Whistleblowers

In recent times, there has been a lot of talk about whistleblowers, but what exactly is a whistleblower?

A whistleblower is any worker in an organisation who reports any wrongdoing he or she believes has taken place in the organisation. Examples of the type of wrongdoing concerned include: illegal activity, misuse of money, putting people's health and safety at risk, and any attempt to cover up any wrong doing.

The whistleblower can choose to report his or her concerns to someone higher up within the organisation. They can also report it to an outsider, for example, to a newspaper journalist, a member of Government or a person who might be affected. The whistleblower can remain anonymous if he or she prefers.

Down through the years, due to the courage of whistleblowers, many cases of wrong doing have been brought to light. Here in Ireland, whistleblowers have highlighted serious cases of misconduct in care homes, childcare centres and in the Garda.

The Protected Disclosures Act 2014 is a law that protects the rights of whistleblowers. This law means that a person who brings evidence of wrongdoing, cannot be fired from his or her job or punished in any way.

However, in the last few months Garda whistleblowers, including Sergeant Maurice McCabe, have claimed that they and their families have been given a hard time by those in authority.

The Government has therefore set up a tribunal which will investigate all of these claims. Judge Peter Charleton will lead the tribunal and so it will be known as the "Charleton Tribunal".

## Turning green

On St. Patrick's Day, everyone wants to be a little bit Irish. In many countries it has become the tradition to turn famous landmarks green on this day.

The Great Wall of China, the Sydney Opera House in Australia, the pyramids of Egypt and the Eiffel Tower in Paris are just a few of the famous places that will be lit up in green on March 17<sup>th</sup>.

For more than 50 years the great Chicago River runs bright green to celebrate St. Patrick's Day.



Chicago River

Thousands of people turn up to watch members of the Chicago Plumbers' Union pump 45 pounds of vegetable dye into the river, turning it green.

## Drive-through Ashes

On Ash Wednesday, the parish priest of Glenamaddy, County Galway, Fr Paddy Mooney, came up with the idea of "Drive-through Ashes". People who were busy or unable to attend Mass were able to get ashes by driving up to the door of the church. There, they could stay in the car while the priest and some helpers placed the ashes on their forehead.

Fr. Mooney said that it was a great success with several hundred people receiving ashes in an hour and a half. He said he came up with the idea after hearing about a bishop in County Clare who held confessions in a shopping centre before Christmas.



Edition 35, April 2017

## Irish Coast Guard Rescue 116

In the early hours of 14<sup>th</sup> March Coast Guard helicopter Rescue 116 disappeared over Blacksod Bay in County Mayo, a few kilometres out to sea.

The helicopter had four crew members on board. They had been part of a mission to rescue an injured passenger from a fishing boat. Their helicopter was returning to refuel when all radio contact was lost.

Captain Dara Fitzpatrick was rescued from the sea a short time later but sadly died in hospital. A major search continued for the other crew members. Because of dangerous weather conditions, it was 10 days before the wreckage of the helicopter was found, 40 metres below sea level. Soon after, divers with the help of underwater cameras, found and recovered the body of Captain Mark Duffy. The search is still ongoing for the two remaining crewmen, winch operator Paul Ormsby and winchman Ciarán Smith.



Dara Fitzpatrick, Mark Duffy, Paul Ormsby, Ciarán Smith

Searchers also recovered the helicopter's black box from the wreckage. The black box records details of all activity and conversations in the helicopter. It is hoped that this will give information as to what happened in the final moments before the helicopter vanished.

Each year the Irish Coast Guard responds to thousands of emergencies on the sea, rivers, lakes islands, beaches and mountains around Ireland. They also assist in other types of emergencies such

as flooding, and they help in protecting our coasts from pollution. They also assist the health services by air-lifting sick or injured people for emergency treatment to hospital. There are four helicopter bases, in Dublin, Waterford, Shannon and Sligo.

The full-time coast guards are assisted by highly trained volunteers who are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. There are over 100 of these volunteers based in various locations around the coast. Volunteers are called out to as many as 1,000 emergencies each year.

Sadly, last September one of these volunteers, Caitriona Lucas, lost her life during a search operation off the coast of county Clare. The 41-year-old died when her boat overturned during the search for a missing man. She is the only Coast Guard volunteer to die during a search and rescue.



Caitriona Lucas

Her husband, Bernard, who is also a volunteer, travelled to Mayo to help in the search for the missing helicopter crew.

Although everyone who becomes a coast guard receives thorough training beforehand, it still takes a person of great courage to do this type of work. There is no doubt that it is dangerous and every time they go out on a rescue operation they are risking their lives to help others.

At the time of this newsletter going to print, the two remaining crew members have not been recovered from the sea. Our thoughts and prayers are with them, their families and all the brave men and women of the Irish Coast Guard service.



Edition 36, May 2017

## Missing persons

This month marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the disappearance of Madeleine McCann. Three-year-old Madeleine went missing from her family's holiday apartment in the south coast holiday area of Portugal on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2007. Her parents were having dinner with friends at the time, just 50 metres away. Her disappearance sparked the biggest and most well-known missing person case in history.



Ten years on, despite following more than 500 lines of inquiry, police in Portugal and Britain appear to be no closer to finding out what really happened to Madeleine on that night.

Here in Ireland as many as 8000 people are reported missing every year. Thankfully most of these are found within a short period. However, on average 25 people remain missing in Ireland every year. There have been many well known cases here, such as those of Dublin schoolboy Philip Cairns and six-year-old Donegal girl Mary Boyle. Thirteen-year-old Philip vanished in 1986 while returning to school from his home after lunch. Mary disappeared in 1977 while walking close to her grandparents' home in the countryside in Donegal. Both children have never been found.

Philip Cairns



Mary Boyle



In 1982, the Garda set up The Missing Persons Bureau. The Bureau assists in the

investigation of all missing person cases in Ireland. They also work with international police forces and keep up to date records on all missing person cases.

For the families of these missing people, there are no answers only many questions and the agony of endless searching and waiting. However, they never give up hope of seeing their loved ones again.

## Tuam Mother and Baby Home

In March this year one of the greatest scandals ever in this country came to light. The bodies of several hundred babies and small children were found buried near a septic tank on the grounds of the old Mother and Baby Home in Tuam in Galway. There had been nothing to show that it was a mass grave. Research carried out by local Tuam woman, Catherine Corless, discovered that a total of 796 babies and small children died in the Tuam Home over the years. She was unable to find graves for these babies and therefore put pressure on the Government to investigate.

Tuam Mother and Baby Home



The Home for unmarried pregnant women, was run by the Bon Secours order of nuns from 1925 to 1961. This was a time in

Ireland when an unmarried woman becoming pregnant was seen as the greatest shame to befall a woman and her family.

Some women were put into these Homes, against their will, by their families, because of fear of the Catholic Church or for other reasons. However, many women were sent to these Homes by the Catholic Church and the state authorities, often without the families knowing or agreeing. There were several of these Homes around Ireland. Most were run by the Catholic Church. Some, known as the Magdalene Laundries, required the women to work long hours in the laundry. Some women spent their entire lives in these Homes.

Not all women in the Magdalene Laundries were mothers. Those who were mothers had their babies taken from them. Many of the children were then given or sold into fostering or adoption, some to couples in America. Many stayed in the care of the institutions and attended schools known at the time as Industrial schools. Many babies and children died in the Homes. The last of these Homes only closed their doors in the 1990's.



## Enda to step down

Enda Kenny has decided to step down as leader of Fine Gael, having held the post since 2002. He will also step down as Taoiseach of the country. He first became Taoiseach following Fine Gael's major success in the 2011 election when they won 76 seats. He became Taoiseach for a 2<sup>nd</sup> term following the 2016 general election.

Born in 1951, Enda, who comes from Islandeady near Castlebar in Co. Mayo, was first elected as a TD for Mayo in 1975. He was elected following the death of his father Henry, who served as TD before him. Enda worked as a primary school teacher before entering politics.

At 24, he was the youngest person ever to be elected to the Dáil. Still serving as a TD 42 years later, also makes him the longest serving TD in the Dáil today.



In 1992, he married Fionnuala O'Kelly who herself was no stranger to politics as she worked as a press officer in Fianna Fáil. They have 3 grown up

children. A keen cyclist and hill walker, Enda has taken part in many charity cycles over the years. He is a big supporter of all sports but especially of Mayo Football.

Enda Kenny took over as head of government when Ireland was in the grip of a major economic crisis. His time as leader of the country is seen with mixed views. Many say he failed to tackle some of the major issues such as homelessness, the state of the health service and water charges. Others believe he brought Ireland out of the recession and back on its feet. He was also leader when Ireland became one of the first countries in the world to make marriage for same sex couples legal.

He will continue as a TD for Mayo. It is not known if he will run in the next election. It is also thought that he may continue his political career in Europe. We wish him well in the future.

## New leader

Leo Varadkar will be the new leader of Fine Gael. In an election held among Fine Gael party members, he received 60 percent of the votes beating fellow minister Simon Coveney. The 38-year-old has served as a TD for Dublin West since 2007 and is currently minister for Social Protection.

Leo's father is from India and worked as a doctor in England where he met Leo's mother who is from Waterford. They moved to Ireland in the 1970s where Leo and his two sisters were born.

Leo himself is also a doctor and worked as a GP before entering politics.



He will also now become Taoiseach and leader of the Government. He will be the youngest ever Taoiseach. It is expected that a government re-

shuffle will take place with some ministers losing their positions and others being promoted. We wish him luck as he begins this new chapter in his political career.

## Tidy Towns

It's that time of year again when volunteers in towns and villages right across Ireland can be seen out and about painting, planting, weeding and litter picking. All of this is done with an eye on winning a prize in the annual Tidy Towns competition.

The competition, which is in its 55<sup>th</sup> year, gets more popular every year, with more than 800 towns and villages taking part in 2016. Each place is visited by the judges over the months of June and July. The winners are then named in September. There are awards given to the best town and village in each county and there is one overall award which was won last year by Skerries in Dublin.

Volunteers all say that being involved in Tidy Towns creates a lovely sense of community and pride in where you live. All age groups can take part with something for everyone. It's also a great way for new people in the area to get to know people.



## 999 - What's your emergency?

999, the phone number used in many countries in an emergency to call the ambulance, fire service, police or coastguard, is 80 years old this year.



On June 30<sup>th</sup> 1937, the first ever 999 call was made in London. The emergency

phone number was set up following a fire in London which killed 5 women. At the time people claimed that when they rang for a fire engine their calls were not answered quickly enough by the telephone operators. So, it was then decided that a special phone number would be used to alert the operators that it was an emergency. The service was rolled out in Glasgow the following year. It is used today all across Britain, Ireland and many other countries.

It is the world's oldest emergency phone service. In Britain alone, operators respond to 30 million 999 calls a year. Here in Ireland the number 112 is also used as an emergency number, as well as 999. The number 911 is used in Canada and the USA.

## Farm accidents

The majority of deaths in the workplace now take place on farms. The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) have said that already in 2017, 16 people have died here in Ireland due to farming accidents. As many as half of farm accidents are caused by tractors and machinery with animals being the next biggest cause. The HSA say that children and people over 65 are the people most at risk.

This is one of the busiest times of year on farms with hay and silage being made. It is also the time that children are on their summer holidays. The HSA is asking farmers to make sure that children's play areas are kept safely away from large animals, tractors and all machinery.

## ESB is 90 years old

The ESB (Electricity Supply Board) was set up 90 years ago in 1927. Although there was a small number of public lights in Dublin since the 1880's, the ESB set about expanding the service to all of Ireland.

Their first big task was the building of a power station in Ardnacrusha in County Clare. Here, water was taken from the River Shannon and used to generate electricity. Work began in 1925 and it took 5 years to build. At that time it was the biggest water power station of its kind in the world.

The roll out of electricity to rural Ireland began in 1945 and took more than 20 years to complete. It was a huge task as thousands of poles and cables and electricity pylons had to be built all over Ireland. By 1965, 80 percent of Irish households had electricity.

The day when electricity was being turned on was a big day in every parish. Many places created a festival around it with the local parish priest having the honour of turning on the first lights! There are many stories told of how people were amazed by being able to have light by just turning a switch. Some people didn't trust it and were afraid to change from candles and open fires to light bulbs and electric cookers. The ESB employed staff to travel from house to house to show people how to use electric cookers, fridges, TVs and washing machines.

For many years, water from the River Shannon was used to generate most of the electricity used in Ireland. Coal, which was imported, was also used and later peat (turf) burning power stations were opened in the midlands. Today, coal, water and peat provide less than a quarter of our electricity. Almost half of the electricity we use is generated by gas, with wind farms generating almost 20 percent of our electricity.

To mark their 90 years in business, the ESB is giving free tours to the public of the power station in Ardnacrusha. To book a tour go to [www.esb.ie](http://www.esb.ie).



## McGregor The Notorious

World champion mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter and Dublin man, Conor McGregor, recently faced his most difficult fight yet. Known as "The Notorious" (no tor i ous) McGregor took on world boxing champion Floyd Mayweather, in a fight that was stopped after 10 rounds.

MMA fighting rules are very different to those in boxing. In boxing the only strikes allowed are punches. You cannot punch below the waist, kidneys or back of the head and neck or punch the opponent when down. In MMA there can be a mix of different styles used including kick boxing and pulling the opponent to the ground where body punches are allowed. MMA fights usually go to three rounds lasting five minutes. A boxing match can go to 12 three minute rounds. McGregor, who only started boxing training recently was therefore no match for the more experienced Mayweather who holds 15 world titles and had never been beaten in his career.



Before he became a professional fighter, McGregor was a trainee plumber. At 29, he is now said to be one of the richest fighters in the world. He lives in a mansion with his partner Dee and baby son,

Conor junior. He owns a fleet of luxury cars and is said recently to have bought a private jet. It is reported that he earned more than €30 million from the Mayweather fight. Both fighters are said to receive a large pay-out from all products advertised during the TV coverage of the fight.

Well known outside the ring as a larger than life, fast talking, proud Irishman who likes to dress well, he is very much in demand by companies world-wide to market their products. He already has his own clothes label and is about to start his own brand of whiskey which he is going to call "Notorious".

## The People's Princess

On 31<sup>st</sup> August 1997 the world woke up to the shocking news that Britain's Princess Diana had been killed in a car accident in Paris.



It was later known that the car in which she was travelling was being driven at high speed in an attempt to avoid press photographers and reporters. She was only 36 when she died

Diana won the hearts of people around the world when, as a shy 19 year old, she announced her engagement to heir to the crown, Prince Charles. A year later in 1981 their wedding was shown on live TV across the world. Her youth, beauty and shy smile endeared her to millions.

She was mother to William and Harry whom she adored. However her marriage to Prince Charles was troubled and the couple announced their divorce in 1996. If anything this seemed to make her even more popular as she was regarded as one of the people rather than a royal. However being popular meant she was followed day and night by the press and on many occasions private photos of her were printed in newspapers across the world.

Her work for many charities earned her huge respect. She was involved in more than 100 charities especially those which help children. She travelled and met with AIDS and leprosy sufferers in Africa to raise awareness about these illnesses. Today her sons still support these charities in their mother's memory. Her funeral was the biggest ever seen in England as millions lined the streets of London and many millions more watched on TV. She became known as "The People's Princess". Her friend, the singer Elton John, wrote a song in her memory called "Goodbye England's rose" which became the biggest selling song ever in Britain with all the money raised from it going to Diana's charities.



## Death of Jimmy Magee

Well known sports commentator for over 50 years, Jimmy Magee, passed away recently after a short illness. He was 82.

Born in New York, his family moved to County Louth a few years later where Jimmy grew up. As a young boy he loved to entertain his family and friends by giving made up commentaries on make believe matches, copying commentator of the time, Michael O'Hehir.

He began his broadcasting career in the 1950's covering a broad range of all sports. In fact, he broadcast from every Olympic games for RTE since 1972. He was a particular fan of boxer Katy Taylor and was overjoyed when he was there for her gold medal win in the 2012 London Olympics. He also covered every Soccer World Cup between the years 1966 and 2010.



Jimmy's passion and knowledge of all sports meant the listener was treated to a commentary that was filled with great information and detail along

with some witty remarks in between.

He presented a sports quiz called "Know your Sport" for many years in which viewers sent in sports questions trying to outsmart him. His huge knowledge of sport meant he was hardly ever caught out and so he was given the nick name "The Memory Man".

In 1966 Jimmy came up with the idea of organising a fun match where retired sports people played against well-known people from TV and the music industry. All money raised went to charities. It became known as "Jimmy Magee All Stars" and continued for nearly 50 years. In that time, they played matches all over Ireland, England and USA and raised more than five million Euro for charities in Ireland and abroad.

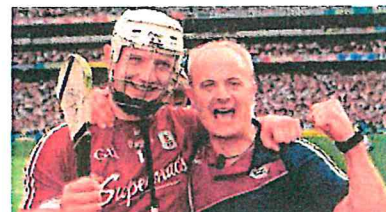
Jimmy's wife Marie died in 1989 at the age of 54 and his eldest son Paul died of Motor Neuron Disease in 2008 at the age of 51.

People who knew Jimmy remarked on his kindness to everyone he met and also his great sense of fun. With a twinkle in his eye he was always ready to share a funny story. May he rest in peace.

## Galway end 29 year wait

After a wait of 29 years Galway have won the All-Ireland Senior Hurling final for just their 5<sup>th</sup> time ever. In a match played with speed, skill and passion they beat Waterford who themselves haven't won the All-Ireland since 1959.

Thousands turned out in Galway on the day after their win to welcome home the team



and their manager Micheál Donoghue as they brought the Liam McCarthy cup west of the Shannon. Galway hurling great and 3 time All Star, Joe Canning who scored 9 points on the day received his first All-Ireland medal of his career.

Cork beat Kilkenny to win their 27<sup>th</sup> Camogie all Ireland final.

## Dublin win the Double

Dublin are celebrating on the double after winning the men's and the ladies' senior Football All Ireland titles. Captain of the men's team, Stephen Cluxton, lifted the Sam Maguire for a 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row. Once again a heart broken Mayo team lost out by a single point. The same two counties played in the ladies' final. It was 10 years since Dublin won and 14 years since Mayo last won.



Dublin captain Sinead Aherne lifting the cup



Edition 41 November, 2017

## Ibrahim Halawa Released

Ibrahim Halawa, the 21-year-old Dublin man, has finally returned home to Ireland after spending more than four years in prison in Egypt.

In June 2013 after just completing his leaving certificate, Ibrahim and three of his sisters went on holidays to visit family in Egypt. Both his parents are from there. While there the newly elected president of Egypt was removed from government and there followed many violent clashes between his followers and the new government.

It was while attending a protest march to support the former president that Ibrahim and his sisters were arrested. His sisters were released after three months. However, Ibrahim along with several hundred others remained in prison awaiting trial. He was only 17 at the time. Over the four years each time his trial was meant to take place it was postponed. In all it was postponed more than 20 times until finally in September he was cleared of any charges and was released a month later.



Government ministers visited Egypt on several occasions to lobby on his behalf and to visit him in prison.

Ibrahim's family back home in Firhouse in Dublin worked tirelessly over the 4 years for his release and are overjoyed at his safe return.

## Deeds of Bravery Awards

The Deeds of Bravery Awards are awards that are given by the state to people from all walks of life and of all ages who have attempted to save the life of another while risking their own life.

Anyone can nominate a person for an award and each nomination will then be judged by the awards council.

This council is made up of people from the government, the Garda Síochána, the Red Cross and county councils.

The awards vary from a certificate of bravery to bronze, silver and gold medals. A gold medal award is the highest award that the state can give and is not awarded every year. Each year the winners and their families are invited to Farmleigh House in the Phoenix Park in Dublin. Here they are presented with their award at a dinner.

15 awards were presented this year. There was a gold medal awarded to the family of Caitriona Lucas, a volunteer coastguard who was drowned in 2016 while searching for a missing man off the coast of county Clare.



The late Caitriona Lucas

Four young boys, members of a Boy Scout group who made several attempts to rescue a girl who had been dragged into the sea by a wave off the coast of Wexford at Hook Head were also given a bronze medal each.

Other awards included one to a young Cork woman who saved her mother from a violent knife attack receiving a serious stab wound to her own hand. Another was given to a man who managed to put out a fire at a petrol pumps saving what could have caused a terrible explosion and loss of life. Another award was given to a boy at just 13 who went to the assistance of his brother when his canoe turned over in a deep river.

Four members of the Gardaí from Clonmel were each given a bronze medal for helping to free a woman driver from a vehicle which had gone on fire following a crash.





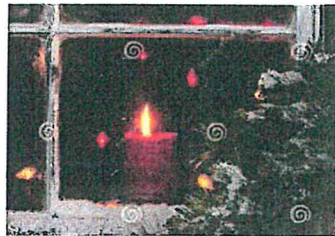
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## Christmas Long Ago

As we all prepare for Christmas, buying presents, decorating our homes with indoor and outdoor lights and planning our Christmas Day dinner menu, have you ever thought what Christmas was like for our parents or grandparents? Before we had TVs, phones or computers life was very different.

Kitty who is 85, grew up on a farm in west Clare and her memories of Christmas are of a much more simple but beautiful time.

"We didn't put up a tree for Christmas, nobody did in fact. We would be sent out the fields to pick berry holly and ivy to decorate the house. A sprig of holly was then put on the mantelpiece over the fire and behind all the holy pictures. We put a candle on every window and these were lit on Christmas Eve. It was the tradition that the youngest member of the family always lit the candles on this night."



Kitty recalls that preparations for Christmas started as early as October, the Christmas cake and pudding were baked and then stored in tins until Christmas Day. In farming areas, a pig was killed in October so that ham and bacon would be ready by December. Geese were kept and fattened from August until December when they would be sold at the market for Christmas day dinner. Roast goose and ham was the traditional Christmas dinner in Ireland at that time with turkey only becoming popular in more recent years.

There were no supermarkets at that time and all shopping was done at local village shops that usually sold everything from tea and sugar to tins of paint. A big part of the preparation was known as "bringing home the Christmas". This was the name given to the large shopping done just before Christmas. What was special about this was that along with the usual food items, treats such as sweets and new clothes were also bought at this time.

Kitty recalls that there was great excitement in her house on this day every year.

It was the tradition then that the local shopkeeper would give each customer a free gift known as the "Christmas Box" as a thank you for their business during the year. Kitty remembers that this was eagerly looked forward to as the box would contain luxuries such as biscuits or a bottle of whiskey.

Kitty remembers the whole family would attend mass either at midnight on Christmas Eve or at dawn at 6am on Christmas morning. Then it was home to see what Santa Claus had brought. Santa's gift list however was a lot different than today. Kitty remembers that children received gifts such as books, footballs, coins and chocolate.

"One year I received an orange and a banana from Santa. I was so excited as I had never seen either fruit before, I thought they were the nicest things I had ever tasted" Kitty recalls

Televisions were unheard of in Ireland then and only a couple of homes had radios so on Christmas night neighbours would visit each other to play cards, chat or play music.

On St Stephen's Day children and some adults dressed up in disguise and went from house to house singing and playing music in return for money or treats. This was known as "hunting the Wren" and is a tradition that still goes on in parts of Ireland today.

Kitty is in good health living on her own and still driving. Her brother, sister and parents have all passed on so memories of her Christmas childhood although special are a little bit sad. She has seen many changes over the years but some traditions are still the same. She still puts a candle in the window (electric now), goes to mass on Christmas Eve, still insists on cooking her own Christmas Day roast goose and will have her Euro coins ready for anyone who might call on Stephen's day, hunting the Wren.