



Muckross Mail

40th Anniversary Issue

Newsletter of the Muckross Past Pupils' Union

February 2011

PPU Committee:

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Helena O'Dowd

Muckross Mail Editor:

Gay Rodgers,
33 Hazel Avenue,
Kilmacud, Co. Dublin
Tel: 087-638 3683

Contacts:

www.muckrossparkppu.com

Email muckrossppu@ireland.com

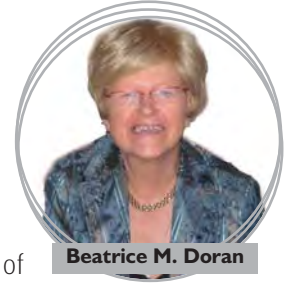
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Beatrice Doran
087-243 1946

Valerie Cox (Fitzpatrick)
087-685 8406

Claire Johns, 4 Willowfield Ave,
Goatstown, Dublin 14
Tel.087-2218602

FROM THE UNION PRESIDENT



Beatrice M. Doran

As past pupils of Muckross, we were fortunate to have a Dominican education where the emphasis was on the growth of each individual's spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical qualities through the education of the whole person. The role of the teachers, both religious and lay, was to facilitate learning by challenging each one of us to reach her potential. As a result, we have a wonderful collection of past pupils who have become leaders in their chosen professions and who have played an important role in Irish intellectual, business, social and political life.

Our congratulations go to past pupil Emma Donoghue (1981-87), whose novel *Room* was short-listed last year for the Booker Prize, and won the prize for the Novel of the Year at the Irish Book awards. See the interview with Emma in this Newsletter. Another past pupil, Patricia O'Reilly (Dain) also had her new book, *A Type of Beauty* published. I am sure there are many more past pupils who have achieved greatness in other fields of whom the Past Pupils' Union is not aware. We are always very happy to hear from past pupils about their achievements and successes and would love more of you to write something for our annual Muckross Mail.

The role of the Past Pupils' Union is to help past pupils keep in touch and we do this by organizing among other things an annual dinner, a newsletter, an Easter Egg hunt, a Santa party and our website www.muckrossparkppu.com. In addition we support the Etafari playgroups in South Africa in which the Dominican sisters are involved. We also aim to help (via our Benevolent Fund), any past pupils in financial need.

In 2012 Muckross Past Pupils' Union celebrates its Centenary. As far as we know, we are the oldest girls past pupils' union in Ireland. From the annals we learn that "On 18th March 1912 Three of our Past Pupils The Misses Florrie and Eily McGloughlin and Miss Ivy Powell approached Mother Prioress (Martina) and asked for her permission to form a Union for our Past Pupils. The permission was willingly given and invitations were sent out to all and sundry Past Pupils. The result was good; a large gathering of P.P. Muckross met in the "Hall". This was the first Union for Dominican Secondary girls' schools in or about Dublin."

To celebrate our Centenary in 2012, plans are in hand to produce a commemorative book which you can read more about later in this newsletter.

A special word of welcome and congratulations to Caroline Lundy, who is the new Principal of Muckross Park College. Congratulations too go to Ann Marie Mee who has taught in Muckross for a number of years, and who was recently appointed Deputy Principal of the school. Ann Marie has been a great friend to the Past Pupils' Union over the years and we look forward to having a similar close relationship with the new Principal Caroline Lundy, and the School. Both Caroline & Ann Marie warmly welcomed us to the school for refreshments after the annual Combined Dominican Union Mass held in the School Chapel in October 2010.

Finally, I would like to thank our committee for their enthusiastic help and support during the year.

Beatrice M. Doran, President



EDITORIAL

It's hard to believe that the first Muckross Mail was published 40 years ago in March 1971. Valerie Cox (Fitzpatrick) was the editor and she told me it was 'typed on stencils and produced on a particularly malicious Gestetner which sprayed ink over everything'. This was followed by hours of page sorting, stapling and licking stamps.

Looking through the first issue recently, I read that the Musical and Dramatic Society were very active and reported a fantastic attendance at 'Bless the Bride' which was produced by Lorna Madigan of RTE. The Bridge Circle met every second Tuesday and the Hockey Club reported that Marguerite Barry had made the Irish reserve team. It also announced the very first Fork Supper with a ticket price of 50p. But even more interesting was that Anne Brady was organising a baby-sitting service during the Fork Supper and AGM for 10p per hour!

Happenings in the school included that 1st Years, under the guidance of Sr Barnabas started a Bicycle Club, a Hiking Club and a Bird and Tree Club. 6th Years reached the final of the Aer Lingus Debate, Audrey Arthure reached the Leinster Finals of the Fish Cookery Competition and Mary Hyland won the Gas Cookery Competition.

So with 40 years of Muckross Mail and the Centenary of the PPU about to be celebrated in 2012, Muckross girls have a lot to be proud of. It is now up to all past pupils, particularly our most recent ones, to continue the tradition for another 100 years.

Gay Rodgers, *Editor*



Easter egg hunters lined up waiting for the 'ready, steady, go' at the 2010 Easter Egg Hunt.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Writers Workshop

Saturday 26th February 2011 from 2pm – 5.30pm
in the National Yacht Club Dun Laoghaire
Cost €20 (incl. refreshments).
Bookings: Contact Valerie Cox 087-685 8406.

Union Day & AGM

Sunday 6th March 2011 in Muckross Park
11.15 am Mass followed by AGM & refreshments.

Easter Egg Hunt

Sunday 3rd April 2011 in Muckross Park
from 12 – 1 pm. Advance booking essential.

Annual Dinner

Friday 15th April 2011 at 7.30pm
in Stillorgan Park Hotel
Stillorgan, Co. Dublin
Advance booking essential.

Combined Dominican Golf Society

Monday 11th July 2011
in Naas Golf Club
Contact Ann Quinlan 087-239 5772.

Muckross Golf Society

Thursday 8th September 2011
Edmondstown Golf Club, Rathfarnham.
Time sheet is available from Annette Quigley
at quigleyannette@gmail.com or 087-686 7376
before 31st August.

Combined Dominican Unions' Mass

Sunday 2nd October 2011 at 11.15am in Muckross Park.

Santa Party

Sunday 4th December 2011 in Muckross Park
At 12 noon - 1pm. Advance booking essential.

PPU Mass in Muckross:

1st Sunday of February, March, April, September,
October, November and December
at 11.15am in Muckross Park.

ANNUAL DINNER – 15th April 2011

The 2011 Annual Dinner will be held in Stillorgan Park Hotel on Friday 15th April 2011 at 7.30pm at a cost of €45 per head. We invite those who are 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 and 60+ years out of Muckross to organise a group of your classmates to celebrate at the dinner.

To book for the Annual Dinner please send a cheque for €45 each (*payable to Muckross Park PPU*) to the address on the Booking Form in this issue and you will be sent a Ticket to be brought along on the night. If you are planning a class reunion at the dinner we request that ONE person of that class be responsible to collect ALL names and cheques and forward them in bulk. Please contact us if you require a Group Booking Form. This will help greatly with bookings and avoid confusion. Large groups will be accommodated at adjoining tables.

Please Note: Telephone bookings will not be accepted and all tickets must be paid in advance no later than 8th April.



SCHOOL NEWS

Muckross Welcomes a new Principal and Deputy Principal

Congratulations to Caroline Lundy who was appointed as the new principal of Muckross Park last September. The new deputy principal is Ann Marie Mee, who has taught in Muckross for many years. We wish them all the best in their new roles.

Muckross Archive

The school is compiling its archive to protect the legacy of Muckross Park College. We would like to appeal to any past pupil, teacher or parent that may have any items of interest to contact us. Suggested items include photographs, letters, certificates, correspondence, awards, drawings, artifacts etc. If you have something that may be of interest to us please contact: Ms. Deirdre Mac Mathuna, Muckross Park College, Donnybrook, Dublin 4. Tel (01) 4914033 or email deirdre.macmathuna@dublin.ie

New School Orchestra

We are delighted to hear that the Music Department are in the process of setting up a school orchestra.

Sporting Congratulations!

The pupils of Muckross Park are involved in many sporting and extra curricular activities too numerous to include here. But we would like to pick out two achievements to tell you about. Sarah Twomey, a Transition Year student, won 2 gold medals at the Karate World Championships in Cyprus and The Transition Year Fitness Team beat the Gonzaga boys in a hockey challenge match. The girls won 5-2!

Well done all from the PPU.

OLD SCHOOL, NEW TRICKS

Have you ever wondered what has happened to the old school building, the convent, the prefabs, the lodge and the hostel since the opening of the new school? Well, here is an update which we hope you will find interesting.

In 2006 the Dominican sisters and Dublin City Council started planning together to use the old senior school as a space for immigrants and all the 'new' Irish to meet in a way that would be welcoming and respectful of the diversity of cultures and would facilitate integration.

In preparation for this new centre, renovations to the existing building were required to bring it up to modern standards. Work started and all the classrooms were gutted. However as a result of the economic downturn, Dublin City Council could no longer fund the project and work stopped. All the classroom areas are now boarded up. But we are delighted to report that the Concert Hall remains intact. We spoke to Sister Rose Elizabeth about this recently who said the community were looking to the future with confidence.

The hostel has been leased to UCD for its students and is now called UCD Halls. The Department of Education was due to remove the prefabs when the school moved to the new building but the cost of doing so proved too much so they remain on site. They were rented for some time to Gaelscoil Lios na nÓg while their own school was being renovated in Oakley Road. Now the all female Curves Gym is in situ. The lodge on the avenue is now a Montessori school.

The convent had a new heating system installed which caused a lot of disruption. As the main house is a listed building the work had to be carried out sympathetically and took some time to complete. This was long overdue and I'm sure that the 19 sisters who reside there were delighted with the extra heat during the snow over Christmas.

So as you see there is still plenty of life around the old campus.

2010 RAFFLE RESULTS

The Raffle took place at the Muckross PPU Annual Dinner on 23rd April 2010 in the Stillorgan Park Hotel. The value of the prizes was almost €1,500. Congratulations to the following winners:

- 1st Prize: One week self-catering for two at Old Grain Cottages, St. Mullins, Co. Carlow.
Winner: Madeleine Gaughan
- 2nd Prize: One year's drama class for one child from Emer Halpenny School of Drama.
Winner: Barbara Goff
- 3rd Prize: Two nights BB+One dinner in a Bewley's Hotel.
Winner: Madeleine McKeown (Doran)
- 4th Prize: Dinner & show for two at Johnnie Fox's Pub, Glencullen, Co. Dublin.
Winner: Joan Horan
- 5th Prize: Afternoon tea for two in the Four Seasons Hotel, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.
Winner: Katie O'Flynn (Duggan)
- 6th Prize: A one hour massage from Heaven Face and Body, Grafton Street, Dublin 2.
Winner: Rachel Staunton (6th Year)

Sincere thanks to our sponsors for their generosity in supplying the above prizes.

EASTER EGG HUNT



Maia Springael & Emma Kelleher enjoying last year's Easter Egg Hunt.

Past Pupils –
bring your children or grandchildren
to our Easter Egg Hunt
Sunday 3rd April 2011
12 Noon in Muckross Park

For bookings contact:
Grainne Cryan at
087-926 4003 or
Email: grainne@springael.info



2010 WRITERS WORKSHOP REVIEW

Left to right: David Rice, Emily Cox, Tony Davis and Catherine de Courcy at the 2010 Writers Workshop.

Last 6th March 2010 we had another good turnout for our popular Writers Workshop in the National Yacht Club, Dun Laoghaire. Tony Davis (husband of Gay Rodgers) had kindly agreed to be chairman for the afternoon. He welcomed everyone and introduced the 3 guest speakers, David Rice, Emily Cox and Catherine de Courcy who spoke about their books and experiences.

David Rice is director of the Killaloe Hedge-School of Writing. He has taught writing and editing skills for over 20 years in Ireland, China and America. His books include *The Pompeii Syndrome*, *Blood Guilt* and *Song of Tiananmen Square*. He gave everyone a great insight into writing clear and simple prose.

Emily Cox spoke about her first book, *Suicide, Ireland's Story*. The book covers the high rate of suicide here especially among males and how modern society drives individuals to such extremes. This subject generated an enormous amount of discussion.

Catherine de Courcy is an author, travel writer and historian as

well as a Muckross past pupil. She has written more than 10 books and is acknowledged as a world authority on zoos. She spoke about a number of her books including her recent book, *Dublin Zoo: an illustrated history*, which has been described by the Independent Zoo Enthusiasts Society, UK as 'probably the best ever zoo history from these islands'. She also spoke about her book *Adventure in Grief* which she wrote after her husband John's death by suicide in 2000.

After a coffee break during which more lively discussion took place, the winning entry for the short story competition was announced. The winner was Emer Halpenny who was presented with a book token for €50. You can read Emer's winning entry later in this issue.

Following this, Patricia O'Reilly's workshop put everyone through their paces. Patricia focused on fiction writing, covering the main ingredients of fiction – plot, characters and locations. Everyone got involved and there was plenty of interaction with ideas and story lines coming from all.

STAY IN TOUCH BY FACEBOOK AND EMAIL

Check out our Facebook page, Muckross Park College Past Pupils Union. We have over 450 friends at the moment so why not join us there.

Also the PPU has an email address, muckrossppu@ireland.com and we would love to hear from you. Email us now so we can add you to our address book. If you are in touch with other Muckross girls perhaps you would be good enough to let us have their email address. Remember to let us know if you have changed your email address or postal address recently. That way you won't miss out on Union news or the Muckross Mail. Likewise if you have news for us that we can put in the next issue of Muckross Mail we will be delighted to hear from you.



2011 WRITERS WORKSHOP & SHORT STORY COMPETITION

Win a €50 book voucher

Here is the opening sentence from

A week in December,

Sebastian Faulks' new novel:

'Five o'clock and freezing'

In your own words complete a short story in a maximum of 500 words, using this as the first line. Please return your entry to The Editor, Muckross Mail by email to muckrossppu@ireland.com or by post to 33 Hazel Avenue, Kilmacud, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, no later than **Wednesday 23rd February 2011**. Remember to include your name, address and telephone number.

Good luck and enjoy the experience. The winning entry will be published in the next edition of Muckross Mail and will also be read out (hopefully by the author) at the 2011 Writers Workshop.

The Workshop will take place on Saturday 26th February 2011 at 2pm in the National Yacht Club in Dun Laoghaire. We are delighted that Patricia O'Reilly will be with us again to run this year's workshop entitled **Making Every Word Count**. The event will start with short presentations and Q & A session from a number of guest speakers with a professional involvement in writing.

Ed: Details of the guest speakers were not to hand at time of going to print, but will be published on our website when available.

Membership Subscriptions

Please remember to renew your 2011 subscription. In an effort to cut down on administration we would greatly appreciate if those who pay by cheque each year could switch to a Standing Order. This would remove the necessity of sending out reminders. Please complete the Membership form at the back of this issue.

The Annual Subscription is €15 with a reduced rate of €10 for over 60s. *If renewing, please amend your existing Standing Order in line with the current amounts if necessary.*

Your subscriptions help towards various projects including the Benevolent Fund, the Playgroup Projects in Cape Town and the costs involved in the production of the Muckross Mail, and your support is greatly appreciated.



Claire Baxter, winner of the PPU golf outing, with the perpetual trophy.

MUCKROSS PARK GOLF SOCIETY

Our 8th Annual Golf Outing was held on 9th September last in Edmondstown Golf Club and 31 ladies competed on a beautiful sunny afternoon, followed by a most enjoyable dinner and prize giving later that evening. The winner of the Captain's Prize was Claire Baxter who plays in Elm Green. She came in with a score of 36 points, narrowly beating Janice Woodcock on the back 9. We are very grateful to Eadaoin Maher who kindly sponsored a wonderful array of prizes and has also offered to sponsor the prizes for the 2011. Thank you so much, Eadaoin, for your generosity.

Our Outing for 2011 will once again be held in Edmondstown Golf Club on the 8th September. This year's Captain is Moya Williams (Forde) and she may be contacted by Email at paulandmoya@gmail.com

To book your slot on the Time Sheet for the 2011 outing Email Annette Quigley (Soraghan) at quigleyannette@gmail.com or call 087-686 7376.

Darina Marshall, *Captain 2010*



A YEAR IN SOUTH AFRICA



Eavanna with one of the children in her care in South Africa.

What strikes me most about being home (apart from the challenging weather!) is what we take for granted in our everyday lives. Clean water, plenty of food and drink and cosy comfortable homes. My year in South Africa taught me that these things, which we consider normal, are luxuries to hundreds of thousands of people all across South Africa's vast and beautiful land.

I spent a year volunteering and travelling, arriving in Durban in October 2009, working first in Kokstad, a town in the Sisonke District of KwaZulu-Natal, about three hours from Durban. I was helping families to bring their ill children to the local hospital for appointments. I also devised a Hygiene Programme for the local crèches. I found the work so rewarding, as everything you do is so appreciated. The poverty was immense, yet the people were very happy and generous.

My family came to Cape Town for Christmas and I joined them there for a holiday. I had been in Cape Town and the wine-lands before, so it was familiar to me, with its majestic mountains and colourful patchwork of farmlands set in lovely valleys.

During the year I joined a group working in a school with children who had been orphaned when their parents died of HIV Aids. Though the facilities and resources were few, the children learned and the school provided a 'family' for them, otherwise they would have had to rely on the generosity of their already impoverished relatives.

From Easter to the end of October 2010 I worked with 'Edge of Africa' in Knysna, on the Garden Route. This organisation provides volunteers for two major projects, one environmental and one medical. I was the medical co-ordinator, placing volunteers in the hospital and the outlying clinics. My work was challenging but seeing the projects through was extremely satisfying. One such project was establishing a vegetable garden, where the local women planted and cultivated their own vegetables. I used to be one of those people who thought all vegetables came from Superquinn!

Overall my experience was life changing. I hope I contributed something, but the problems there are so vast and overwhelming that it is difficult to see the impact. My year would not have been possible but for the financial help given to me from Muckross Park. I was supported by the staff and pupils through a fund raising event and also received support from the Past Pupils' Union. I thank you all most sincerely for this. I feel so privileged to have attended Muckross and lucky to have such backing and support.

Eavanna Maloney

Ed: Eavanna is the daughter of teacher Dan Maloney who has been a great friend of the PPU by attending the Santa Party each year as Santa's 'representative'.

2012 – The Centenary of the Past Pupils' Union

To celebrate 100 years of the PPU in 2012 we are planning a Book of Memories which will be edited by Valerie Cox, a former President of the Muckross Past Pupils' Union and the founder of the Muckross Mail. She is working with other past pupils including Patricia O'Reilly, Helen Litton, Brenda Moore and Catherine de Courcy, all published authors in their own right, to produce the centenary book.

If you have any memories and stories you would like to share or have any memorabilia or photos which could be included in the book, please contact Valerie Cox at 087-685 8406 or email muckrossppu@ireland.com. We are also looking for advertisers and sponsors, so if you would like to buy advertising space to promote your business please contact Valerie.

We want to celebrate this major anniversary. This is YOUR union, so if you have any ideas about how we can mark our centenary please contact any member of the committee.



WINNING ENTRY FROM 2010 SHORT STORY COMPETITION

Last year we ran a competition in conjunction with the Writers Workshop. We gave the first line from a well known novel – ‘*Even before I came to my senses, I knew my sister was dead*’ and asked you to complete a short story in a maximum of 500 words. Entries for the competition doubled from 2009 and we hope you enjoy reading the following winning entry from Emer Halpenny.

Even before I came to my senses, I knew my sister was dead. There was no sound coming from her, for one thing. My own breath was loud in my ears. My heart pounded, every beat an accusation. My thoughts were bizarre. They jumped around my head in no order. I thought, is this real? Dear God in Heaven, dear Mother Mary have I actually taken her life from her? I thought, are my lips blue? They feel like they should be blue. So strange that I

should have the same sensation as when her bloody dog barks at me. Adrenaline comes when it's needed. The body does not distinguish between these things. Dogs, killing; it's all the same. I am still lying on my back, my eyes closed against the whole sorry mess. Breathe. I don't know if I am talking to myself or to her. Am I hurt? An ache in my arm and then the reminder: ah yes, I am holding the hammer still, my fist so tight my whole arm is in pain. She won't have survived that. A blow to the head – I remember now. I hit her in the eye. I turn myself into the foetal position, hugging of all things, the weapon. No. No, no, no. My twin. I should look at her. I am afraid. Is this real? When I look at her will I see her ghost, next to her like a failed guardian angel, staring at me? Or is she alive still? I can't hear her because my heart beats in my ears. That's right. I've had a shock. I might only have imagined it. My mind, playing tricks. But I remember, as I did it, I remember her mascara was smeared. I had enough time to think, she's sorry after all. But too late to stop... Ah. No. I will look at the weapon so. I am going to open my eyes and look. But I can smell blood, an earthy smell. I think of soil and minerals and her bare feet on warm brown earth. I uncurl myself from the thing that killed her and stretch my arm out. I will touch her skin. Then I will know. If she is cold, then I will look at her. That is the hand of a dead person alright. There is...nothing here. She is gone. She has left me alone with her body, the one she kept so well all these years. Better than mine and yet we started out with the same model. Now I have both. My fat one and her beautiful dead one, to carry with me. Her parting gift. I would like to see what she looks like now. Now, with her eye gone and her golden locks dyed blood red. I might be sick. I have a bad taste in my mouth. It's so dark. I will open my eyes in a minute. I will look at her. Soon.

Emer Halpenny, Class of 1985

BACK FIELD SMOKERS

It's only now, twenty five years later, that the seedy secrets from the back field smokers can safely come out. Oh, if Sister Norah could see me now – the worst kind of ex smoker, intolerant to the ends of my (unstained) finger tips; why, she'd laugh. "You!" she'd say disbelievingly, "Anti smoker? That's priceless!"

I was caught smoking so many times that even I wondered if it was rotting my brain. One time, so engrossed was I in some debate with two smoke mates (who shall remain nameless, but I can report they too saw the light and no longer indulge) that I still had the cigarette in my fingers walking past the main school building – yes, right there in front of the old willow tree. My friend alerted me to it simply by the widening of her eyes. I often wondered if I had been spotted by a teacher who took pity on me and turned a blind eye, because to be honest, I spent all of fifth year outside the office, encountering pitying looks from sixth years. There was an entire day spent locked in Miss O'Donoghue's office while it was decided what was to be done with me now, my having been suspended from school three times in a row, and only weeks apart. As I sat there contemplating my brain size, three fellows in crime (who had *not* been caught, the wily things) offered whispered words of encouragement through the letter box: "You're going to be expelled for sure, Emer. They *have* to make an example of you."

The problem was that we broke a tradition. For many years the smoking venue of choice for wild Muckross gals was the 'lane' in the back field. One could see on-coming teachers in good time, but it got a tad cold in the winter, and of course we were far too cool to wear our coats. So we searched for warmer laneways (bird's eye view from Sister Norah's office, not very clever, but I was happy to rule that venue out for my friends.) Eight of us thought under the stage was a nice dry dusty place to have a smoke...we were told it was only luck that we didn't burn the school down. That's two suspensions and counting, Emer. Toilet cubicle; that one was bad because I thought someone was imitating the Kerry accent of our Principal, so it seemed like I was reckless and carefree about my fate.

In fairness, twenty five years on, I get it now. It can't have been easy for the teachers, but in my defence, I really wasn't trying to break rules. I was just a girl who liked smoking and didn't see the dangers therein – from a getting caught point of view that is. Sister Norah did her best. We came to an agreement whereby I would hand my cigarettes (10 Major, just like the bus-drivers) over to her in the morning and pick them up at half past three. I was asked not to smoke in my uniform as I was representing the school. Although I rolled my eyes at that and presumably broke it, I appreciate now the image I was giving out. Making an example of myself, I suppose. My daughter will don the green uniform the year after next. I don't want to see her letting the school down, with socks baggy around her ankles and a school bag with anarchic band names on it. Heaven forefend she might smoke, and if she does (please don't let her please don't let her) let's hope it's not in her uniform and leaning against a bus stop somewhere. Oh, and don't let her curse. Or look at the boys from Gonzaga. Or bunk off double Geography. At the very least, don't let her get caught.

Emer Halpenny, Class of 1985



DOMINICAN FARM AND ECOLOGY CENTRE, WICKLOW

Sr Julie Newman on the farm overlooking Wicklow town and harbour



The Big Bang. Evolution. Climate change. Organic farming. What do all of these have in common? Dominicans of course!

A beautiful sunny morning last August found me driving to Wicklow. Not to Brittas Bay with a picnic but to meet Julie Newman at An Tairseach, the Dominican Farm and Ecology Centre in Wicklow town.

Julie, an energetic woman clad in trousers and trainers, met me in the car park of the Farm Shop and took me through to the Ecology Centre where tea and biscuits and Sr. Marian O'Sullivan were waiting. It was then that I realised that Julie was also a Dominican sister.

Over tea they told me how in 1992 the community decided to live in a more sustainable way and care for the earth. They have 70 acres attached to the convent and by 1997 the farm was converted to organic. Then in 2005 the Ecology Centre opened. The Centre offers a wide variety of courses and retreats for people of all ages from organic gardening to alternative energy, art, dance, meditation, vegetarian cooking, theology and spirituality. In September 2010 a five day course 'The Epic of Evolution' took place. The presenters were Pauline McGrath OP, Michael Rodgers, a Kiltegan priest, and Prof. Larry Edwards who has lectured on the Universe Story at the California Institute and University of San Francisco. These courses attract students from all over the world.

The Centre has residential facilities for 17 people and Julie took me on a tour where I saw the bright large dining room where healthy seasonal organic meals are served during the courses. There are very comfortable en suite bedrooms, most of which have a small kitchen, with a view either over Wicklow Bay or the farm. These rooms can also be booked for private retreats in June each year.

Then Julie and I headed outside to the vegetable garden where corn on the cob, peppers and various vegetables and fruit abounded. In the yard I met Billy and Bobby, rare Kerry bog ponies who were disappointed that I didn't bring them treats!

As we walked up through the fields Julie asked if I could climb a gate. It was the first time I've climbed a five-bar gate with a nun! We passed



Kitchen garden and polytunnels with the Ecology Centre in the background.

the main tillage area and their suckler herd of cattle and sheep, all organically reared. I don't think the animals really appreciate the view over Wicklow Head and lighthouse which were wonderful under blue skies. We continued on to the 10 acres which are set aside as a conservation area including a pond and 3 acres of wetlands. This is a sanctuary for wild-life where they maintain habitats to increase biodiversity. More than 9,000 trees have been planted including Scots pine, alder, white beam and mountain ash. There are benches all around where you can sit and read or just relax in the quiet surroundings.

All of this takes money to run so the Farm Shop is open on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday and you can also find them at the farmers markets at Dalkey and Bray. They receive a government grant which helps towards wages for the farm manager and staff. You can also help by sponsoring a tree in your own name or as a gift (see contact details below). Visit www.ecocentrewicklow.ie for more information.

Back in 1965 the Dominicans in Muckross introduced driving lessons for 5th and 6th years. This was very progressive at the time and I am delighted to see the progressive Dominican spirit still alive and well and living in Wicklow.

Gay Rodgers, Class of 1966

A Message from Cape Town



Children having their midday meal in a converted shipping container

We had an email from Sr Caitriona in Cape Town giving us an update on the Izimvozethu Playschool Project. Here is a short extract from it:

'We were overjoyed to get your donation of €500 at the end of 2009 and like you to know that it was put to full use in providing nourishing food for the preschool children during 2010, it was a great relief for young mothers to be assured of a place where they knew that their little ones would not only be cared for, but also receive breakfast and a mid-day meal. Thank you, Muckross Past Pupils Union, for your generosity in reaching out to the mothers and children in this part of South Africa.'

You will be glad to know that some of the wretched shipping containers used as playrooms have been repaired and extended, a children's jungle gym erected and grass planted to improve the physical conditions for the children coming to the Playgroup and for their teachers.'



MEETING EMMA DONOGHUE



Shortly after we got our Inter Cert results in Muckross in 1969, our classmate Helen Donoghue announced that she had a new baby sister. The baby, the youngest of eight, was to be called Emma.

Fast forward forty-one years and I'm sitting at a reading in Trinity College, listening to Emma Donoghue, fiction writer, playwright, Booker Prize nominee. She reads from her recently published novel *Room* in a lively, fun-loving way, just as you'd expect someone's younger sister to do.

Room is the story of Ma and her young son Jack and their interdependence in captivity and in society. It is a novel that explores the contradiction of freedom within confinement and restriction in liberty. It addresses big subjects but, as Emma says it can never get too pompous as it is told in the voice of a five-year-old child. Children ask the big questions but very quickly return to bodily functions! Emma has had many literary influences, not least growing up in a family where her father, Denis Donoghue, was professor of English in UCD. However she never read his work until after she had left home. Shelves and shelves of his books "were just wallpaper" she says.

At the reading I am with my daughter (Aifric Downey, class of 2007) and we are both secretly proud that this famous writer is one of us - a Muckross past pupil. Afterwards I ask Emma about her school days. Are there teachers she remembers? "A Miss Foley and a Miss Doyle for English. Yes, that's where I learned to dig deep into a poem... I remember Walter de la Mere's poem about an owl" she says. Following her time in Muckross she studied English and French at UCD and took her Ph.D. at Cambridge. She now lives in Canada with her partner and two children.

I read *Room* recently. It is a touching account of a mother-child relationship, reminding me in some ways of the father-son relationship in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. Although the physical setting is an eleven-by-eleven-foot room with one skylight and a bolted door, the atmosphere within is light and somehow magical. We get the sense of an articulate five-year-old, Jack, who has had the benefit of his very loving and literary Ma from whom he has learned so much about life and the world even though he has not experienced 'Outside' yet. It is heart-warming to see how they both enjoy the nursing relationship, without the disapproval society often loads on mothers who breastfeed beyond babyhood.

Emma used her own son as a language role-model for Jack. To sound genuinely childlike she replicated a typical five-year-old's

speech patterns, for example incorrect use of past tense "I brang" and exaggerations "my jumbo megatron transformerblaster". This novel does what literary fiction should do; it brings you to another place, to a situation which seems implausible but in the hands of a capable writer such as Emma Donoghue is rendered plausible.

Emma describes *Room* as one of her easiest novels to write. "It has a cleaner structure than my other fiction". She wanted to explore the limits of intimacy and trust by placing a mother and child in a room together. She says all parents are trying to find the balance between protectiveness and freedom. She dared to imagine *Room*. If you haven't read it yet, dare to read it now.

Nollaig Rowan-Downey, Class of 1971

Ed: Emma Donoghue was short-listed for the 2010 Booker Prize and also won Novel of the Year at the Irish Book Awards.

UNION DAY



Some of the 2010/11 committee after their election at the AGM on Union Day last year. Front row l-r: Sr Barnabas, Beatrice Doran and Gay Rodgers. Back row l-r: Valerie Cox, Niamh Gourley, Philo Butler, Claire Johns, Margot Doyle and Felicity Coll.

Union Day will take place on Sunday 6th March 2011 in Muckross Park. The format will be Mass at 11.15am followed by the AGM after which refreshments will be served. It is only by attending the AGM that we can hear your views on how you feel the PPU is performing and hear any new ideas for events and objectives for the coming year and in particular for our centenary in 2012. Please support your PPU committee and we look forward to seeing lots of you on Union Day.



MUSHY PEAS

As a child I was an enthusiastic eater, except when mushy peas were on the menu. I hated them - their look, smell and taste, and the way they oozed green around the edges.

Ours was a house where it was a cardinal sin to leave food on your plate. 'Think of the starving babies in Africa,' my mother would plead. And when I wouldn't, she'd remove the fork from my hand, scoop up a mush of peas and hold them to my lips which, in anticipation, I'd firmly shut. As the peas grew colder and yuckier the more determined she became pressing forkfuls against my unyielding mouth. From experience I knew she'd sit opposite me until I gave in. Eventually I'd swallow the lot until only the green ooze remained.

One day I had a brainwave. A fairy tale brainwave. If I hid the peas there would be none to eat. But where could I hide them? No corner of our house escaped my mother's speckled grey feather duster. Then I remembered the story of the squirrel who, afraid he'd be hungry during winter hibernation, hid a hazelnut up each nostril.

I managed to get four peas up my nose - two on either side. That there was many more rattling around in the Marrowfat box didn't in the least faze me. At the age of four I had no conception of quantity. For all I knew, one pea could feed a whole family.

My only problem was that with my nose blocked, I'd have to take great gulping breaths of air in and out of my mouth.

When mammy came on me I was gasping. Afterwards she'd

say that I was turning blue before her eyes and she was certain I was having some kind of fit. She said 'Omigod', and opened the window to call across the garden wall to our nurse-neighbour.

I started to cry and a bullet-like pea shot from each nostril. Pulling me this way and that, the neighbour and mammy explored the remaining contents of my nose. The nurse worried about my ears getting blocked and mammy gave me little kisses. By now my breath was a sob and my sob was a breath.

The nurse held me straight and thumped my back and said something about hospital. I hated her and bellowed as loud as I could. 'That's good. Crying like that might shift the remainder.'

But it didn't and then she got the idea of holding me upside down by my ankles while mammy banged on my back. I screamed ever louder, and the remaining two peas torpedoed to the floor. When I was upright again, mammy shook me by the shoulders and told me what a bold girl I was, and she asked the neighbour to stay for a cup of tea and a slice of cherry cake.

But we never had mushy peas again.

Patricia O'Reilly, *Class of 1959*

Ed: Patricia's latest novel: *A Type of Beauty, the Story of Kathleen Newton (1854-1882)* is in the shops now. Also visit www.patriciaoreilly.net

Thank You to all the Sponsors of our 2011 Raffle

This year's raffle has really fantastic prizes which we hope will generate a bumper fundraising.

- 1st Prize:** 2 nights B&B+1D mid-week break for 2 in Westport Plaza & Castlecourt Resort, Westport, Co. Mayo.
- 2nd Prize:** 2 night mid-week break for 2 in Meyrick Hotel, Eyre Square, Galway.
- 3rd Prize:** 1 year's drama class for 1 child (age 3.5 to teens) from Emer Halpenny School of Drama.
- 4th Prize:** €200 Voucher for Brown Thomas.
- 5th Prize:** Dinner for 2 in Purple Sage Restaurant at the Stillorgan Park Hotel.
- 6th Prize:** €50 Voucher for the National Concert Hall.

Draw will take place on Friday 15th April 2011

Tickets are €5 each or book of 5 for €20. If you did not receive you tickets with the Muckross Mail or you would like extra tickets please Email: muckrossppu@ireland.com or Telephone 087-638 3683.

Veronica Wynne, Gay Rodgers and Cathy O'Connor (class of 1966) had a mini reunion last August when Veronica was over from Canada where she has lived for many years.





DONNYBROOK TO SYDNEY

My life journey has taken me from Donnybrook to Sydney in 56 years. I spent three very memorable years at Muckross from 1960. I fondly remember Sr Barnabas, Sr Vincenzo, Sr Louis Dominic, Sr Francis and Sr Regina. I particularly remember my early science classes with Sr Frances. The skeleton in her cupboard fascinated me and she even made a lesson on levers seem interesting. I loved hockey, Hiawatha and many other things about my days in Muckross. I left because the school was unable to provide honours mathematics and science subjects. At that time girls were not expected to have careers.

After finishing the Leaving Cert I completed a BSc at UCD and left Ireland for Toronto, Canada. There I married my husband who I had met at UCD and had three children. My time in Canada was spent working for Bell Telephone and then while at home with the children doing community service with other young mothers in mothers groups and other child focused activities. In 1980 my husband

decided Australia would provide more potential for our children and it would also be a safer place if there was a world war. He never mentioned bushfires, snakes or sharks!

We arrived in Sydney with no jobs and three children in November 1980. The purple jacaranda trees were in full bloom. Sydney looked so beautiful. We spent six months in Manley before moving to the inner west and establishing a second hand shop in Croydon. There was still no science in my daily life. I operated the shop every afternoon but spent most mornings in the local primary school helping out with mothers club, uniform sales and the canteen. I found doing volunteer work in the local school a great way to integrate into the local community. I was lonely after leaving my great friends in Canada.

In 1985 I decided I wanted to complete my Diploma in education. The NSW government was short of science teachers so the time seemed right to use my science degree and

in 1986 I was posted to a school in Western Sydney. In 1991 I became the Western Sydney science consultant which was a great job. In 1995 the NSW government changed and decided to send the consultants back to schools. I was given an opportunity to switch to working for the commonwealth government developing a teaching resource for schools. In 2004 the National Measurement Institute was formed. The organisation I had worked for since 1995 was one of three that merged to form the institute. I was given the position of Training Manager for the institute. Another job I love!

I now have five grand children. Two live in Sydney and three in Jersey UK. I have a beautiful garden in the Blue Mountains and am very happy with my lot. Life has been good to me and I am grateful for the grounding I received from the teaching staff at Muckross in the early sixties.

Marian Haire (nee Walsh)

AGM and Nominations for the 2011/2012 Committee

The AGM will take place on Union Day on Sunday 6th March 2011. As a number of the present Committee will be stepping down at the AGM we are looking for nominations or PPU members to volunteer to join the new Committee. We have had quite a few of the more recent past pupils join the Union in the last few years and we would like to see them represented on the Committee to bring new ideas to the PPU.

The Committee only meet approx 6 times a year. So as you see it will not eat into much of your time! If you are interested please contact Claire Johns (Doyle), Hon Secretary at 087-221 8602 prior to the AGM or email us at muckrossppu@ireland.com

Received from Egypt via the PPU Facebook Page

I'm a graduate of Muckross Park, Dublin, class 1994; I'm Egyptian and my dad was working in the Egyptian embassy that time. I did the Leaving Certificate in one year 1993-1994 and my principal was Sr Norah O'Connor. She was a lovely lady and I was in contact with her for many years after I left Ireland. I had very good grades and I had lovely friends, such as Deidre Hanley, Sheila Doyle, Eithne Wall and more.

I came back to enter college here in Egypt (Tourism university) and I worked as a Tour guide during my four years studies. In 1998 after graduation I worked as a flight attendant for 2 years in Gulf Air, based in United Kingdom of Bahrain, then back to Egypt in 2001 and worked in a tourism company for two years then with Mercedes Benz in 2002 for three years, now in Henkel - a German multinational for detergents and cosmetics since 2005 as CFO Executive Assistant.

I'll never forget the lovely time I spent in Ireland but unfortunately I couldn't attend the graduation party; I only attended the pre-debs as I went back the following summer after graduation but couldn't stay till the graduation party because of my studies beginning at college. Irish people are lovely and Ireland is a beautiful country. Thanks to all the teachers, Sr Norah, colleagues and all the Irish people I dealt with.

Regards, **Soha El Kady**, Class of 1994

PPU Monthly Mass

The monthly PPU Mass (see Forthcoming Events for times and dates) is not restricted to past pupils as some of you may think. Bring along your husband, children, boyfriend, anyone! Mass in the chapel is followed by tea/coffee and biscuits and hopefully some news and gossip!

The Mass on the 1st Sunday in November is dedicated to all deceased past pupils. If there is anyone whose name you would like to be read out do let us know. Please do not blame the committee if a name is omitted - we don't know unless we are advised.

The **Combined Dominican Schools Unions' Mass** will take place in Muckross Park on **Sunday 2nd October 2011 at 11.15am**. If you have friends who went to Ballyfermot, Cabra, Dun Laoghaire, Eccles Street & Griffith Ave, Falls Road, Fortwilliam, Portstewart, Santa Sabina, Sion Hill, Taylor's Hill or Wicklow or any other Dominican school tell them about it and bring them along too. We were delighted to see so many Dominican past pupils at the 2010 Mass and look forward to welcoming you all again in 2011.



ANNUAL DINNER – BOOKING FORM

Friday 15th April 2011 in the Stillorgan Park Hotel • Tickets €45 • Dinner 7.30pm
EARLY BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL - TELEPHONE BOOKINGS WILL NOT BE TAKEN

I wish to book _____ places @ €45 each, and enclose cheque for €_____ (payable to Muckross Park PPU).
Please supply names of all those attending on a separate page indicating anniversary year if applicable. Large groups will be accommodated at adjoining tables. • Please indicate any special dietary requirements

First Name: Surname:

Year Left: Maiden Name:

Address:

Tel No.: Email:

please print clearly

Bookings must be received **not later than 8th April** and should be sent to:
Muckross Park PPU, c/o Niamh Gourley, 110 Marsham Court, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin.

MUCKROSS PARK PAST PUPILS UNION – MEMBERSHIP FORM

I wish to join / renew my membership (delete as appropriate). Please complete the Standing Order below

(Block Letters)

First Name: Last Name: Maiden Name:

Address:

Year Left: Tel. No.: Mobile:

Email:

please print clearly

Occupation: Have you any professional or other skills to offer to the PPU?

Annual Membership Fee: €15 or Seniors (over 60s) €10 • From non euro zone area send £10 Sterling
If you prefer not to pay by Standing Order please send a cheque (payable to Muckross PPU) to the address shown below.

STANDING ORDER

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Name of Bank | | | | | | | | | | |
| Address of Bank | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sort Code (6 digits) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Account Number (8 digits) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Account Holder Name | | | | | | | | | | |

Pay now and/or on the 1st day of JULY of each year until further notice the sum of € to the credit of:

- Muckross Past Pupils' Union Account Account No: 17107621
 - Bank of Ireland, 34 College Green, Dublin 2 Sort Code: 90-07-89
- and charge the same to my account.

Please cancel all previous standing instructions in favour of Muckross Past Pupils' Union.

Signature: _____ Date: _____