



# THE YEAR IS 1986

The year is 1986 and I was scuttling to school,  
The jumper felt quite itchy, but the He-Man bag was cool.  
We had obligation to the carpet, to stop it getting dirty,  
So, we changed into our slippers 'til the bell blared at 1:30.

By first class we had jobs, like banging out the dusters,  
We'd tidy up and hurtle home in time to watch Blockbusters.  
We didn't store our songs, on iPhones or devices,  
We listened to Atlantic 252 en route to Crazy Prices!

The principal calls us to the hall and I can't tell you how it feels,  
Watching Ronnie Whelan on a telly that has wheels!  
We read Ann and Barry and played songs from our tapes,  
On Fridays we did art by rolling márla into shapes.

The Snowcream van would come along, with milk in tiny cartons,  
I was banned from taking penalties if I wore my big Doc Martens.  
I got homework at the weekend and a tantrum I would throw,  
If I had to go to bed before the last part of Glenroe.

I didn't walk to school, as the journey was too far,  
Our steed? A Ford Cortina; my neighbour's supercar!  
I played in fields and rode my bike each June to September  
And now, the teacher, in mindful pause, remembering to remember.

— *Richard Daly.*  
*Waterpark N.S.*

# SUMMERTIME

Seagulls strutting, window shopping in  
Unsuspecting hands, laden with refreshing tonics from a  
Midday sun that paints with a palette of  
Merry tones, while castles crash and crumble from an invasion of  
Expressive limbs, and their architects recline in vexed anguish and plot immediate  
Revenge on their sneering sibling, until a parental peacemaker makes a  
Timely intervention, waving the white, topped with a flake.  
Ices raised to toast when uninvited pilots perform an in-flight  
Mugging, no charge, as other beady-eyed bandits  
Eye another predicable pod, more gullible than gull.

— *Aidan Swords.*  
*An Grianán National School.*

# RUT

My hands are warm  
My heart is cold  
My eyes are wet  
My head is sold  
My clothes are together  
My stomach is in knots  
My legs carry me far  
My soles have had their lot  
My arms carry my children  
My shoulders carry the world  
My mouth stays closed  
My mind is in a swirl

Outward, inward  
Open wide, closed shut  
Wide awake, fast asleep  
I hope it's just a rut.

— *Andrea Lyons.*  
*St. Declan's N.S.*

# ARE WE ALL EQUAL?

Let's go back to the very beginning  
When men were men and women were women  
And if women had any complaints about this  
They'd be put on a stake and branded a witch.  
The obvious reason that women were there  
Was to obey their husbands and produce an heir.  
18<sup>th</sup> century arrived with an enlightening solution  
Jean Jacques for men's rights then the French Revolution.  
Mary Wallstonecraft stood with a voice of her own  
Suggesting that women work outside the home.  
Whilst Britain and Europe were changing their ways  
The new world America was in its early days.  
Here their belief was in sharing the load  
Women and men worked together we're told.  
However, by mid-19<sup>th</sup> century things began to move toward  
The women for home and the men for the sword.  
In 1909 Roosevelt convened things must alter  
And encouraged the men to be active fathers.  
The 'Nuclear family' was introduced soon  
Back to women in the kitchen and men to the moon.  
The 'Natural family' both expressive and instrumental  
Proved false and in time it became detrimental.  
And in came the sixties with new feminist notions  
But for family life proved a poisonous potion.  
Children lost out while women climbed the ladder  
Now mothers were working as well as the father.  
Childminders began to be part of the clan  
But then in the nineties arrived the 'New Man'.  
Comes home from work, plays with kids, makes the dinner  
And still mows the lawn, helps with chores. He's a winner.  
Alas...the househusband is a mythical creature

Although some of these requirements may often feature.

In Sweden, for example, all are made equal

Excellent job opportunities for all of their people.

Women in power jobs with the same pay as men

But in the family home it's unequal again.

O.k. let's be fair..let's hear it for the boys

Surely, they can iron shirts and play with kid's toys.

They do work quite hard in the home it is said

D.I.Y and car maintenance and they do warm a bed

And the fact is the difference is not only in biology

It's in makeup and brain and their general psychology.

Women can do ten things all at one time

Men's brain tends to drift when they turn on an iron.

A house filled with kids is deemed as sheer chaos

But with our networked brain it is easy for us.

While life in society has taken many new routes and

women have gained from revolts and disputes, she'll

stand for election or run a business of her own and still

clean the kitchen when she returns home.

— *Eileen Murphy. (Eibhlin Ui Mhurchú)*  
*Gaelscoil na nDéise, Port Láirge.*

# THIRD CLASS POEM

We came to third class wondering  
Just what we had in store,  
Little did we realise  
It would be a year like never before.

We started in September  
New teachers and new school  
And though we were a little afraid  
It was really kind of cool.

We swam and learned our tables,  
Wrote stories, sang in time  
Dressed up for Halloween,  
Coped with a new lunchtime.

We practiced our gymnastics,  
Learned new things every day,  
Red Kettle and the cinema  
Christmas was on the way.

We started in 2020  
With resolutions for New Year  
There were mentions of a virus  
It couldn't interfere!

Our teachers had us running  
We thought we'd all pass out  
We practiced for the Peace Proms  
Where we sang and danced about.

We knew that things were changing  
We practiced how to sneeze,  
We washed our hands for twenty  
And hoped that it would ease.

We came to school on Thursday  
Little did we understand?  
The 12<sup>th</sup> of March would be  
Historical in our land.

We wish it had been different  
But it didn't go that way  
Our normal life has changed  
We helped to save the day.

We learn online at home  
New topics every week  
We miss our friends and school  
Sometimes it has been bleak.

We near the end of third  
It isn't how we planned  
We learned new skills at home  
And are probably very tanned.

Our year is nearly over  
Your teachers wish you well  
We missed our time together  
We even missed the bell!

— *Deirdre Atkins.*  
*Our Lady of Mercy S.N.S.*

# FALSE HOPE

A beach, a Sunday in winter,  
4 pm.  
Bundled in our coats, we walk its length without much in the way of chat  
between us.  
We don't touch.  
Bits of rope and shell and stone litter our path.  
You stop and reach for a stick and you set to work writing our names in the  
sand.  
"There", you say. "That's us".  
I smile weakly, certain of my false hope.  
Certain of nothing at all.

— *Siobhán Ryan.*  
*Kilcash N.S.*

# A DIFFERENT YEAR

I walk the lonely corridors frozen in time,  
Leprechauns and St.Patrick's Day Art make it feel like a crime,  
To be here in school on a sunny day in May,  
But for this virus we all have to pay,  
To give up our loved ones for just a little while,  
But we'll all be back together soon with a smile,  
The playgrounds will be filled with laughter and voices,  
And what it comes down to is all of our choices,  
To stay safe or not, to have a social conscience,  
Or to go on Facebook and say it's all nonsense,  
We need to work together towards our common goal,  
As the frontline staff play a vital role,  
We clap our healthcare heroes and put candles in the window,  
We hug the ones we can and pray for the ones that are low,  
We want to get back to living our lives to the full,  
But stopping to think of others and not relenting to the pull,  
Of materialism, superficiality, and everything in between,  
Let's look after each other and not forget how to dream,  
Thumbs up, air high fives, salutes, and waves,  
Let's stand together, but a little apart and see how this one plays.

— *Eimear Murphy.*  
*Gaelscoil Phort Láirge.*

# TIME

The light faded, the watch ticked,  
Dreams of the future forgotten.  
The journey over but the threads still vibrant,  
Soul set free to be who they were.  
That smile, the laugh, the fun still echoing,  
Still breathing on the wind,  
Still breathing in my breath.  
Echoing from some distant place now but still close.  
No acceptable ending, none fitting  
The reserved life spent and broken.  
The empty glasses case, soft cold hands,  
“ Cher, what of it”.  
Unfinished book, now closed  
The watch still ticking.

— *Clare Cotter.*  
*St. John of God Primary School.*

# AMAZONIAN CRY

Falling giant,  
Decades of rising  
towards the heavens,  
Now keels into thick scrub,  
Crushing life from your leafy limbs.  
Once proudly dressed in majestic splendour,  
your corpse dragged mercilessly to torturous humiliation.

Ravaged,  
Your dusty dermis laid to waste by rusting blades and greedy hands,  
Your carved limbs now adorn the colonial house,  
Teak columns, polished and gleaming, entertain guests who boast  
of monies made from fallen giants.

Belittled,  
Mocking laughter echoes through the cavernous room,  
Scorning eco-warriors who defend life's veins,  
As blood from goblet spills and stains  
your sinewy boards,  
They do not hear your downtrodden cry.

Defaced,  
Your natural beauty sculpted for their pleasure,  
Wicked desire like Salome's request,  
They ignore your life-giving presence,  
Absorbing putrid, suffocating fumes of age.

Your canopy of shade now long forgotten,  
Your sanctuary no longer teems with life,  
Ringed stump, fungus spored and rotten,  
But I remember  
your Amazonian Cry.

— *Marie Walker.*  
*Scoil Lorcáin.*

# YESTERDAY

sent runny sour goodness sopping through the pages.  
And you said Hope is a hammer,  
but what is left  
when it falls and smashes  
into smithereens? What  
is left green  
when grey looms  
with needle, and heavy  
Memory clings to the spoon  
used to fill fallow mouths?

— *Jennifer McGrath.*  
*Hansfield Educate Together Secondary School.*

# MEMORIES

As the end of the school year nears,  
We hope we can forget our Covid-19 fears,  
Which have sadly cut our time together short,  
After what was such a saddening news report.

In September when I first met this group,  
I knew from the outset; I had a winning troop.  
Getting to know everyone,  
For me it was so much fun!

October brought with it, witches, and ghouls,  
As we settled in to following class rules!  
We got to know Roald Dahl's 'Big Friendly Giant'  
And I knew that you would always be so compliant!  
As Science week approached in November,  
It was also a month for us to reflect and remember,  
In our prayer space we placed  
Photos of loved ones who could not be replaced.

Hot chocolate we made on a cold December day,  
As a treat for performing so well in our Christmas play,  
We had a visit from the big man in red.  
'What a great class you are' is what he said.

As a new year began in January 2020,  
We were ready to learn plenty.  
About the solar system and space, we learned lots,  
And in soccer we took numerous shots!

In February as the country held a General Election  
We were engrossed as to see who would give us new direction,  
Together we made a St. Brigid's cross,  
As we thought about preparing for Lá Glas!

How different March was to the norm,  
As we watched our country begin to transform,  
On the twelfth day of the month we closed our school doors,  
As children scrambled home in their scores.  
Although our year was cut short,  
Online we gathered for support,  
How very much I miss you all,  
And can imagine you have grown so tall.

No sports day or school tour,  
We certainly miss these things for sure.  
As we continue our distance learning,  
We wish for the day we will be returning.

As our Summer holidays are drawing near,  
It's time for me, to think back on the year,  
Where I met this amazing class in Seafield,  
And to me your talents and skills were revealed.

To my class of 2020, I bid farewell,  
What a super bunch, I've got to know so well,  
Fond memories of you all, I will keep,  
As onto a new class you all leap!

— *Natalie Brown.*  
*Seafield N.S.*

# HOW LONG IT TAKES

The bay mirrors wavering houses, trees,  
ducks sleep on clumps of seaweed or swim  
in furious circles, heads dipping, an engine coughs,  
a car passes, sunlight dazzles a child's blue scooter.  
How long it takes to know what leaving really means.

Two swans slide past, white shadows rippling  
before them. And was it worth it? A plover,  
smokey grey, picks its way among pebbles  
its arctic peal piercing the glassy air.

Five boat masts, the only straight lines.  
A gull rises, claws hanging, climbs above  
its own reflection, winging high.

— *Ger Duffy.*  
*St. Paul's B.N.S.*

# STRANGE TIMES

The streets are bare, the traffic is gone,  
Self-isolation can make you feel so alone,  
Our skies are so clear you can now see the stars,  
And people are walking and not using cars,  
But we're in this together all fighting this bug,  
And we'll get back to the day, when its ok to hug.

Soap and water can keep this virus at bay,  
By washing your hands a few times, a day,  
Gloves and masks have become common place,  
And very little business is done face to face,  
But we're in this together and united we stand,  
And look forward to greeting with a shake of the hand.

Businesses closing put lots on the dole,  
And parents in turn took up the teaching role,  
The €350 payment helped all with their rent,  
While some on the frontline to work they were sent,  
But we're in this together two metres apart,  
And keep social distance when visiting the mart.

Eggs, flour, and loo roll sold out in the shops,  
The distance to travel could be 10k at tops,  
One trade that did well with parcels galore,  
Was internet shopping and knocks at your door,  
But we're in this together and we will hold fast,  
Until the Coronavirus is a thing of the past.

— *Mary Ray.*  
*Passage East National School.*