

ISSUE 65
OCTOBER 2026

Little Village

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EDITORIAL

Hard to believe that we are now in Autumn, that lovely time of year o believe we are now in Autumn, that lovely time of year when the leaves change from green to red to orange and gold. The children are just back at school and already planning their Halloween outfits.

We have a Halloween article for you on how it used to be a fairly low-budget affair. We also have our piece on "The Mystery Drawer" – every home has one. We don't set out to have one, but somehow we all end up with one. Whenever we pick up a nut, screw, piece of plastic, or instruction manual and don't know where to put it, we usually end up putting it into the "Mystery Drawer" – just in case!

We also have pieces on how coffee was once simple, how doing nothing was once perfectly acceptable, and a celebration of autumn in D15 – and why it might just be the best season. There's our take on the 15-minute life, the annual drama of who turned on the heating, and a Budget Day piece asking the question we all want answered: are we actually any better off?

So until next time.....and a little gentle reminder that on Sunday 25th October our clocks go back an hour and we return to winter time.

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- The Carpenter Inn
- The Carlton Hotel Tyrrelstown



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When the Clocks go back

There is something particularly depressing about the clocks going back.

On Sunday, 25 October 2026, we get the great annual bargain: one extra hour in bed in exchange for several months of darkness. Ireland returns to winter time on the last Sunday in October, when the clocks go back by one hour.

It sounds good at first.

An extra hour in bed. Lovely.

Unfortunately, by Monday afternoon you discover the small print: it's dark at teatime. Not pleasantly dusky—dark. Properly dark. You look out the window at half past five and your body immediately assumes the day is over. Pyjamas begin to seem reasonable. There is a strong temptation to close the curtains, put on the television, and remain indoors until March.

The first dark evening always comes as a surprise, even though it happens every year. You finish work, leave the shops, or come out of Blanchardstown Centre, and suddenly it feels like 10pm. You check your watch: 5.47. This cannot be right. There are still several hours of the day left, but psychologically they have been cancelled.

Summer evenings encourage activity: you might cut the grass, go for a walk, sit outside, or visit somebody. Once the clocks go back, enthusiasm disappears. Someone suggests an evening walk and the response changes from “Good idea” to “Now?”

The dog suffers particularly badly. All summer,

the evening walk is a pleasant affair in daylight. By November, you are standing at the front door wearing a coat, hat, and reflective clothing while the dog looks delighted. The dog does not understand darkness. The dog does not understand rain. The dog simply understands walk. This is irritatingly positive.

Driving also changes overnight. Suddenly every journey seems to involve darkness, glare, and headlights coming towards you. The windscreen develops a mysterious film that was invisible during daylight. You spend half the journey adjusting demisters and wondering whether everybody else's headlights have become brighter.

There is another October ritual: changing the clocks themselves. This used to take effort. There were clocks in the kitchen, sitting room, bedrooms, and perhaps one on the microwave that had been showing the wrong time since the last power cut. Now phones, tablets, and computers change automatically. This has removed one of the great **Sunday morning conversations**:

“Did you put the clock back?”

“I thought you did.”

“What time is it actually?”

There will always be one clock that resists—usually the oven. Modern ovens can cook at precise temperatures, clean themselves, and communicate with apps, yet changing the clock apparently requires holding three buttons



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simultaneously while standing on one leg. Most people eventually give up. For six months, the oven is correct. For the other six months, you mentally add or subtract an hour.

Then there are the clocks in cars. Some change automatically. Others require navigation through a menu system clearly designed by someone who had never met a driver. You press Settings, then System, then General, then Time—and somehow you accidentally change the language to Swedish. By the time the clock is correct, you need another hour in bed.

Of course, there is one benefit: mornings become brighter for a while. This is especially welcome for anyone heading to work or school early, and it is one of the reasons we still change the clocks—the arrangement shifts more available daylight into the morning during winter.

But the darker evenings are what we notice most. By December, Dublin sunset is shortly after 4pm under the current system. Four o'clock. That is not evening. That is late afternoon. Yet nature has decided the shutters are coming down.

Perhaps this explains why Irish winter life becomes so heavily based around food. Once darkness arrives early, soup suddenly seems attractive. Stews return. Roast dinners become important. You begin buying biscuits “for visitors,” even though nobody has announced they are coming. The house gets warmer. The lights come on. Candles appear. Throws mysteriously multiply on sofas. We effectively turn our homes into survival bunkers until spring.

There has been talk for years about ending the twice-yearly clock change, but Ireland continues with the current system, partly because of concerns about having different time arrangements on either side of the border.

So this October, we will do it all again. We will enjoy our extra hour. Then complain that it is dark. We will say: “God, the evenings have fairly closed in.” This phrase will be repeated thousands of times across D15, usually while someone looks mournfully out a window.

By November we will have accepted it. By January we will barely notice. And then one evening in February, someone will suddenly say: “There’s a great stretch in the evenings.” At that point, hope returns. Until then, put the kettle on. It’s practically night-time.



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For 25 years, Chrysalis Montessori and Afterschool has had the privilege of being part of the lives of children and families in our community.

From the very beginning, our aim has been to create a warm, nurturing environment where every child is valued as an individual and given the freedom, encouragement and confidence to grow. At the heart of Chrysalis has always been Montessori education. We believe that children learn best when their natural curiosity is encouraged, their independence is supported and they are given the opportunity to discover the world at their own pace. Through purposeful play, hands-on learning and carefully prepared environments, we have watched generations of children develop not only academically, but socially and emotionally too.

Over the past 25 years, many things have changed, but the core values at the heart of Chrysalis have remained the same: kindness, respect, independence, curiosity and a genuine love of learning.

Reaching this milestone would not have been possible without the fantastic people who have been part of our journey.

To our parents and families, thank you for placing your trust in us and allowing us the enormous privilege of caring for and educating your children.

To our staff, past and present, thank you for the warmth, dedication, patience and enthusiasm you have brought to Chrysalis every day. You have helped make it the special place it is. And most importantly, to the children who have come through our doors over the past 25 years — thank you for the laughter, the questions, the friendships, the discoveries and the wonderful memories. Watching you learn, become independent and grow in confidence has always been at the heart of what we do.

As we celebrate 25 years of Chrysalis Montessori and Afterschool, we are incredibly grateful for our past and excited for the future.

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Councillor

John Walsh

Phone: 087 6486228 Email: john.walsh@cllr.fingal.ie @cllrjohnwalsh

Dear Resident

I hope you are keeping well. I have included below an update on some issues which I have been working on. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if I can be of any assistance.

All the best,
John

DECISION TO APPROVE PARKING CHARGES AT BLANCHARDSTOWN CENTRE SHOWS TOTAL DISREGARD FOR COMMUNITY CONCERNS

An Comisiun Pleanála has approved the application by SVP Capital for parking charges at the Blanchardstown Centre, rejecting the appeals which I and other public representatives submitted in January 2026 against the decision by Fingal Council to allow the charges.

This decision shows a complete disregard for the voice of the local community in Dublin 15, where over 11,200 people signed the **#NoBarriersforBlanch** petition set up by Luke Daly calling for the charges to be dropped. The plan imposes unfair charges on families, communities and businesses in the midst of a cost of living crisis. The plan for parking charges is irresponsible, socially regressive and deeply unfair to workers, business and local communities living close to the Centre.

It is fundamentally wrong to charge people for accessing essential public services such as the Library, Draiocht and Fingal Council housing section. The proposed barriers will also cause large-scale traffic chaos and make it even harder for local residents to access the Centre, especially at peak times and in the run-up to Christmas. SVP Capital should not be allowed to ride roughshod over local communities and their own workers.

NEW FINGAL ACCESS STRATEGY APPROVED

A new Access Strategy 2026-30, 'A Fingal for All', was adopted by Fingal Council on 14th September, setting out a series of actions in line with the UN Convention of the Rights of Disabled Persons (UNCPRD). Fingal is one of the first local authorities to adopt an access strategy. The strategy recognises that accessibility is an ongoing journey, calling for continuous meaningful engagement, adaptation, and the active participation of Disabled Persons Representative Organisations (DPROs). This strategy has to be fully funded and supported by the Council to be effective.



Thanks to the Fingal Council staff and all the groups who made BlanchFest so successful



Labour

PUBLIC TRANSPORT - N8 BUS SERVICE IS LONG OVERDUE

It is extraordinary that there is no direct bus service from Dublin 15 to Dublin Airport. The N8 bus service, which is part of the Bus Connects scheme, was originally due to run from Blanchardstown to Dublin Airport from the third quarter of 2025 but has been delayed repeatedly and there is currently no clear timeline for its introduction. I brought forward a motion to our local Area Committee, which was approved unanimously by Councillors, to ask Fingal Council to lobby the NTA and Minister for Transport for implementation of the N8 service before the end of this year.

Motion: Councillor J. Walsh

"That this Committee write to the National Transport Authority and the Minister for Transport to ensure that the proposed N8 bus service from Blanchardstown to Dublin Airport is introduced before the end of 2026."



Well done to the Clonsilla Porterstown Heritage Society for their work on the 4th Clonsilla Heritage Festival

COOLMINE COMMUNITY SCHOOL – SIGN THE PETITION

While the board of management of Coolmine Community School submitted an application to the Department of Education and Youth for a new building in May, there has been no update at all from the Department. It is disgraceful that students and staff are obliged to work in completely unacceptable conditions, as the building is 54 years old and the roof is severely damaged. Despite repeated emergency works funding, leaks in the roof are a daily reality of life and the only viable solution is a new, purpose built school building.

A quick reminder that you can sign the petition for a new school building launched by the Coolmine School Parents' Association here:



Working with Cllr Mary McCamley and Luke Daly

MERRION VAULTS OPENS 2 NEW BRANCHES IN BLANCHARDSTOWN (WEST DUBLIN) AND CORK.

Merrion Vaults, Ireland's only purpose-built safe deposit box facilities, are delighted to announce the opening of 2 new Irish Branches in Blanchardstown (West Dublin), and Carrigtwohill in Cork.

Our Blanchardstown branch, in Blanchardstown Corporate Park 2, is conveniently located less than 10 mins from the M50 via junction 5/6. It can also be accessed via numerous bus routes with the nearest bus stop a 2-minute walk from our branch. We have ample designated parking right outside the front door enabling customers to easily access our premises. The branch offers 7 different sizes of safety deposit boxes from as little as €280 per year. That is less than €6 for complete peace of mind.

These new additions two Irish branches double the company's footprint in the Island of Ireland – with existing branches on Dublin's exclusive Burlington Road and Belfast. This brings the number of branches for the group to 15 across Ireland, the UK and Spain.

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COFFEE WAS SIMPLE

There was a time in Ireland when coffee was simple.

You had tea. And if you didn't want tea, there was coffee. By coffee, I mean instant coffee. A spoonful from a jar, hot water, milk if you wanted it, and that was the end of the matter.

Nobody asked where the beans came from. Nobody discussed roast profiles. Nobody mentioned acidity unless they had indigestion. Coffee was coffee.

In many Irish homes, it wasn't even the first choice. Tea ruled. Coffee was what you offered someone when you wanted to appear slightly sophisticated. "Would you like tea or coffee?" If they said coffee, you reached for the jar of Gold Blend kept specially for visitors. That was about as exotic as things got.

Then, somewhere along the line, coffee changed. It became a culture. Then an industry. Then almost a personality type.

Today, walk into a café around D15 and ordering a coffee can feel like sitting an oral exam.

"What can I get you?"

"A coffee, please."

That is no longer an acceptable answer.

"What kind?"

And so it begins. Americano. Latte. Cappuccino. Flat white. Macchiato. Mocha. Espresso. Double espresso. Long black. Cortado. You begin to wonder whether the person behind you has memorised the

menu and is judging you.

Then come the milk options.

"Regular milk?"

"Yes."

"Full-fat, low-fat, oat, almond, soy or coconut?"

At this point, I generally want to say, "Whatever came out of the cow." But even that may require clarification.

Then there is the size. Small, medium or large would be straightforward. Some coffee chains prefer more elaborate terminology. You find yourself pointing at a cup. "That one."

Then they ask if you want an extra shot. An extra shot of what? Coffee, apparently. It seems that the coffee you have already ordered may not contain enough coffee.

Once you get used to the vocabulary, another layer appears: the beans. Coffee now comes with biographies. You may be told that your drink contains single-origin beans from a small farm at high altitude, hand-picked at dawn and roasted locally in small batches. Years ago, the most we knew about our coffee was that it came in a jar and was on special offer in Tesco.

Coffee has also become expensive enough that you expect a little ceremony. A takeaway coffee can now cost roughly what an entire lunch used to cost.

Continues P.16

Cllr Gerard Sheehan

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Ongar Family Fun Day Brings Community Together for a Fantastic Weekend Celebration

ONGAR, DUBLIN – The vibrant spirit of Ongar was on full display on Sunday, September 6th, as hundreds of local residents gathered for the annual Ongar Family Fun Day. Organised to foster community connections and bring local families together, the event delivered an action-packed day of entertainment that left both kids and parents thoroughly delighted.

The packed schedule featured a wide array of activities, including a popular kids' train, face painting, a bustling craft fair, indoor performances, balloon art, and a special highlight performance by the Blanchardstown Brass Band, alongside a host of other local entertainment.

Local representative Cllr Gerard Sheehan (Fingal



children out enjoying themselves makes all the hard work worthwhile. Special thanks to the manager of Ongar Community Centre Patrick Steacy for doing such a good job of organising and running the event and of course all the staff and volunteers on the day. It's getting better every year"

The day would not have been the same without the fabulous Blanchardstown Brass Band, celebrating 200 years bringing incredible joyful music which really made the day all the more special

The success of the day relied heavily on a dedicated team of organizers, staff, and local volunteers. Patrick Steacy, Community Centre Manager, extended his deep appreciation to everyone who made the day possible.

Organisers have expressed their gratitude to the entire Ongar community, local businesses, and volunteer teams who contributed to making this year's event one of the most successful to date.



County Council), who helps organise the annual event and volunteered on the ground throughout the day, praised the event's impact on local spirit:

"Sunday was an absolutely excellent day for Ongar. Events like this offer a vital opportunity for our community to gather, get to know one another, and build a welcoming, inclusive environment for everyone living here. Seeing so many families and



Add an alternative milk, an extra shot, and some flavoured syrup, and you start to wonder whether finance is available. Yet we keep buying it.

Cafés are busy everywhere. D15 is no exception. Coffee has become less about caffeine and more about social life.

“We should meet for coffee.”

This does not necessarily mean coffee. It means a chat. A catch-up. A gossip. Possibly a muffin. Two people can order one drink each and occupy a table for ninety minutes discussing children, work, neighbours, holidays, and the price of everything. The coffee is merely admission.

And to be fair, modern coffee is usually very good. Once you get used to freshly ground coffee, going back to instant can feel like drinking something from an office meeting in 1987.

I have also learned enough to have preferences. This worries me. I now know that I prefer certain types of coffee. I can even tell when one is too weak. It is a slippery slope. Next I'll be discussing tasting notes.

The coffee machine at home has become another modern household appliance. Once we had a kettle.

Now kitchens contain machines with buttons, flashing lights, milk frothers, and removable components that require regular cleaning. Some cost more than the first television our family owned. And after buying one, you then discover you need the correct coffee pods.

There are hundreds. Some are intense. Some are smooth. Some are described as having notes of chocolate, nuts, berries or caramel. I have yet to drink one and say: “Ah yes, definitely hazelnut with a hint of blackberry.” Mostly I think: “That’s nice coffee.”

Perhaps that is enough.

Coffee may have become complicated, but it has also become one of the small pleasures of modern life. A good café, a decent cup, and half an hour with someone you like is hard to beat.

Still, every now and then I miss the simplicity of the old days. Someone called to the house. The kettle went on. And the only question was: “Tea or coffee?” No follow-up questions. No choice of milk. No extra shots. And absolutely nobody asked where the beans were grown.



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Mulhuddart

It was a great honour and privilege to stand in for the Mayor of Fingal Cllr Tony Murphy at this recent Variety Show. Mulhuddart certainly has talent in great abundance. The event was a great success and the atmosphere was magical. Congratulations to the organisers.



Laurel Lodge

I am delighted to see that Fingal County Council and the National Transport Authority have responded to my correspondence and request for the siting of this new bus shelter in Laurel Lodge. The shelter is situated across the road from the Community Centre and now many local people including those who attend the centre or church or who may have mobility challenges can avail of a sit-down and cover during inclement weather while waiting for the bus.



Corduff

It was a pleasure to feature on Phoenix FM to promote the Sunshine Spirits group. We are a combination of local musicians and singers and we recently had the pleasure of entertaining the folks in St Patrick's Parish Centre Corduff and Parslickstown House. Watch out for our next gig.



Castleknock

It is so pleasing to see the important work that Fingal County Council have completed on Castleknock Manor in order to make the access to St Brigids GAA Club safer for all children as well as for students walking to and from Edmund Rice College. There is a new 'safe walk way' now and a zebra crossing, with a second zebra crossing close to where the bus-stop is situated on the N3, thus making it really obvious to drivers that people will be crossing.



Castleknock Tidy Towns fundraiser

It was most enjoyable playing and singing at the recent Castleknock Tidy Towns fundraiser in the Castleknock Parish Centre with the Trad 15 group. It is important that we support CTT. These committed and hard-working volunteers have the village and adjacent areas looking magnificent. They meet at MYOS every Saturday at 10am and work for two hours for the benefit of us all. Come and join them.





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PAINT LIKE A PRO Colour Drenching Explained

By Mick Gilbride | Dublin Area Manager, Pat McDonnell Paints

Colour drenching is more versatile than its dramatic name suggests. Put simply, it means carrying one colour across the surfaces of a room: the walls, ceiling, skirting boards and doors.

Why Does It Work?

Most schemes contrast coloured walls with white ceilings and woodwork. Colour drenching removes these contrasting lines. This can make a small space feel more expansive, while giving rooms a cohesive atmosphere.

Choosing Your Colour

Consider how you want the room to feel. Soft neutrals and pastels create a gentle, airy effect, while deep blues, greens and earthy shades can feel intimate and cocooning. Look at what will remain in the room: flooring, furniture, fabrics and materials. Your chosen colour should complement these elements or provide intentional contrast. Light also matters, as the same shade can appear different in a bright, north-facing or artificially lit space.

Test shortlisted shades on card or lining paper. View them throughout the day before deciding. Our tester pots are 25% off, making this an ideal opportunity to properly explore a few options.

One Colour, One Finish

For the most seamless interpretation, some people prefer the same colour and finish across every surface. Farrow & Ball Dead Flat makes this straightforward. This ultra-matt, multi-surface finish can be used on walls, ceilings, woodwork and metal, creating an uninterrupted wash of colour without changing products from surface to surface. Better still, all of our stores have their own Farrow & Ball tinting machines, so your chosen colour and finish can be mixed in store while you wait or order online and get it, or any of our products, delivered straight to your door for free.

One Colour, Different Finishes

Colour drenching can also mean maintaining one colour while varying the sheen. This adds subtle depth while suiting each surface.

Ralston offers an excellent route to this effect because the same colour can be mixed across complementary wall and trim paints. For a soft scheme, pair Ralston ExtraTex Matt on walls and ceilings with Ralston Aqua Matt/ Semi-



matt/ Satin on woodwork. The difference in sheen allows doors and skirting boards to catch the light while the colour remains consistent.

Our team can explain the options and recommend the right preparation and primer for each area.

Start Small or Go Bold

If you are unsure about drenching a living room or bedroom, why not try a small bathroom or utility room. These spaces are ideal for experimenting with a stronger shade. Alternatively, try tonal colour drenching, using closely related shades from the same colour family across the walls, woodwork and ceiling.

Whichever approach you choose, preparation remains essential. Clean surfaces thoroughly, fill and sand imperfections, and prime where required.

If choosing one colour for an entire room feels daunting, bring photographs and samples into your Pat McDonnell Paints store or book a consultation with one of our colour experts. Bring your ideas to us, and we'll help you choose the right colour and finishes to transform your room with confidence.

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Doing Nothing

Once, doing nothing was perfectly acceptable.



You sat down. That was it. No phone. No podcast. No television in the background. No smartwatch reminding you to stand up. No app congratulating you for breathing correctly. You simply sat there.

Today, doing nothing has become almost impossible. The moment we find ourselves with five spare minutes, we reach for the phone. We check messages. We check the weather. We check the news. Then we check the weather again, just in case something dramatic has happened in the previous ninety seconds.

Somehow, an entire industry has developed around making sure we are never left alone with our own thoughts. Waiting for a bus once involved waiting for a bus. You looked up the road. You looked at other people. You possibly looked up the road again. Now everyone at a bus stop is staring into a phone as though awaiting urgent instructions from Government Buildings.

The same applies in cafés. Look around any



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- Our meeting is OPEN to anyone interested in learning about AA and how we help others affected by alcoholism.
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café in D15 and there is a good chance that half the customers are looking at screens. Even people sitting together sometimes appear to be communicating with people who are somewhere else. We have reached the strange point where being physically present with someone does not necessarily mean giving them your attention. The phone wins.

Our parents did nothing quite well. They could sit in a chair after dinner and stare into the fire. Nobody asked what they were doing. If you asked your father, "What are you doing?" the answer might simply have been: "Nothing." Perfectly reasonable.

Today, if someone admits to doing nothing, we immediately suspect they should be doing something. Could they not go for a walk? Read a book? Clear out a cupboard? Learn Spanish? Listen to an educational podcast? Improve themselves in some way? Even relaxation has become competitive.

We are told to practise mindfulness. There are apps for this. Think about that. We now need technology to teach us how to sit quietly without technology.

Exercise has gone the same way. Walking was once a pleasant activity. Now it is recorded.

"How far did you walk?"

"About three miles."

"How many steps?"

"I don't know."

This answer now makes you sound irresponsible. Somewhere your smartwatch is disappointed in you.

Even holidays are no longer safe from productivity. Years ago, you went away to do very little. You sat beside a pool. You had lunch. You might have fallen asleep. That was considered a successful day. Now holidays have itineraries. People return home exhausted after completing seventeen attractions, four museums, three boat trips, and a sunrise yoga class. They need a holiday after the holiday.

Children may have suffered most of all. When we were young, boredom was an accepted part of childhood. If you said, "I'm bored," your parents did not organise an activity. They certainly did not produce an electronic device. They usually said something like: "Go outside." And out you went. You found something to do



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because the alternative was remaining indoors, where an adult might find you a job.

Today, every minute of childhood can be organised. Football on Monday. Swimming on Tuesday. Music on Wednesday. Something involving coding on Thursday. By Friday, an eight-year-old has a busier diary than a company director.

Perhaps we need to rediscover boredom. Not all day, obviously – there are limits. But maybe ten minutes here and there. Sit in a café without looking at your phone. Walk through a park without counting your steps. Wait for someone without checking emails. Look out a window. Do absolutely nothing.

It may feel uncomfortable at first. You may experience a powerful urge to check whether somebody has liked a photograph you posted yesterday. Resist.

You might eventually discover that doing nothing is actually quite pleasant. And the best thing about it? It requires no subscription, no charger, and no software update.

Halloween used to be a fairly low-budget affair



There were no giant inflatable ghosts on the front lawn.

No orange lights around the windows. And certainly no family discussions in early October about this year's "Halloween theme."

We had a turnip. That was more or less the theme.

Before pumpkins became widely available, someone had to hollow out a large turnip, which was approximately as easy as tunnelling through concrete with a teaspoon. An adult usually started the job and, after twenty minutes, regretted agreeing to it. Eventually a face was hacked into the front, a candle was pushed inside, and the result looked genuinely terrifying – although perhaps not in the way intended.

Modern pumpkins are much easier. You can carve one in minutes. They are bright orange, photogenic, and look lovely outside the front door. The old turnip looked as though it had been dug up from a graveyard – which, when you think about it, was probably more appropriate for Halloween.

Costumes were equally basic.

Today, children can be transformed into remarkably convincing superheroes, witches, zombies, vampires, and characters from films their grandparents have never heard of. The costume may have been ordered online three weeks earlier and includes accessories, face paint, and possibly battery-powered lighting.

Our costume was often a black plastic bag. Two holes for the arms, one for the head, and there you were – a witch. Possibly Dracula. Nobody was entirely sure. If your mother was particularly creative, you might get an old sheet with two eyeholes cut into it. A ghost. Job done.

There was no concern that three other children at the door might be wearing the same outfit, because half the street was dressed from the same collection of household rubbish.

Then we went from house to house. There was no parent walking twenty yards behind with a torch, bottled water, and a phone tracking our location. You went out with other children and returned when you had collected enough food to cause serious dental

problems.

The contents of the bag were also different. Today's child expects branded sweets, chocolate bars, and packets of crisps. Years ago you could come home with apples, nuts, loose sweets, and the occasional coin. There was always one house that gave fruit. Even as children we regarded this as a serious breach of the Halloween agreement. You had walked all that way dressed in a bin bag and somebody handed you an apple. Still, the apple joined the collection. Nothing was refused.

We also had Halloween games at home. One involved trying to bite an apple floating in a basin of water while keeping your hands behind your back. Looking back, this was simply organised near-drowning. You emerged with wet hair, soaked clothes, and possibly an apple. Everyone thought this was hilarious. Health and safety had not yet reached the family kitchen. There were other games involving apples hanging from strings and assorted attempts to make eating unnecessarily difficult.

The strange thing is that we loved it. Halloween was exciting precisely because it was slightly chaotic. The house was darkened. Candles were lit. Someone told ghost stories. And there was always a cousin who claimed to have seen something mysterious on a lonely road several years earlier. Ireland was particularly good at this because we had generations of banshees, fairies, haunted houses, and unexplained noises to draw upon. We did not need Hollywood. Every family had an aunt who knew someone who had heard the banshee.

Modern Halloween is very different.

Walk around parts of D15 in late October and some houses now put Christmas decorating to shame. Gravestones appear in gardens. Cobwebs cover hedges. Skeletons sit on benches. Ghosts hang from trees. Some homes are so convincing that I half expect an estate agent's sign outside saying: "Three-bed semi, haunted, BER rating C2."

Continues P.22

Roderic O'GORMAN^{TD}

Green Party Leader & TD for Dublin West

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please don't hesitate
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And Halloween is no longer just one evening. It has become a season. Shops begin filling with costumes, decorations, and enormous bags of sweets weeks beforehand. Schools have Halloween activities. Libraries and community venues organise events. Families visit pumpkin patches. There are Halloween movies, Halloween cakes, and Halloween-themed everything.

Even dogs now have Halloween costumes. I am not convinced the dog asked for this. Some poor Labrador is standing in a housing estate dressed as a bumblebee, wondering where its life went wrong.

Parents have become involved too. In our day, parents stayed at home and answered the door. Now many accompany younger children around the neighbourhood. This is probably sensible – although it has created another modern phenomenon: adults standing at garden gates having conversations while twenty children queue at the front door like customers outside a nightclub.

And the quantity of sweets has escalated. A child can now return home with enough chocolate to stock a small shop. Parents then introduce the idea of “rationing.” This normally means the parents eat some after the children go to bed – for safety reasons, obviously.

We should not pretend everything about the old Halloween was better. Some of it was downright dangerous. Bonfires were not always supervised. Fireworks appeared from mysterious sources. Costumes could probably ignite at twenty paces. And nobody worried much about where children were for several hours.

Modern Halloween is safer, more colourful, and probably much more fun for younger children. But I do think something has been lost. Halloween used to require imagination because there wasn't much else. A turnip became a monster. An old sheet became a ghost. A dark room and a good story could frighten you more than any expensive decoration.

Perhaps that is just nostalgia talking. Every generation believes its childhood version was better. Children around D15 this Halloween will make their own memories involving pumpkins, costumes, sweets, and houses decorated like film sets. In fifty years they will probably complain that Halloween isn't what it used to be either.

And somewhere an elderly person will tell their grandchildren: “When I was young, we had to go from house to house ourselves. We didn't even have drones delivering the sweets.”

Now that will be frightening.

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Halloween at Blanchardstown Library

Blanchardstown Library is getting into the Halloween spirit this October with a special Ellora McGee Halloween Drawalong with author and illustrator Úna Woods.

Taking place on Saturday, 31 October from 2pm to 3pm, the free workshop introduces children to the wonderfully spooky world of Ellora McGee: Trainee Banshee. Young artists will learn how to draw Ellora and her friends while discovering a distinctly Irish take on Halloween.

The session is suitable for children aged 8 to 12 and forms part of Fingal's Home of Halloween celebrations.

Places should be booked through Blanchardstown Library, so early booking would be wise — particularly when the alternative Halloween activity may involve keeping children entertained at home while they consume their body weight in sweets.

Blanchardstown Library is located at the Civic Centre, Blanchardstown Centre.

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Mystery Drawer

Every house has one.

A drawer that officially has a purpose but, over time, becomes home to things that no longer belong anywhere else.

In our house, it started as a kitchen drawer. Then came the batteries. Then old keys. Then instruction manuals. Then a takeaway menu from a Chinese restaurant that closed six years ago. Eventually, the drawer stopped being storage and became archaeology.

Open it today and you may find three AA batteries, none of which you trust, several loose screws, an Allen key from a piece of furniture long since gone, two elastic bands, a birthday candle, an old loyalty card, and a cable that fits absolutely nothing you currently own.

You cannot throw the cable away. That would be reckless. The moment you dump it, you will discover what it was for. So back into the drawer it goes.

Modern technology has made the mystery drawer even worse. Years ago, a cable was usually obvious – it went into the television, the radio, or the phone. Now we have charging leads accumulated from about twenty years of technological evolution: Mini USB, Micro USB, USB-C, Lightning cables, cables with strange round ends, and one that may have belonged to a Nokia phone in 2004.

We keep them all. There is always the possibility that civilisation may collapse and the only thing standing between us and disaster will be an obsolete

charging lead for a digital camera.

Batteries are another problem. Nobody knows whether the batteries in the drawer are new or used. At some point, someone removed them from a device and thought: “I’ll keep those. They might still have a bit left.” This is how batteries enter permanent limbo. You can buy a battery tester, of course – but then you have to store the battery tester somewhere. Probably in the drawer.

Keys are even more mysterious. Every house contains keys that nobody is prepared to throw away because nobody knows what they open.

“This one might be for the shed.”

“No, the shed key is bigger.”

“Back door?”

“No.”

“Old suitcase?”

“Possibly.”

And so the key remains. There may be no lock anywhere in Ireland that matches it, but disposing of it feels dangerous. The minute it goes into the bin, someone will say: “Where’s the little silver key for the roof box?”

Then there are takeaway menus. This made sense years ago – you kept the menu because the next time you fancied a Chinese or Indian meal, you needed the phone number. Today, the entire menu is online. Yet some homes still have a folded leaflet from 2017 promising “free prawn crackers on orders over €25.”

There are also things we keep because we think they are important. Instruction manuals are a prime example. We buy a toaster and keep the manual for fifteen years. Not once in those fifteen years do we consult the section headed “Operating Your Toaster.” If the toaster stops working, we throw it out. The manual stays.

Receipts are another common resident. You find one for an electrical appliance bought four years ago. You no longer own the appliance. Still, throwing the receipt away feels like tempting fate.

Then there are the completely unexplained objects: a small plastic cap, a metal bracket, a rubber ring, a tiny spring. You pick it up. “What’s this off?” Nobody knows. But it looks important. Into the drawer.

There is usually a moment every few years when someone decides enough is enough. “We’re clearing this drawer out.” Everything is tipped onto the kitchen table. There are several minutes of ruthless decision-making. Old receipts: bin. Broken pencil: bin. Expired vouchers: bin.

Unknown cable... Pause. “Better keep that.”

Mystery key... “Keep.”

Bag of screws... “Might need those.”

Within twenty minutes, almost everything goes back into the drawer. We have achieved nothing.

The strange thing is that these drawers exist in neat houses too. You can visit a spotless home around D15, where every cushion is perfectly placed and the kitchen worktops are completely clear. But somewhere, hidden behind a beautifully fitted cabinet door, is a drawer containing two dead batteries, a radiator key, a loose button, and an instruction leaflet for a kettle nobody remembers owning.

Perhaps we need these drawers. They are little holding areas for things we are not yet emotionally ready to throw away – not valuable enough to store properly, not useless enough to dump. Just... potentially important.

And every so often, something wonderful happens. You need an unusual screw. You open the drawer. You rummage around. And there it is – the exact screw you need. At that moment, every useless object you have kept for twenty years is vindicated.

You close the drawer proudly. This is why we never clear it out. One day, we might need something.

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The 15 minute life



One of the great pleasures of living in D15 is that, with a bit of luck and favourable traffic, almost everything you need can be found within about fifteen minutes.

Shopping? No problem. Coffee? Everywhere. A walk? Plenty of choice. Cinema, restaurants, sports, schools, parks, supermarkets, medical centres, gyms, and enough retail outlets to seriously damage a bank balance are all reasonably close at hand.

Urban planners now talk enthusiastically about the “15-minute city,” as though they have recently invented the idea of living near things. D15 residents have been doing it for years.

Of course, the definition of fifteen minutes depends entirely on the time of day. At 10am, somewhere may genuinely be fifteen minutes away. At 5pm, it could be fifteen minutes away geographically and forty-five minutes away emotionally. Still, the principle holds. From Castleknock and Blanchardstown to Clonsilla, Ongar, Carpenterstown and beyond, you rarely have to travel very far to find what you need.

Blanchardstown Centre alone can absorb several hours of your life without you noticing. You may go in for one specific item and emerge much later carrying three bags, having eaten lunch, and with no recollection of where you parked the car. The search for the car is then your exercise for the day.

But D15 is about more than shopping. There are plenty of places to walk, whether it's through local parks, along stretches of canal, around housing estates, or simply taking the long way home because your phone has told you that you are still 2,000 steps short.

Modern walking is no longer just walking. It now requires data. You must know how far you went, how many calories you burned, your average pace, and possibly your heart rate. Our parents simply went for a walk and came home again. We appear to need a

performance report.

Coffee culture has also transformed local life. There was a time when going for coffee meant visiting someone's house and being handed instant coffee in a mug. Today, D15 has cafés everywhere, and meeting someone for coffee has become one of Ireland's main social activities.

“Will we meet for coffee?”

This can mean anything from twenty minutes to three hours. Very little actual coffee may be involved after the first cup.

Then there is food. Whatever you fancy, there is a good chance you can find it nearby. Pizza, Indian, Chinese, burgers, Thai, Italian, cafés, bakeries, and increasingly elaborate brunches.

Brunch itself is a relatively recent development in Irish life. Previous generations had breakfast and dinner. If you got hungry in between, there was bread. Now we happily pay for smashed avocado while discussing the cost of living.

D15 also has the great advantage of being close enough to Dublin city centre to enjoy it, while far enough away that you don't necessarily have to visit it very often. This is important. There comes a stage in life when travelling into the city becomes something you plan carefully. Where will we park? Should we get the train? What time will we come home? Do we actually need to go at all?

Quite often the answer is no. Everything we need is nearby.

That may be the real attraction of the 15-minute life. You can shop locally, eat locally, walk locally, and meet friends locally without turning every outing into an expedition.

And if we could only arrange for the traffic to cooperate, D15 really would have everything within fifteen minutes. Until then, perhaps we should call it the 15-to-35-minute life. It's less catchy, but probably more accurate.

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To Whom It May Concern,

We are delighted to confirm that Kevin Casey will be hosting a Night of Music, Community and Hope in the Clonsilla Inn on 16th October in aid of Childhood Cancer Ireland.

This letter confirms that we have given him permission to fundraise on our behalf, and we would be delighted for anyone who is in a position to offer support to this event to do so. Should you require further clarification on this or have any other questions, please contact me on Rebecca.lawler@childhoodcancer.ie or on 086356813.

Childhood Cancer Ireland is a non-government funded national parent and survivor-led charity. We help to ease the burden that a childhood cancer diagnosis brings and represent the voice of children, adolescents and young adults with cancer, survivors and their families.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, families affected by childhood cancer can access the emotional, practical, and social supports they need at every stage of their journey, from diagnosis through treatment, recovery, and, when necessary, bereavement.

Support ensures that children and young people receive specialist psychological care, play therapy, and psychotherapy close to home, as well as vital education supports like grinds, career guidance, and webinars. It also opens the door to meaningful programmes such as mentorship through Connecting Champions and the Beads of Courage® programme.

Parents and survivors find strength and guidance through peer support networks, workshops, Connect and Learn Events financial advice, and psychological care, and when the worst happens, relapse and bereavement grants. Siblings are not forgotten; they too receive psychological support, connection events and their own Beads of Courage® programme.

Thank you for making this possible.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Lawler
Childhood Cancer Ireland



Autumn in D15

Maybe This Is Actually Our Best Season

We spend most of the year in Ireland waiting for summer. Then summer arrives and we immediately discover that we are not really equipped for it.

If the temperature reaches 24 degrees, offices become unbearable, bedrooms refuse to cool down, and half the country starts complaining that it's "too close." We buy garden furniture in May, barbecue equipment in June, and spend July moving both in and out of the shed depending on the clouds.

Perhaps we have been backing the wrong season all along. Maybe autumn is actually the best time of year in D15.

October, in particular, has a lot going for it. It is cool enough to go for a decent walk without arriving home looking as though you have completed a marathon, but not yet cold enough to require thermal underwear and negotiations over the central heating. You can wear a proper coat again – this is important in Ireland, because we are much better at dressing for 12 degrees than 25.

Autumn also improves the scenery. Trees that have spent all summer being merely green suddenly start making an effort. Reds, yellows, browns, and golds appear everywhere.

Millennium Park in Blanchardstown is particularly suited to the season, with 60 acres of tree-lined

paths, woodland, and meadow right beside the town centre. The Royal Canal around Castleknock and Clonsilla also comes into its own at this time of year. There is something about walking beside water on a crisp October afternoon that feels much healthier than walking around a shopping centre – although the canal has yet to provide coffee and cake at regular intervals.

Dublin 15 is fortunate to have the Royal Canal, the Tolka, and the Liffey running through or alongside the area, with the Tolka Valley offering woodland, wetlands, and open countryside remarkably close to urban neighbourhoods.

Of course, an autumn walk now requires more equipment than it once did. Years ago you put on your shoes and went out. Today you need a smartwatch. You must count your steps. Apparently a walk that is not recorded electronically may not have happened. You can stroll for an hour through beautiful autumn scenery, enjoy the fresh air, meet people, and return home feeling wonderful. Then you look at your watch: "Only 7,846 steps." Suddenly the entire outing feels inadequate.

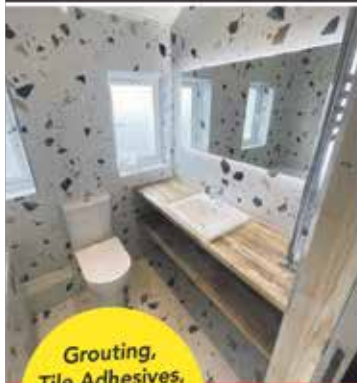
Some people will then pace around the kitchen that evening to reach 10,000. Our parents would have found this difficult to understand. "What are you doing?" "I need another 600 steps." "Go and bring in the bins." Problem solved.

Autumn also provides the perfect Irish weather compromise: there is no expectation of sunshine.



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This removes enormous pressure. In July, rain feels like a personal betrayal. You look outside indignantly: "It's supposed to be summer." In October, rain is simply October. You put on a coat and get on with it. If the sun appears, it is regarded as a bonus rather than a constitutional right.

There is also something very pleasant about coming home from an autumn walk. A summer walk ends with looking for a cold drink and wondering whether someone has remembered to water the plants. An October walk ends with the kettle. Possibly soup. Maybe toast. By November, this can develop into stew.

Irish people are naturally gifted at autumn food. We understand potatoes, gravy, and things cooked slowly in large pots. Nobody has ever returned shivering from a walk along the canal and said: "What I really fancy now is a light quinoa salad."

Autumn evenings have their attractions too. The curtains close earlier. Television suddenly seems more legitimate. In summer there is a slight sense of guilt about sitting indoors at seven o'clock: "Lovely evening outside" – usually said by somebody who is also sitting indoors. By October, no explanation is necessary. You can sit on the

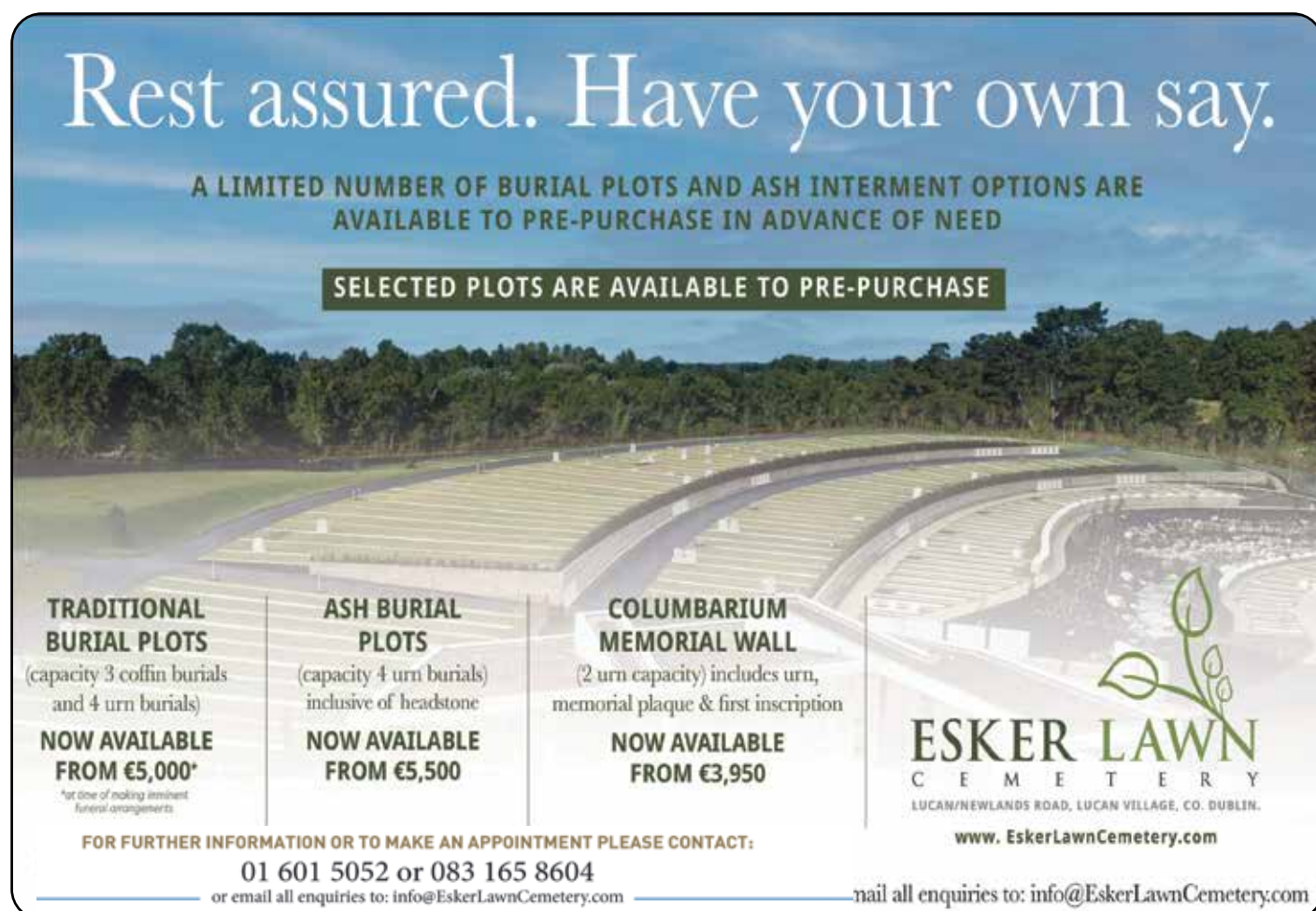
sofa at half seven with a cup of tea and feel that you are behaving entirely appropriately.

Then there are the leaves. Beautiful on the trees. Less beautiful once they have all landed on your driveway. This is autumn's little joke. You sweep them into a neat pile. You put them into a bag. You admire your work. Then the wind blows. Twenty minutes later, the driveway looks exactly as it did before you started. Somewhere in Castleknock, a leaf blower is being started at this very moment.

Still, even that is part of the season. Autumn does not make the extravagant promises of summer. It doesn't tempt us into buying paddling pools, patio heaters, or outdoor kitchens that require weather conditions last seen in southern Spain. It simply turns up with cooler days, colourful trees, and an excuse to slow down a little.

So perhaps instead of mourning the end of summer this October, we should enjoy what D15 has right outside the door. Take a walk. Kick through a few leaves. Ignore the step counter. Then go home, put the kettle on, and have something entirely unsuitable for a fitness regime.

Autumn may not be the season we spend all year waiting for. But perhaps it should be.



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Who Turned the Heating On?

Every Irish household has its own unofficial date for turning on the heating.



It is never written down. There is no family meeting. No calendar reminder. You just reach a point in October when someone says: “Is it cold in here?”

This is the opening shot. Someone else immediately replies: “It’s not that bad.”

It is always that person who delays the heating. Every house has one. They are usually wearing a jumper. Possibly two. Their argument is that once the heating goes on, that is it until spring – as though pressing the boiler button creates a legally binding six-month contract with Bord Gáis.

So the negotiations begin.

“Could you not put another layer on?”

“I have three layers on.”

“Maybe close the door.”

“The door is closed.”

“Have a cup of tea.”

At this point the cold person realises they are not going to win through logic. The tea is made. The argument continues.

October is awkward because we are not yet mentally ready for winter. September still feels vaguely summery. There may even have been a warm day last week. Turning on the heating feels like admitting defeat. The garden furniture may still be outside. There could be shorts hanging in the wardrobe. You are not prepared to accept that the boiler has returned to active duty.

So we improvise. Throws appear on sofas. Slippers return. Someone discovers a hot-water bottle at the back of a cupboard. A small fan heater is produced, supposedly “just for ten minutes,” and proceeds to consume enough electricity to power Blanchardstown Centre.

Still, the central heating remains untouched. There is pride involved. If you can get to November without turning it on, you have achieved something. What exactly you have achieved is unclear,

particularly if the family has spent October sitting under blankets.

The great turning-on moment is often secretive. Nobody announces it. Somebody simply disappears towards the boiler. A few minutes later there is a familiar click. Then the radiators begin making noises they have not made since March.

One gurgles. One stays stone cold. One becomes so hot you could fry an egg on it. Another has decided this is the year it will no longer participate.

This leads to the annual search for the radiator key. Every Irish house owns a radiator key. Nobody knows where it is.

You check the kitchen drawer. There are batteries, old keys, screws, several cables from obsolete phones, and an instruction manual for a kettle you threw out in 2019. No radiator key. Eventually someone finds it in the place where it was put “so we wouldn’t lose it.”

Then comes bleeding the radiators, which sounds far more dramatic than it is – although the person doing it generally adopts the expression of a qualified heating engineer. “Get me a cloth.” A few drops of black water appear and suddenly everyone is an expert.

Modern heating systems have made things both easier and more complicated. Once, you had a thermostat on the wall. You turned it up. The house got warmer. Now we have apps. Zones. Smart controls. Timers. Boost functions. You can turn the heating on from another country.

This is impressive. You can be sitting in Lanzarote and warm the kitchen in Clonsilla. Why you would want to do this is another question.

The real danger of smart heating is that it provides data. You can now see exactly how much energy you are using. This means you can sit in a warm room feeling guilty. In the old days, ignorance was much more comfortable.

Energy prices have also turned heating into a financial decision. Years ago, if you were cold,

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you turned on the heating. Now you hesitate. You think about the bill. You wonder whether the price of gas has gone up. You lower the thermostat by one degree and feel financially responsible. Then somebody walks past and quietly turns it back up.

The thermostat itself can become the centre of domestic conflict. One person likes 19 degrees. Another wants 22. There can be only three degrees between these settings, yet emotionally it is the difference between the Arctic and a Turkish bath. The person paying the bill usually favours 19. The person sitting still watching television prefers 22. Children prefer something closer to tropical.

Teenagers can spend all day in a bedroom with the radiator fully on and the window open. This is enough to make a parent age visibly.

“Why is the window open?”

“It was too warm.”

“Then turn the radiator down!”

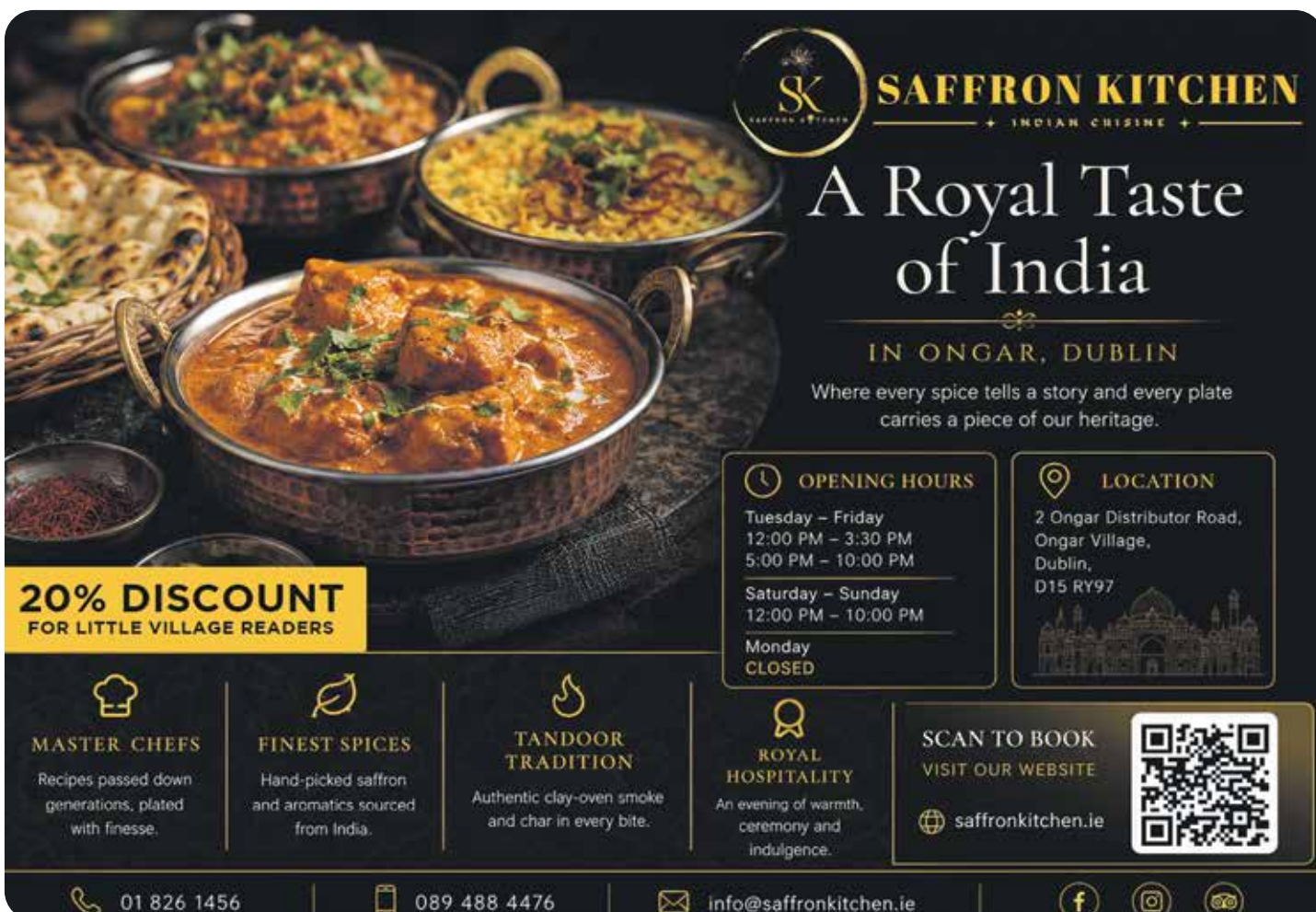
Silence. Apparently that solution had never occurred to them.

Then there are older houses, newer houses, insulated houses, and houses that appear to lose heat through some portal to another dimension. You can heat some homes for half an hour and they stay comfortable. Others cool down the instant the boiler switches off. You sit there listening to the radiator ticking as it cools and realise the room temperature is dropping at roughly the same rate as your bank balance.

Despite all this, there is something comforting about the first proper heating evening of autumn. The curtains are closed. The lights are on. The house feels warm. Someone makes tea. You settle onto the sofa and, for the first time in months, accept that summer is over.

Across D15 this October, the same small domestic drama will play out in thousands of homes. Someone will complain they are cold. Someone else will say it is far too early. Jumpers will be suggested. Blankets will appear. And eventually, somewhere in the house, there will be a quiet click.

Nobody will admit doing it. But everyone will move a little closer to the radiator.



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ON THE NIGHT**



Budget Day

Every October we have the same national ritual.

The Minister for Finance stands up in the Dáil with a large folder and begins reading out numbers involving billions of euro. Economists appear on television. Accountants are wheeled into radio studios. Charts appear. And somewhere in D15, someone sitting at a kitchen table asks the only question that really matters: “Am I any better off?”

Budget 2027 will be announced on 6 October and, as usual, there will be plenty of impressive figures. Millions for this. Billions for that. Tax packages. Spending packages. Credits, allowances, thresholds, and reliefs.

By the end of the evening, most of us will have given up trying to understand the overall package and will be waiting for somebody to produce the useful bit: Single person on €45,000 — gains €8.73 a week. Ah. Now we understand.

Budget Day has always fascinated me because the Government deals in billions while the public deals in tens. The Minister announces €500 million for something and we nod thoughtfully. Then somebody says petrol has gone up by three cent a litre and we become furious.

That is because household economics is very different from government economics. Nobody in Castleknock, Blanchardstown, Clonsilla, or Ongar sits down at the end of the month and discusses fiscal headroom. They discuss why the electricity bill is so high. Or how a bag of groceries that once seemed fairly ordinary has somehow become €120. Or whether two takeaway pizzas should really require a small loan.

The Government has already indicated that income tax will be one of the big issues in this budget. That will be welcome news to anyone who has received a pay rise only to discover that Revenue was equally

pleased about it. There is something particularly disappointing about being told you are getting an extra €50 a week and then finding considerably less than €50 arriving in your bank account. You feel briefly richer. Then taxation introduces itself.

Childcare is also expected to feature heavily. For younger families, childcare costs can resemble a second mortgage — except eventually you finish paying a mortgage. Parents can spend years handing over astonishing amounts of money simply for the privilege of going to work.

Then, once the children reach school age, you assume the financial pressure will ease. This is adorable optimism. There are uniforms. Books. School trips. Sports. Phones. Trainers. Birthday parties. And eventually a teenager who can stand in front of a fully stocked fridge and announce: “There’s nothing to eat.”

Pensioners will be watching too. Every budget seems to produce lengthy debate about increases to pensions and social welfare payments. An extra €10 a week sounds reasonable until you remember that the same pensioner is also buying food, heating the house, paying insurance, and wondering why a modest visit to the supermarket now requires considerable financial planning.

Energy will inevitably be part of the discussion as well. October is perfect timing for this, because it is around then that Irish households begin the annual Heating War. One person says: “It’s freezing.” Another says: “It’s not cold enough for the heating yet.” The first person puts on another jumper. Eventually someone turns the heating on secretly and nobody admits doing it.

Modern heating systems are now so sophisticated that you can control them from your phone. This

allows you to sit in a cold room staring at an app showing you exactly how much money you are saving by remaining cold. Progress.

Then there is the weekly shop. Politicians can tell us that inflation is easing, but supermarket economics has its own rules. You enter for a few essentials and emerge with three bags costing enough to make you check the receipt. You always check the receipt. Not because the supermarket has necessarily made a mistake – you simply want to identify which completely ordinary object now costs €7. Coffee? Butter? Washing powder? There is always a culprit.

Housing, of course, remains the enormous issue hanging over everything. For younger people, the question is whether they can afford to buy at all. For renters, it is whether they can afford to remain where they are. For older homeowners, the mortgage may finally be gone, but property tax, insurance, maintenance, and energy bills have taken its place.

A house never really stops costing money. The roof simply waits until you begin feeling financially comfortable. Then it develops a leak.

What makes Budget Day interesting is that almost everyone will find something to complain about. Give tax relief to workers and somebody will ask why

pensioners got nothing. Increase welfare payments and somebody will ask why workers are paying for it. Help homeowners and renters complain. Help renters and homeowners complain. The Minister for Finance cannot win. Perhaps that is why the Budget speech takes so long – he is delaying reading the comments online.

Still, budgets matter. Small changes can add up over a year, particularly for households already watching every euro. A tax reduction, childcare support, or increase in a weekly payment may not transform anyone's life, but it can make things a little easier.

The difficulty comes when the Government announces that you are €600 a year better off, but your insurance has risen by €300, groceries by another few hundred, and the boiler has chosen December to die.

This is why the real Budget analysis does not happen in Leinster House. It happens around kitchen tables. After all the speeches, graphs, and expert commentary, families across D15 will eventually do the same calculation. Money coming in. Money going out. And the final verdict will be beautifully simple:

“Grand. But are we actually any better off?”

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