



MILTON KEYNES IRISH WELFARE SUPPORT GROUP

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MK Irish Welfare Support Group Newsletter



Newsletter November
2024

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Dates for your Diary

8th December 2024: Christmas party: Doors open 12.30pm for lunch at 1pm

LUNCH MUST BE BOOKED. LAST DATE FOR BOOKING IS WEDNESDAY 20TH NOVEMBER

Closed for Christmas break 2024 : 25th December and 1st January 2025. We return to lunch club on **8th January 2025.**

BOOKING / CANCELLING LUNCH

To book, cancel or make changes to lunch bookings, please ring **Rita** on **07975 801510** by Monday at the latest – you may be asked to pay for uncanceled bookings if you fail to inform us. Thank you for your co-operation.

PET'S CORNER

Many members of the lunch club have pets.

We would like to hear about your pets and what they get up to, what they mean to you. Perhaps you rescued a pet in need and would like to share your experiences.

Is your pet clever, comical or a great companion? Have you always had pets or are you a newbie?.....All pets welcome.....

COULD YOU BENEFIT FROM EXPLORING WHAT THE INTERNET HAS TO OFFER?

AGE UK have dedicated Digital Champions on hand to support you to make the most out of the internet through **FREE** sessions delivered safely over the phone or face-to-face. They can guide you through the tasks that you want to do! Whether that be video calling family and friends, online shopping or pursuing your hobbies and interests, they are there to help. Please call or email them on **01908 550700 / info@ageukmiltonkeynes.org.uk**

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GETTING TO KNOW OUR MEMBERS.....

We all have life stories that bring us to where we are today. We would like to know a little of your story if you are happy to share....

I had the pleasure of meeting Mary Howley for lunch recently and we had a lovely chat about things.

Mary is a Galway girl living happily in Bletchley these days. I asked Mary how she came to be in England. Mary arrived in England around 1967. Mary went to Lewes, East Sussex and started her Nursing career with the NHS. Mary relocated to Barking, Essex and completed her SEN nursing training and qualification.

It wasn't all work because Mary found the love of her life at the nurse's dance night at the Shandon Dance Hall in Romford. Mary had a happy marriage and 2 children. Both children became successful in their chosen careers. Mary is very proud of their achievements. Sadly Mary lost her husband in 2021. He was a hard worker and worked as a crane driver, one of McAlpines fusiliers no less. For those not in the know they were the Irish labourers who migrated to Britain to help rebuild London after the blitz.

Mary has 4 grandchildren to her credit but is kept busy with her new exciting venture. Yes, Mary has adopted a stray dog from Macedonia. He came to her just after she lost her husband. Billy the spaniel has his feet right under the table and Mary wouldn't be without him now. They make great companions for each other! Mary loves coming to the lunch club and enjoys meeting friends and catching up. Mary does a grand job with the raffle tickets too!

Mary spent many years in the London and Essex areas but has been in MK for the last 13 years. Mary still has family in Galway City. Mary misses Ireland but is always glad to get back home to MK.

To close our chat I asked Mary to tell me something about herself that we might not know about her. I was surprised to discover Mary had a tattoo done when she was 50 years old. Brave woman!!

Thank you for sharing your experiences.

THE HISTORY OF HALLOWEEN: FROM ANCIENT ORIGINS TO MODERN TRADITIONS

Halloween is a beloved holiday celebrated around the world on 31 October. It is a time filled with spooky costumes, jack-o'-lanterns, and trick-or-treating. But have you ever wondered how these traditions came to be? The history of Halloween is rich and fascinating, with roots that trace back thousands of years.

We celebrate Halloween these days with trick or treating, fun costumes, pumpkin carving, and haunted houses, but where did it all begin?

Forget the horror novel that you're too scared to read and instead, why not tuck into this story with a pumpkin spice latté on hand? Halloween occurs every year on 31 October. The name Halloween is derived from 'All Hallow's Eve' because 'All Hallow's Day' is on 1 November.

Thousands of years ago, 31 October marked the beginning of Samhain (pronounced Sow-in). This pagan festival marked the ending of summer and the beginning of winter, foretelling the darker days to come and even alluding to death for some.

People also believed that Samhain blurred the lines between the living and the dead, allowing the dead to walk the earth for the day.

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Therefore, it was common to ward off evil spirits by lighting bonfires and wearing costumes. Anyone wearing a costume would blend in as one of the dead and remain untouched by evil forces.

Over time, Halloween evolved into a day of fun activities. Children began collecting treats from their neighbours, and families carved pumpkins into lanterns.

One theory suggests that trick or treating originated during Samhain. People would go door to door offering performances in exchange for food and drink they would then use to appease the spirits.

The tradition of carving pumpkins developed much later. Irish people used to carve faces into turnips to scare away the dead during the festival of Samhain.

The switch from the turnip to pumpkin happened soon after the great potato famine of the 1800s. It caused a mass migration of Irish people to settle in the USA. It was concluded that pumpkins were a lot easier to carve, and so the famous jack-o-lantern was born.

Nowadays, it is not uncommon to find a bonfire on Halloween night or children bobbing for apples at a party.

The history of Halloween in Ireland exposes the more old-fashioned games that centred around divination. One game that we don't see very often today involves six saucers laid out on a table, with each saucer containing something different.

The child playing the game would close their eyes and reach out to touch a saucer, the contents of which would predict their future.

A pound meant they would become rich and a ring meant they would be first to marry. Clay meant they would be first to die and flour meant they would become a baker. Meanwhile, water meant they would cross the ocean and rosary beads meant they would become a priest or nun.

What's more, the traditional Halloween fruitcake 'Bairín Breac' (Barm brack in English) was also used to predict the future.

Different objects would be hidden in the cake, each one revealing the future to its beholder.

Bairín Breac is still eaten in Ireland every autumn. It's easy to make or can be bought in Irish supermarkets around Halloween time.

Although it's not associated with divination anymore, you can still buy Bairín Breac with a ring hidden inside. We can remember the trouble we caused as children, tearing apart the Bairín Breac in search of that precious ring!

I tried to get a barm brack with a ring in for the raffle but couldn't find one in England!!

Many thanks again to all our members, volunteers and sponsors for all your continued support.

Happy and prosperous Christmas to you all
Nollaig faoi shéan agus faoi shonas díobh go léir



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