New Courthouses
Review of 2017
Festive Features
CONTENTS

REGULARS
Welcome Note 3
Appointments 16
Retirements 14
Obituaries 17
Through the Lens 24

FEATURES
Christmas Messages 4
A look back at 2017 5

NEWS
Courts Service conferences 10
Reaching out to the community 11
The changing face of human resources 13

SOCIAL
Christmas Recipe 18
Book reviews 19
Quiz 19
Film reviews 20
Welcome to the December issue of Courts Service News

It’s been another year of revival and progress around the courts. Increases in budgetary allocations, particularly for capital building projects, injected renewed energy into several areas including buildings and ICT.

In our review of the year (pages 5-9) we cast our eye back over various events and activities. On the buildings front, the opening of Drogheda courthouse was a highlight, and the six other major projects around the country made significant progress with Letterkenny courthouse due for completion in the coming weeks.

Many tributes were paid to Chief Justice Susan Denham as she retired (page 6). Among her many legacies is her contribution to the reform of the administration of the courts, with the establishment of the Courts Service high on that list.

We welcomed the appointment of her successor, Mr. Justice Frank Clarke, (see page 7). His address at the start of the new legal year laid much emphasis on improving access to the courts. He further demonstrated his intentions by allowing cameras into the Supreme Court for the first time (page 7).

The resurgence in emphasis on staff training and development continued (page 8) with the launch of a new online training resource (‘L&D Connect’). There were several staff conferences where issues of the day including strategic and succession planning, were debated and discussed. (page 10).

Our outreach programme continued to enjoy great success with visitors from schools, colleges, and community groups from Ireland and abroad availing of opportunities to observe the courts in action (page 11).

Among our Christmas features is an article on how to deal with stress (page 18). Or you might de-stress by visiting one of the many festive events around the country (page 20 and 21). We have reviews of books (page 19), and films (see pages 22 and 23), a delicious recipe (see page 18) and a seasonal quiz (page 19).

We also bring news of appointments and retirements, and remember colleagues recently deceased.

As always, we are indebted to all who have assisted us during the year with contributions, comments and suggestions. Your support is invaluable as we endeavour to bring news about what’s happening around the courts. To subscribe, visit the ‘Publications’ section of our website (www.courts.ie) or email: courtsservicenews@courts.ie.

We wish all our readers a happy and healthy Christmas and a peaceful New Year and look forward to hearing from you all again during 2018.

The Courts Service News Team
CHRISTMAS MESSAGES

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF JUSTICE

Celebrations come at various times for different peoples. Whether they be the religious festivals of Christmas, Eid, or Hannukah, or the pre religious festivals of solstice and mid winter - they share a common theme. That theme in this part of our world has always been one of family, of time out, of generosity, and of kindness.

The many ways we celebrate our humanity and collective existence seem to forge at this time of mid winter - to bring us closer to what it is we value and to whom we wish to celebrate with.

At this great time of celebration we remember the year past - the great effort and success of those we work with and the public we serve. We remember year round kindnesses and struggles; not forgetting the matters of real importance and avoiding the niggling things we cannot control.

Time with friends and family - away from the hustle and bustle of modern living - is a great gift in itself. As are the communal efforts of the collective, of the great community we work amongst.

To the justice community - judges, Courts Service staff, lawyers, Gardai, Prison Service and Probation Service personnel, and all the other support services we encounter in our work throughout the year - I extend every good wish for the holiday season and the most prosperous and healthiest of New Years.

Frank Clarke

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Christmas means many things to many people. It is an opportunity to celebrate with family near or, via modern means of communication, far across the world. It is a time to step back, gear down and relax. A time to appreciate those we share our lives with.

In the workplace, we acknowledge the efforts of colleagues who have journeyed with us during the year. For the Courts Service it has been another year of activity across many areas. Increased budgets helped our ICT and training programmes make considerable progress. The skylines of towns around the country have seen buildings inch towards completion. We have welcomed new staff many of whom have worked in a variety of different areas before they joined us. We look forward to learning from them and with them as we head into 2018.

My thanks is due to everyone in the Courts Service for another year of great effort and support for the courts, each other, and the users of the services of the courts. I also thank the judiciary and the wider justice sector for their friendship and their co-operation for our various initiatives in the past year.

And as this issue of Courts Service News is our annual printed version - and not just via the mobile platforms we normally use - can I extend to all the readers of this publication a very real and old fashioned ‘Happy Christmas’. Here’s hoping that 2018 brings us all good tidings.

Brendan Ryan
LOOK BACK AT 2017...

THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS

It was a year of changes and developments in the courts in 2017. After a year of looking to the past of 1916, 2017 was a look towards the future.

Our capital projects, encompassing buildings and ICT, made considerable progress. Building work continued around the country and the first of our current major projects, Drogheda Courthouse, opened its doors. There were ICT developments in relation to e-licensing, video conferencing, and digital audio recording, and planning for changes proposed in areas including legal costs and bankruptcy.

The hugely influential Chief Justice Susan Denham retired in July and was replaced by Mr Justice Frank Clarke. In the Supreme Court, we welcomed TV cameras in for the first time and began planning for e-filing of documents.

The message from the Courts Service Annual Report was that Ireland’s courts are open, busy and good value for money.

Our Learning and Development Unit and Change Management Office continued to develop an improved strategic business approach for the Courts Service with L & D Connect (an online training portal) going live.

In a year where we said goodbye to many colleagues through retirement we also welcomed a high number of staff throughout the year as the economy continued to improve.

NEW AND IMPROVED BUILDINGS

Drogheda courthouse opens for business
July saw the first of the Courts Service bundle of courthouses open under the current Public Private Partnership (PPP) project in Drogheda. Chief Justice Susan Denham congratulated the project team, the architects and all those associated with the planning and delivery of the courthouse on creating “a centre that meets the needs of modern society.” She said the facility, “is not just fulfilling a utilitarian and service need, but is a building which is destined to be part of the cultural heritage of the people of Drogheda. The completed Drogheda courthouse has two double height courtrooms; ancillary accommodation for judges and staff; consultation rooms for practitioners, clients and vulnerable witnesses; spacious public lobby and waiting areas; spaces for the media; and facilities for persons in custody.

More openings on the way
A new courthouse in Letterkenny has been completed and will open in 2018. Court buildings in Cork, Limerick, Mullingar, Wexford and Waterford are close to completion.

The improved facilities will allow a greater range of sittings to held at the various locations, including custody cases that previously could not be held at some venues due to inadequate facilities or security concerns.
LOOK BACK AT 2017...

THE END OF AN ERA:
CHIEF JUSTICE SUSAN DENHAM RETIRES

“If you seek her monument look around you” said Mr. Justice Donal O’Donnell paraphrasing Sir Christopher Wren as he led tributes in the Supreme Court to retiring Chief Justice Susan Denham on 28th July. He said it was “the end of one of the longest and most remarkable chapters in Irish legal history”.

Judge Denham retired after 26 years as a judge, 25 of them in the Supreme Court, becoming the third longest serving judge in the history of the court, after James Murnaghan and Brian Walsh. Judge O’Donnell said that “Susan Denham’s career has been characterised by loyalty to the country, to the administration of justice, and perhaps most of all to the institution that is the Supreme Court. She has never willingly chosen the option of exit and for 25 years she has stayed, struggled, contributed and added her distinctive voice, and we, as a court, a country, and a people are much the better for it.”

He said that in the Chief Justice’s career “there was the patriotism of keeping the community ordered by justice and mercy, and loyalty, courage and also sacrifice. There is a quiet and insistent patriotism in attending meetings, cajoling colleagues, persuading politicians, energising civil servants, making lists, assigning tasks, and finally ticking them off and achieving reform.” He went on to recall her many achievements as a reformer and chair of a litany of boards, initiatives, commissions and working groups – all of which brought about real reform. He reminded the Court that she was also the chair of the Working Group on a Courts Commission which led to the establishment of the Courts Service and the Working Group on a Court of Appeal which produced a recommendation which ultimately led to the establishment of the Court of Appeal and the development of a new jurisdiction for the Supreme Court. She has been honorary secretary of the Committee on Judicial Conduct and Ethics and was chair of an interim judicial council established in 2011. She has been a strong and passionate supporter of the concept of a judicial council and since her appointment of Chief Justice has pressed for the enactment of the legislation to establish one.

She is chair of the Committee for Judicial Studies and also chair of the Judicial Appointments Advisory Board, and has taken a particular interest as chair of the Courts Centenary Commemoration Committee which has organised “such a successful lecture series as part of Ireland’s decade of commemoration”.

“When the new lawyers of 2017 look around the Irish legal system they see something that is unrecognisable from the world that Susan Denham entered. In its physical infrastructure of new buildings, in the people who work in them, and in the infrastructure of the system, the Courts Service itself, the Court of Appeal, the new Supreme Court, a Commercial Court and we hope soon a new Judicial Council, she has been involved in all of it.”

Chief Justice Susan Denham with her husband Brian

Laying a wreath with Minister for Justice & Equality Frances Fitzgerald and Andy Farnham, a representative of the families of those killed in 1916, at the 2016 Easter Bank Holiday commemoration

On a site visit to Letterkenny Courthouse
LOOK BACK AT 2017...

A NEW ERA: MR JUSTICE FRANK CLARKE APPOINTED CHIEF JUSTICE

As he prepared to preside over his first legal year, the Chief Justice Mr Justice Frank Clarke called for the voice of the judiciary to be heard in the ongoing debates about judicial appointments and a Judicial Council. He said that he knew of “no jurisdiction in the world where it is not considered reasonable and appropriate for judges to make their views known in an appropriate way, in relation to proposed legislation which actually affects the judiciary itself”.

Outlining his priorities, he said that, “there is little point in having a good court system, likely to produce fair results in accordance with law, if a great many people find it difficult or even impossible to access that system for practical reasons. There are few formal legal barriers to access to justice in the Irish legal system but it has increasingly become the case that certain types of litigation are beyond the resources of many”. He welcomed the review of the civil procedures of the courts being overseen by a committee chaired by the President of the High Court. He also announced that the Supreme Court will undertake a pilot project to facilitate the making and consideration of all applications for leave to appeal online.

Mr. Justice Frank Clarke was born in Walkinstown, Dublin in October, 1951. He was educated at Drimnagh Castle CBS and University College Dublin where he was awarded a B.A. in Mathematics and Economics (1972). Having completed his legal studies at King’s Inns he was called to the Bar in 1973. He practised at the Bar from then until his appointment to the High Court in November 2004. He had become a senior counsel in 1985. He was appointed to the Supreme Court in March 2012.

During his time at the Bar he practised mainly in the commercial and public law fields (including constitutional law). He was twice appointed by the Supreme Court as counsel to present argument on references of Bills to the Supreme Court by the President under Article 26 of the Constitution. He also acted as counsel to the Public Accounts Committee on its inquiry into the DIRT tax issue and was external counsel to the Commission to Inquiry into Child Abuse (Laffoy and Ryan Commissions).

SUPREME COURT TELEVISED LIVE

Television cameras were allowed into the Supreme Court for the first time in October to film two judgments being delivered. The proceedings were broadcast live on both RTE News Now and on RTE online. Footage also featured on main TV news bulletins across the day with parallel reports on the contents of the cases and the historic nature of the broadcast.

RTE and the Courts Service overcame many barriers, physical and heritage, to broadcast live from the Georgian Four Courts building. Small robotic cameras were deployed to feed images from the courtroom to an RTE satellite van outside at the location.

The initiative, promoted by Chief Justice Ms. Justice Susan Denham during her time in the Supreme Court, was given the go ahead by new Chief Justice Mr Justice Frank Clarke. “We are taking the step of televising the judgments of the Supreme Court as a way of demystifying the courts process. We wish to allow people see how their highest court operates. This initiative will help explain and create an understanding of the courts. It is a start, and following a test period, we will review its success with a view to expanding coverage in the New Year. This might include televising the parties making their arguments in the Supreme Court”.

Chief Justice Frank Clarke speaking at opening of new legal year

Robotic camera in the Supreme Court
LOOK BACK AT 2017...

BUSY YEAR FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Staff learning and development continued to receive considerable focus following several years of little investment. The Courts Service Learning and Development Unit (“L&D Unit”) saw an increase in both budgetary allocation and staffing and reported steady progress during the first year of implementation of its three year Learning and Development Strategy.

First steps were taken to establish a coaching culture, with a three day coaching skills programme being rolled out to all managers from CEO through to line managers. Technical training programmes, including Circuit Court family law, e-licensing, and small claims and warrants, are being developed and delivered. Ongoing training initiatives include induction, health and safety, new managers’ toolkit, conflict resolution for dealing with difficult situations, train the trainer, procurement, Microsoft Office and Microsoft skills for registrars.

Further development of staff was facilitated through supporting attendance at various external programmes/workshops/seminars in a diverse mix of areas, including HR, procurement, project management, internal audit and IT, and through significant support for third level qualifications through the refund of fees scheme.

Courts Service training goes online
The L&D Unit launched L&D Connect, an interactive learning management system. It enables staff to take the initiative for their own development. Staff can now book training courses online, manage their training schedule and access a select number of eLearning modules. Managers can view their staff training schedules, bookings and learning records at any time. Over time the Unit aims to have a full suite of e-learning programmes available for both technical and development programmes, with Microsoft Office 365 available as an e-learning course in the near future.

Business Support Unit
A new Business Support Unit was established within the Circuit and District Directorate to transform how information is communicated to staff and provide support and assistance to staff across the organisation. The Unit will play a major role in ensuring consistency in the implementation of procedures, and will work to ensure that procedures across offices are LEAN and efficient and that they comply with legal requirements.

ANNUAL REPORT SHOWS 52% DECREASE IN RUNNING COSTS

The message from the Courts Service Annual Report 2016 is that Ireland’s courts are open, busy, and good value for money. There was a 52% saving on day to day running costs in 2016 compared to 2008 with some €5.5 million of these savings coming about as a result of the increased use of ICT systems. Minister for Justice & Equality, Charles Flanagan, was in Phoenix House to accept the Report from Chief Justice Susan Denham in one of her last public appearances before her retirement.

Court statistics published in the Report revealed increases on the civil side in areas such as personal injury, commercial, personal bankruptcy, debt resolution applications, applications to appoint care representatives, and domestic violence, with decreases in orders for possession, judicial separation, and divorce. In the criminal area, the the majority of District Court offences continued to relate to road traffic. There were increases in respect of drug and public order offences. Appeals to the Court of Appeal continued to rise, as that Court completed its second full year of operations. Applications for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court also increased.
LOOK BACK AT 2017...

BEST YEAR EVER FOR DRUG TREATMENT COURT

There was cause for all associated with the Drug Treatment Court (‘DTC’) to be well pleased as 2017 draws to a close. “There have been nine graduations from the Court this year - the highest number in any one year since the programme started 16 years ago”, Courts Service DTC Manager Hilda McDermott told Courts Service News. “The participants involved have completed all stages of the programme and are clean of all non prescribed drugs. They are also either working or enrolled on a course”.

The DTC Court is now operating from historic Green Street Courthouse having moved there from Chancery Street in September 2016. The DTC Programme comprises three stages - bronze, silver and gold. Hilda tells us that a number of participants have progressed very well this year and have received certificates for completing the silver and bronze phases. “There are currently 31 participants on the bronze phase, 10 on the silver phase and 14 on the gold phase”, she says. “It is a tough journey for a participant to get to the gold phase and we are delighted that so many have made it this year. This time last year there were seven participants on the gold phase”.

The judiciary continue to support the DTC with 108 new referrals from the District Court to the programme this year. “We are continuing to accept new referrals onto the programme”, Hilda says pointing out that the eligibility criteria are as follows: A person must be 18 years or older and must have pleaded guilty or been found guilty and facts heard in the District Court of a non-violent criminal offence. They must reside in the Dublin area. They must be dependent on the use of prohibited drugs and/or prescribed drugs. They should have no outstanding Circuit Court matters. A previous history of violent offences may prevent a person from joining the programme and road traffic matters are not accepted in the DTC.

Fr. Peter McVerry was a guest speaker at a double graduation ceremony in Green Street in October. His words of praise to the graduates and to the other participants were an encouraging boost to all concerned. His continued support is welcomed by all associated with the programme.

MAKING PROGRESS WITH ICT PROJECTS

The allocation of increased funding enabled a number of ICT projects to proceed – both staff and court operations related. Staff benefited from improved desktop infrastructure while progress was made on other significant projects across the Courts Service estate.

For example, the project to facilitate applications for licence applications on-line was further rolled out to offices in Ardee, Letterkenny, Castlebar, Ballina and the remainder of Donegal District 2. Work continued on the project to facilitate online management of cases in the proposed new Legal Cost Adjudicator’s Office as the Courts Service continued to plan for the introduction of the new costs regime. There were developments too in relation to the conversion of the Bankruptcy Register into an electronic version as part of the Irish Government’s support for the EU Insolvency Register.

The co-operation between the Courts Service and the Prisons Service saw the delivery of 10 extra courtrooms with video conferencing capabilities and four complete technology refreshes of existing court venues. There were upgrades too for digital audio recording facilities across the Dublin campus.
NEWS...

CIRCUIT AND DISTRICT OPERATIONS MANAGERS PONDER CURRENT ISSUES

Over 70 members of staff attended the annual Circuit Court and District Court Managers’ and Deputy Managers’ Conference held in the Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise in October.

Attendees were welcomed to the conference by Brendan Ryan and John Coyle. Updates on the work of the Business Support Unit, Human Resources, Change Management, Learning and Development and ICT were provided by staff members from those units. Patrick Johnson provided an update on the progress of the e-Licensing project and the challenges encountered. Noel Doherty of Reform and Development informed staff of recent and upcoming changes to Court Rules and legislation. Sean Quigley presented an overview of the Courts Service Strategic Plan 2017-2020 and the key priorities contained therein.

A presentation on the Combined Court Office Review was of interest to all conference attendees, many of whom had participated in the review over the past year. Marianne Cassidy and Audrey Leonard presented the findings of the review and discussed the recommendations in the final report which has recently been delivered to the Senior Management Team.

DUBLIN MANAGERS CONTINUE TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Senior managers of Courts Service Dublin offices considered a range of topical issues at their recent annual conference. Against a backdrop of encouraging budgetary news, they teased out the challenges posed by matters including the changing nature of staff recruits and the likely retirement of many senior staff in the next few years.

Head of Resource Management Sean Quigley, supported by Tom Ward and Lorraine Fagan, organised the conference which had as its focus the recently completed Courts Service Strategic Plan 2018-2020.

Chief Executive Brendan Ryan outlined how increases in the budgetary allocation for the Courts Service will assist the capital programme, in particular courthouse improvement and maintenance, and ICT development. He also mentioned reviews that are underway to improve services to court users with a report recently completed on the review of combined court offices and one expected in the near future in respect of probate services.

Presentations on the changing face of the human resource function, advances in the approach to learning and development, and the opportunity to improve project delivery via the Change Management Office, served to highlight the challenges faced by the organisation in the coming years. With 35% of staff aged 55 or over, the potential loss of institutional knowledge within a short time span is a major concern. But challenges also present opportunities. It was obvious from the many contributions during the day that the Courts Service has managers – new and experienced – who are not short on ideas and who will actively engage and cooperate to ensure that legacies are preserved.

The responses to a series of questions relating to managing court sittings, delivering services to court users, development of staff, and evaluating our values, demonstrated the commitment, enthusiasm, and determination of those who will lead the Courts Service into the future.

Many of the presentations addressed current challenges facing the Directorate. Tom Ward discussed the appeals of problem convictions and the procedure for same. Additionally, Tom discussed the Victims of Crime Act 2017 and the obligations this legislation places on the Courts Service and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Shay Keary and Sergeant Eugene O’Leary (Garda Liaison and Protection Unit) provided staff with information in relation to courtroom security and the joint risk assessments to be undertaken by An Garda Síochána and the Courts Service in 2018. David Delaney of Tullamore Court Office gave a valuable presentation on “On the Job” training and how a skills matrix can be utilised by office managers, particularly in the role profile stage of the PMDS process.

Sean Quigley, Head of Resource Management speaking at the Dublin Managers conference
KING’S INNS SUCCESS AT BRéAGCHÚIRT Uí DHÁLAIGH 2017

The King’s Inns team won the final of Bréagchúirt Uí Dhálaigh 2017, a moot court competition, held in the Four Courts in November. Now in its 20 year, the competition is organized annually by Gael Linn, and funded by Foras na Gaeilge, in memory of the late Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, former President and Chief Justice of Ireland.

Teams from Trinity College, Dublin, University College Cork, NUI, Galway, Maynooth University and Kings Inns took part this year. They displayed their advocacy skills in an authentic courtroom setting before practicing judges of High Court and Circuit Court. Preliminary rounds took place in Kings Inns, with the two teams of the highest standard chosen to contest the final — Kings Inns and Trinity College, Dublin. Both teams impressed with their logical and well-constructed presentation, correct use of statutes, cases and precedents, ability to answer judges’ questions and ability to deal with the opposing arguments. In the end, however, the judges’ gavel came down in favour of the team from King’s Inns.

Gael Linn CEO, Antoine Ó Coileáin, presented the winners with the Gael Linn Perpetual Trophy and a cheque for €600 with the Trinity Team receiving €300. Mr. Ó Coileáin thanked all the participants and said: “Now in its twentieth year, Gael Linn is pleased that the moot court as Gaeilge, Bréagchúirt Uí Dhálaigh is as popular as ever among law students. As a result of the official status of Irish both at home and in the EU, career opportunities for lawyers with high competence in Irish have never been better. We are indebted to the senior judges who make themselves available each year. Their presence is a testament to the status of Irish in the courts and to the memory of Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh.”

REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY TO COME VISIT THE COURTS

Several Courts Service initiatives continue to afford members of the public the opportunity to experience the courts in action. From students on work experience to active age groups, all are welcomed into court buildings in Dublin and around the country, as Naomi Kelly reports.

Work experience offers transition year students the opportunity to observe both the courts and the Courts Service at work. Students are very complimentary of the interesting and varied view of life in the courts they receive. They tell us that they recommend our programme to other students because the staff make it so interesting. We have no vacancies for the current academic year but anyone interested can apply to workexperience@courts.ie for a place during 2018/2019.

Our School Visit Programme continues to attract thousands of students to the Criminal Courts of Justice in Dublin every year. Students meet a barrister who guides them through the building before bringing them to a courtroom to enact a mock trial. This helps them learn who’s who in the courtroom and how a trial operates. Dates book out fast so contact us at schooltours@courts.ie to book a visit. A similar visit opportunity is available in many courthouses around the country — just contact your local court office. Details are on our website (www.courts.ie).

We also welcome third level and many community and other groups. Judges and court staff play an important support role in welcoming our visitors. One group of grateful family law students visited Dublin’s District Family Court where office manager Eamonn Doherty explained how the office operates, and Judge Gerard Furlong shared his experience of working in this difficult area.

Our Media Relations Service also operates an outreach programme with third level institutions which teach journalism and general media studies. The Service organises a week of talks, seminars, and visits for student journalists to both the Criminal Courts and the Four Courts. The next week of visits and talks will be during the first quarter of next year. Institutions who wish to participate can contact our media relations office via gerry.curran@courts.ie.
FOUR COURTS RESTORATION WORK CONTINUES

Work on the refurbishment of the iconic Four Courts dome is continuing under the supervision of the Office of Public Works ("OPW"). This major undertaking will take two more years to complete.

The exterior of the dome has 24 capitals – these are the top parts of the columns that support the dome – and several need to be replaced. One was replaced earlier in the year. A magnificent piece of work, it was carved by Francis McCormack of Boston, Tubber, Co. Clare who devoted over 900 hours to the job. A second capital will be replaced this month following collaboration between craftsmen from Ireland and Scotland. Minister of State with responsibility for OPW, Kevin ‘Boxer’ Moran T.D joined Fiona Hyslop, MSP, Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs in the Four Courts earlier in the year. They announced that the second capital would be carved at the Engine Shed, Scotland’s new national building conservation centre in Stirling. The new capitals are made from Portland stone and each weigh approximately 800kg.

Visitors to the Round Hall of the Four Courts can enjoy a display to accompany the new capitals which gives historical information about the Four Courts including works undertaken over the years. The exhibition includes extracts from OPW Annual Reports of the 1920s referring to the destruction of the Four Courts during the Civil War.

In the New Year, additional work will be carried out in the Round Hall. OPW will commence exploratory works on the niches situated above the doorways into each of the courtrooms. The intention is to reinstate the artwork in these niches. To carry out these works, scaffolding will be erected outside Courtroom 2. It will be designed in such a way as to avoid any disruption to the operation of the courts and will be in place for approximately 12 months.

NEW STAFF REPRESENTATIVE ON COURTS SERVICE BOARD

Damien Downey was recently elected to serve as the staff representative on the Courts Service Board. Damien worked in the Criminal Courts of Justice before transferring to the Office of Wards of Court in Phoenix House.

He hopes that the skill sets he has gained from his work and from his participation in local and voluntary committees will help him meet the challenges of sitting on the Board. “I intend to keep staff informed of developments and be their voice while at the same time make useful contributions to the work of the Board”, he told Courts Service News.

Damien believes that the staff representative can offer a different perspective on matters. “The best practice for Boards is to have diversity”, he says.
THE CHANGING FACE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

In establishing a fresh approach to human resource management, the Courts Service new Head of HR Denise Cole highlights the complexity of managing people in today’s world.

“Civil service reform and the Civil Service people strategy in particular will influence how we go about public service and staff support”, she says. “The mission, vision and values of the Courts Service as well as the strategic plan and the combined office review should influence how managers develop their office or department plans which should cascade down to individual goals”.

External Factors
Challenges and opportunities from the wider world also have to be factored into how the Courts Service plans its future. For example, can we expect applicants to work in our Dublin offices if housing supply is an issue? If the country reaches full employment in the next year will this limit the supply of skills we need as an employer? Can we manage the way we operate offices if people wish to change working patterns – more flexible weeks, distance work, seasonal availability? What impact might availability or non-availability of new technologies have on the way we plan and manage offices and people? Will legislative reform hamper, challenge or change approaches to the work place and/or delivery on our mandates?

Trust Breeds Excellence
Trust is key to good management and enhancing performance. Those managers who build high trust relationships elicit higher levels of performance. Managers need to strive to inspire their staff and demonstrate a commitment to develop each person in their team. This involves more than box ticking. It is how we define quality and measure it in each office and role, and moreover how we identify what managers can do to enhance the performance of teams and individuals.

Managers need to challenge themselves as to whether they are engaging with and inspiring their staff. This is as much about awareness of the day to day efforts and output of staff as it is about helping to develop and progress them. In all of this Denise believes that management of people is also about the good of society. “We have an obligation to hand back, to pass on the experience from which we have benefited.

For most people, work matters to them. In other words, people derive satisfaction and a sense of worth.”

Connecting to day to day issues
We need to avoid bad management as it is the institutionalising of failure. Lack of management leaves others to pick up the slack or work being left undone. She argues the role of HR today is to give managers the tools to change the organisation in an office. This can be achieved she believes by small steps, by taking bite size chunks – by asking “how are we going to be better today?” In doing so she believes we can move towards a programme of change over the next three years – towards better talent management and career development for staff.

Denise is from Dublin and graduated from UCD with a degree in Science. She began her HR career with KPMG in London and relocated to KPMG Dublin. For the last 14 years she has worked in Healthcare, most recently where she was part of the team that set up Beacon Hospital.

Denise holds a post graduate diploma in Personnel Management, MBA and diploma in Employment Law from the Law Society. She is currently pursuing a diploma in Executive Coaching in the IMI.

Denise enjoys cooking and entertaining, travelling and the Arts and has volunteered for the Irish Refugee Council.
RETIREMENT

ANN CASEY RETIRES

Anne Casey retired recently from the Courts Service after 40 years of public service. Leading the tributes in Mallow District Court Judge Brian Sheridan said she was the most helpful and informative since his arrival to the District five years ago. Describing her as a very kind woman who was well known for her wit, he said she had kept him on his toes, and he thanked her most sincerely for her assistance over the years.

Inspector Tony O’Sullivan said that Anne was a woman who would always make time for a chat and was very accommodating and easy to work with. Solicitor David O’Meara has known Anne all her life as they both hailed from the same parish. As youngsters they both attended the same church in Kilpadder and met regularly. He thanked Anne on behalf of all solicitors for her diligence and assistance. There were tributes also from the Prison Service and the Probation Service.

Chief Clerk, Valerie Lynch said that Anne was extremely kind and patient with all users of the courts, especially lay litigants. She took the time to explain forms and procedures with ease and with care. “Moreover, I must say, I have always loved Anne’s character, she has a great sense of humour, and while very stubborn and always right, I am very aware of how difficult it has been for her at times. She contracted polio at the age of three and spent a vast amount of time in hospital up to the age of 15. She ploughed on and entered the Public Service working in the Department of Education, the Department of Agriculture and the GPO in Dublin before joining the Courts Service, Washington St, Cork, as a clerical officer in 1982, where she became an expert in probate. She transferred to Fermoy District Court Office as an executive officer and finally, due to closure of Fermoy, she moved to Mallow as a higher executive officer, senior court clerk, where she has spent the last eight years.

“Really, I loved my job and there was never a dull moment. I especially loved my time in Mallow. I am proud to have worked in the Courts Service. I never thought I could achieve all I have. Mallow is a very busy office and a busy District. There is a huge administration side to working in the Courts Service as everything must be checked and double checked. The atmosphere is fantastic in Mallow - we all work as a big family and a great team. The work is very varied as it includes criminal, civil, licensing and family law”.

Anne is married to Tim and they have two adult children - Rebecca who works in Dubai and Liam who works in Cork. She knows that retirement will be a new chapter in her life. “Of course, it will be a huge change but I will have more time to do things and be more in control of my life,” she said. She is a member of CorMaghalla Choral Choir in Mallow, has a passion for music (especially trad sessions), enjoys swimming and reading and has been playing bridge for the past year. So no doubt she has plenty to keep her busy.

She will be hugely missed especially by her colleagues in Mallow.

We wish her good health and happiness for the years ahead.

In the presence of many colleagues, well wishers and friends, Ursula O’Neill bid a fond farewell recently after many years of excellent public service. Ursula worked in Naas Court Office for the last 12 years having previously worked in the Department of Social Welfare for some time. She will be remembered for her excellent work and courteous and efficient service to the customers.

Naas Court Office Manager Imelda Grogan thanked Ursula for her many years of dedication and co-operation. She expressed her sincere gratitude to Ursula for being so generous in sharing her knowledge with new staff members. This was an area of work which Ursula enjoyed immensely. Training was one of her many forte. Imelda also acknowledged the very kind and caring nature which was very much part of Ursula.

Members of the judiciary, legal profession and An Garda Síochána paid fine tributes to Ursula and wished her a long and happy retirement.

And so say all of us!
Judge Catherine Murphy (pictured above, on the left, with retired judge Mary Collins) has retired after 21 years as a judge. Educated at University College Dublin and the Law Society, she enrolled as a solicitor in 1973 and was a partner in the firm JG O’Connor and Co in Dublin from 1981 to 1994. She practiced mostly in property, commercial law, insolvency and employment. She was appointed a District Court judge in 1996 and a Circuit Court judge in 2013.

President of the Circuit Court, Mr Justice Raymond Groarke led the tributes to Judge Murphy, saying that she was positive and warm. He praised her for always urging parents to put the child first in the family law cases throughout her judicial career. He said she was a “most excellent, forever available, conscientious, good humoured and compassionate” individual.

Tony McGillicuddy BL thanked Judge Murphy on behalf of the Bar of Ireland for her service and for her adherence to procedures and compassion. Dara Robinson, solicitor, wished her all the best for the future on behalf of the President of the Law Society.

Brendan Ryan, Courts Service CEO, thanked Judge Murphy for her service and her work on the CCJ Project Board and said the building was a testament to her work. He wished her and her family health and happiness and thanked her for her kindness and support. Elisha D’Arcy, Courts Service Judicial Support Unit, thanked her on behalf of the Chief Justice.

Judge Murphy told the packed courtroom in the Criminal Courts of Justice that “today (25th October) marks 21 years to the day” since she was made a judge of the District Court alongside her colleague and friend Judge Mary Collins. She said she was very worried about making her farewell speech as she had forgotten her handkerchief. She spoke about her Gemini Zodiac sign and how she felt she had two sides all her life. On this occasion she was “genuinely heartbroken to be leaving the great world of justice” but on the other side looking forward to a life beyond it. She added that she was looking forward to never wearing black again.

She recalled being appointed to the District Court, saying that she was happy but devastated at the time to be leaving private practice. She said she has been truly fortunate and privileged to work as a judge, adding that she was embarrassed to say just how much she enjoyed it.

She thanked all the services associated with the courts and mentioned in particular the work of Courts Service clerks and registrars. She described the role of registrar as being one that would be difficult to function without. She also extended her thanks to Courts Service staff. Margaret O’Neill from Circuit & District Operations, Áine O’Connor, the Circuit Court President’s secretary and Helen Priestley, Information Office.

She described the barrister and solicitor professions as “superb practitioners” and thanked them for their professionalism and their sheer goodness. She thanked her judicial colleagues for being so supportive and collegiate and gave a special thank you to President Groarke. She described her Judicial Assistant Eithna Dillon as being a very special person.

She ended by mentioning her late father, Judge Captain Kelly, whom she credited with instilling the values of common sense and good manners before she bid a final farewell, saying “may we meet again when I’m not wearing black”.

Assigned Circuit Judges are difficult to dislodge, normally only the grim reaper or the guillotine of time removes us. Not so with David Riordan, who left us with five full years still to serve.

When David was called to the Bar, barristers were expected to have a basic knowledge of the rules of evidence and an understanding of cross examination. O happy days. After a few short years he transferred to the less stressful but more lucrative profession of solicitor. David then gave many years’ service as a solicitor with the Legal Aid Board at a time of growth and expansion.

On his appointment as a District Judge David initially served in the Dublin and Tipperary/Waterford District before returning to Cork and District No. 19. Not a man to rest his laurels David completed a PHD Thesis on the vexed subject of sentencing.

We were colleagues on the circuit bench from the date of his appointment to the Circuit Court and I found him to be very sound in his judgement and a great colleague.

He said “22 years as a judge is a lifetime and I want to get my life back”. Who could deny him that? I wish him and Patricia well in the future. Hopefully together they will have more time to enjoy the rambling and hill walking which gives them so much pleasure.

David has many known fine qualities however not many know that he is a fine singer with a great store of ballads. Hopefully he will have a long, contented retirement and get many opportunities to regale us in song.

Judge Seán Ó Donnabháin
JUDGE JOHN O’HAGAN RETIRES

Judge John O’Hagan who retired in August 2017 comes from a very distinguished legal family. His grandfather, PJ O’Hagan practiced as a solicitor, initially in Newry and then in Dundalk until he was appointed County Registrar for Louth. On his retirement, his son Desmond was appointed County Registrar having practised for many years as a solicitor. In 1959, Desmond was appointed a judge of the District Court where he served for a number of years. He was a member of the Special Criminal Court as was his son John.

I have known John since he was called to the Bar in 1969 and joined the Eastern Circuit. He and I practised together for many years until I was appointed a judge of the Circuit Court in 1985. On my assignment as a judge to the Eastern Circuit, I had the great pleasure of John appearing before me and particularly as a very fair and competent prosecutor for the State. John at all times observed the highest standards that one expects from all members of the legal profession.

In 1996, John was called to the Inner Bar and two years later he was appointed a judge of the Circuit Court. In 2011, he was assigned to the Northern Circuit where he remained until he retired. His reputation on the Bench was that of a fair, just and understanding judge. This was recognised by the barristers, solicitors, court officials and litigants who appeared in his court. The O’Hagan legal line continues, his daughter Clodagh is a solicitor and his son Mark is a barrister.

I had the privilege to pay a tribute to his late father on his last sitting as a judge of the District Court.

Lastly as a word of caution, be very slow to accept an invitation from John to play golf at Baltray, as it may be to your financial detriment. Matthew P. Smith

APPOINTMENT
MR DAVID BARNIVILLE SC

Mr David Barnville SC has been appointed a judge of the High Court. He was educated at University College Dublin and Kings Inns. He was called to the Bar in 1990 and to the Inner Bar in 2006. He is also a member of the Bar of England and Wales.

He served as Chairman of the Bar of Ireland from 2014-2016 and also served as a member of the Courts Service Board and the Judicial Appointments Advisory Board.

He operated a general practice where he specialised in commercial law and was also a Bencher of the Kings Inns.

He acted as a member of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority, Chairman of Irish Rule of Law International and Chairman of the International Bar Association’s Forum for Barristers and Advocates. He also has been Vice-Chairman of Sport Ireland’s Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel and Vice President of Arbitration Ireland.

APPOINTMENT
MS. JUSTICE MARY FINLAY GEOGHEGAN

Ms. Justice Mary Finlay Geoghegan has been appointed to the Supreme Court. She was educated at University College Dublin, the College of Europe in Bruges, the Law Society of Ireland and Kings Inns.

She was admitted as a solicitor in 1973 and worked with McCann FitzGerald as a solicitor and partner. She was called to the Bar in 1980 and to the Inner Bar in 1988. She was also called to the Northern Ireland, New South Wales and English Bars. She was elected a bencher of the Kings Inns in 1996 and served as a member of the Irish Delegation to the Council of Bars and Law Societies of European Communities from 1990-2002.

She was appointed as a judge of the High Court in 2002 where she was assigned to the High Court Commercial list from 2004 to 2014. She was appointed to the Court of Appeal in 2014 upon its establishment.
OBITUARIES

DEATH OF ANN BROGAN

Ann Brogan died recently following an illness borne with great fortitude. It was eleven years ago on 31st October 2006 that Ann began working in the Courts Service recalls her colleague Miriam Egan who began with her that day.

Their first day, Halloween, led them from Phoenix House to the Four Courts, down the long corridor past the Round Hall to the East Wing arriving into the bustling Central Office of the High Court. It was like stepping into a time warp, floor to ceiling of filing shelves with thousands of case files and large leather bound judgments books with hand-written entries. Shortly after arriving they were taken to a packed Court 4 (Round hall) to sit and observe an ongoing murder trial. That was a whole new experience, a new language to learn over the next eleven years. Ann adapted and was soon organising and leading her colleagues and new staff in her quiet but orderly way.

Nessa Doyle, was one of the many staff joining the Central Office who benefited from Ann’s skills and experience. Ann excelled at training others, imparting her knowledge, and the importance of accuracy and attention to detail, with practical tips of how to do tasks efficiently. Nessa found Ann to be a great motivator because she led by example and by doing herself. No task was too big or small for her. Brilliant at multi-tasking, highly productive and disciplined in her work, she ploughed through a myriad of tasks on a daily basis. Her knowledge was immense and she was the ‘go to’ person for tricky queries and tracking High Court documents and files.

In addition to being a fantastic worker, Ann’s concern for others was always evident and many colleagues and clients of the Central Office have spoken recently of the immense help and kindness Ann showed them. Her calm and unassuming manner, her strong work ethic and fortitude coupled with a witty sense of humour and kindness were an immense contribution to the operation of the Central Office. She will be missed so much.

Brendan Creed poetically describes his colleague Ann with the following verse:

She was ever ready, steady, focused.  
Looking for a needle in a hay stack?  
Leave it with Ann. 
Quiet, aware and attentive she loved to teach waiting until her pupil understood, and then moved on. 
She was Donegal in the County Jersey A lady, putting her family first of all. 
We miss her, but her work ethic continues Through the hands and feet of all who knew her.

DEATH OF FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE, MR JUSTICE THOMAS FINLAY

The death has taken place, aged 95, of the former Chief Justice, Mr Justice Thomas Finlay.

Educated at Clongowes Wood College, University College Dublin and King’s Inns, Judge Finlay was called to the Bar in 1944 and the Inner Bar in 1961. He served as a member of Dáil Éireann for Dublin South Central from 1954 to 1957.

He was appointed a High Court judge in 1971 and later President of the High Court in 1974. He became Chief Justice in 1985 and served until his retirement in 1994.

In a varied judicial career he presided over some of the most important cases before the Irish courts, namely Attorney General v Hamilton 1992 (held that confidentiality of cabinet was absolute) and Attorney General v Hamilton 1993 (reaffirmed parliamentary privilege). He also gave the judgment in the controversial Attorney General v X 1992. In his retirement he led a number of public inquiries including the Hepatitis C Tribunal of Inquiry.

His daughter, Ms. Justice Mary Finlay Geoghegan, was recently appointed to the Supreme Court. Chief Justice Frank Clarke paid tribute to the late Chief Justice in the Supreme Court when news of his death came through. His comments were echoed by President of the Court of Appeal Mr Justice Sean Ryan and President of the High Court Mr Justice Peter Kelly. All recalled a man who had been an outstanding lawyer and a great servant of the State.

The absence of Ms Justice Mary Finlay Geoghegan was marked by an empty chair in the Supreme Court. The Chief Justice said that Chief Justice Finlay had been aware of her recent appointment and that it was a “matter of great pride”.

Predeceased by his wife, Alice, he is survived by his children Mary, John, Tom, Joan and Ruth, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.
MANAGING STRESS IN THE LAW

We can all get stressed at times. We all react differently to pressure in that what stresses me might not stress you. And not all stress is bad – it can be motivating. However, serious and prolonged stress can be very upsetting and lead to physical and mental health concerns.

Stress is by far the most common reason for calls to the LawCare helpline. Many working or studying in the legal sector have a driven, perfectionist personality that makes them more prone to stress. They often work long hours in pressured situations, and believe they should always be in control. Feeling unable to cope with work can be particularly difficult.

We at LawCare know that there is very low awareness of the support and services available to those in the legal community, and that there is stigma attached to talking about mental health issues.

We also know from our experience that very often those in the legal community don’t notice the signs of stress, some of which are:

- **Sleep deprivation:** This is a vicious circle: worries about work lead to lack of sleep, which makes it difficult to perform well at work
- **Physical changes:** Headaches, skin complaints, frequent colds, aching muscles and digestive problems
- **Drinking and smoking:** Many turn to drinking and smoking to cope with the demands of work
- **Eating:** Comfort eating or skipping meals
- **Mood swings:** People can become irritated and frustrated, get very angry one minute and feel fine the next. They can be short-tempered or difficult
- **Panic attacks:** These can happen suddenly, for no clear reason. It can mean feeling sick, short of breath, shaking, sweating and experiencing a sense of unreality

It is important to take steps to control stress before it overwhelms. There may be little that can be done to change external pressures, but they can be dealt with. The first stage in dealing with stress is to identify the source in order to plan a strategy. Common issues identified by LawCare callers include:

- Job insecurity and lack of status
- Impossible targets
- Unsupportive colleagues or having no friends at work
- Long, antisocial or inflexible hours
- Lack of support or supervision
- Overwhelming responsibilities or difficulties at home

A good tip is to talk, and don’t stay silent. Talking informally to a trusted colleague or supervisor can be helpful, or call our helpline 1800 991801.

There are plenty of positive strategies to help people to manage stress, and practical resources on stress management and workplace wellbeing can be found on our website www.lawcare.ie.

RECIPE: TURKEY CACCIATORE

Put those turkey leftovers (especially the brown meat) to good use with this tasty festive recipe from Gerry Curran.

**Ingredients**

1 large chopped onion  
2 crushed cloves of garlic  
3 tbsp of any cooking oil  
2 tsp dried oregano or rosemary  
3 cans of chopped tomatoes or 2 jars of readymade tomato pasta sauce (add a splash of vinegar and a heaped tsp of sugar if using the canned tomatoes)  
1 lb or about 500 grams of shredded leftover turkey  
200-250 grams of grated mozzarella cheese  
2 large handfuls fresh breadcrumbs - or leftover bread stuffing (not sausage stuffing).

**Method**

Heat oven to 220C/200C fan/gas 7.

Fry the onion and garlic in the oil until softened. Add the tomatoes and sugar, a little splash of vinegar and some seasoning, then simmer for 20 mins until really thick. There is no need for sugar and vinegar if using the jars of pasta sauce. Optional extras at this point are some chopped celery, mushrooms, red or green peppers, and/or a few black olives.

Stir in the turkey and transfer to a baking dish.

Sprinkle over the mozzarella - or a light cheddar - then scatter over the breadcrumbs or stuffing with a bit more ground pepper. Bake for 20 mins until the turkey mixture is heated through. The top should be bubbly from the melted cheese breaking through the breadcrumbs.

This simple dish - served with left over mash, mixed salad, roast potatoes, chopped up sprouts re-fried with a few bits of shredded ham, boiled pasta shapes, or some crusty bread - is a fool proof way to get good food inside you and yours on St. Stephen’s Day - with no great effort, and by using what is about you already.
BOOK REVIEWS...

THE LEWIS TRILOGY
THE BLACKHOUSE, THE LEWIS MAN, AND THE CHESSMEN BY PETER MAY (QUERCUS)

Not to be confused with Inspector Lewis of Thames Valley CID and immortalised in Colin Dexter’s Morse series, the Lewis Trilogy comprises of three crime novels The Blackhouse, The Lewis Man and The Chessmen set in the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. While each novel can be read as a standalone story, I would recommend reading them in order.

The Blackhouse, the first in the series, introduces us to Detective Inspector Finlay (but known as Fin), Macleod, based in Edinburgh who has recently lost his young son in a hit and run incident. Fin is sent to the Isle of Lewis to investigate a murder which took place there and which bears a number of similarities to a murder being investigated by the Edinburgh police. Fin was born and raised on Lewis but had left there to go to college on the mainland and had not been back since then. Returning to Lewis, memories of childhood and growing up are stirred up and the novel travels back and forth between Fin’s childhood and the present day. It also turns out that the murder victim was the school bully of Fin’s childhood. Fin reacquaints himself with some of his former school mates and former girlfriend. In particular unwelcome memories of the “guga” hunt, a rite of passage for boys growing to manhood on Lewis come to mind.

This is a gripping story with a few unexpected twists and turns which makes for a very satisfying read.

The Lewis Man, number two in the series, finds Fin returning to Lewis, resigned from the police, divorced, and anxious to make a new life for himself. He plans to restore his late parents’ croft. However, the body of an unidentified man is found on the island. The man was a murder victim and the body has lain buried for more than fifty years. A DNA match links the victim to Tormod MacDonald a local farmer suffering from dementia and the father of Fin’s childhood sweetheart, Marsaili. Fin delves into Tormod’s past to try and identify the young murder victim and establish the innocence of Tormod who is the only identified link to the young man. What follows is an enthralling story in which Tormod recalls his own childhood and youth.

The Chessmen is the third and final novel in the series. I have just started reading this one, and it is certainly on a par with the others.

These are definitely novels worth checking out and perfect for the dark winter evenings which are upon us.

Noel Doherty

CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Have a go at our Christmas quiz. What better way to beat the January blues than by winning our €75 One4All voucher? Send your entries to courtsservicenews@courts.ie by Friday 12th January 2018.

1. The badnjak is a log brought into the house and placed on the fire on Christmas Eve in what European country?
2. Comedian and actor Dermot Morgan had a Christmas No.1 with Thank You Very Much Mr Eastwood in what year?
3. In 1939 Robert L May created which loved Christmas character?
4. Raymond Crotty sought a High Court injunction on Christmas Eve in Crotty v An Taoiseach & ors in what year?
5. The Christmas Day (Trading) Act 2004, an Act of the Parliament in the U.K., prevents shops from opening on Christmas Day in England and Wales if they are over a certain square footage. Is it 1,000 sq ft, 3,000 sq ft or 5,000 sq ft?
6. In some Ukrainian homes, what do families put on their Christmas tree for good luck?
7. The Live Animal Crib at Dublin’s Mansion House is a collaboration of Dublin City Council and which agricultural organisation?
8. In Patrick Kavanagh’s A Christmas Childhood, what did the father play?
9. In the popular Christmas Movie “It’s a Wonderful Life”, what US State is the fictional Bedford Falls in?
10. What is a baby reindeer called?
CHRISTMAS EVENTS...

FILL YOUR DAYS AT CHRISTMAS

Christmas is a time to create memories to reminisce about in years to come. But where do we go? We have explored, investigated and debated on some of our favourites and bring you our recommendations from around Ireland for Christmas 2017. So get the cameras charged, the Christmas jumpers on and off you go!

CARLOW
Rathwood Santa Train
Take a magical journey on board the award winning Santa train and watch out for Rudolph and the other reindeer. Walk through the Enchanted Forest to Santa’s Woodland home. This long standing event runs right up until Christmas.

Christmas Elf Chocolate Workshop
Join in on the deliciously fun experience with this interactive workshop at the chocolate Garden of Ireland. Roll up your sleeves and make a chocolate Christmas figure; decorate a chocolate bar for Santa. From 19th November.

CLARE
Aillwee caves workshop
Share the magic of Christmas with Santa and his elves in his workshop deep inside Aillwee Cave, Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare. From 24th November until 23rd December.

CORK
Rumley’s Winter Wonderland
Meet Santa, get up close to the animals at the special crib, jump aboard the Christmas sleigh, and meet and play with Rumley’s Christmas puppies. From 1st – 23rd December.

DUBLIN
Dublin Visitor Centre Christmas Experience
Hop on board the Vintage Christmas Bus driven by Santa himself for a magical tour of Dublin with his special Christmas sing-along and story-telling experience. Kids will visit a Christmas work shop and work on a gingerbread decoration for their Christmas trees. Until 22nd December. Visit www.dublinvisitorcentre.ie

Wild lights in Dublin Zoo
Embark on an enchanted trail and discover a dazzling array of beautifully crafted, giant colourful wild life inspired lanterns. Visitors will also be charmed by Chinese performers before browsing at the Chinese craft market. Pre-book online. Until 7th January.

DONEGAL
Donegal’s Lapland
Meet Santa’s elves and Mrs. Claus before dropping your letters off at the special post office. Find yourself in a different world with Santa’s castle and elves. From 22nd-24th December.
CHRISTMAS EVENTS...

GALWAY

Galway Christmas Markets
Eyre Square is transformed into a winter wonderland from 17th November to 22nd December.

KILKENNY

Yulefest Kilkenny
See the Parade Plaza brought to life, including an opportunity to view the city streets & lighting from a giant ferris wheel.
Until late December. Free.

LIMERICK

Pantomime
Get involved in SPARS production of Cinderella from 18th December to 7th Jan 2018. Aladdin by the Limerick Panto Society will run from 28th December until 7th January.

MAYO

Westport’s walking festival
A magical weekend of walking in the mountains and trails of Mayo and Connemara with superb views of the Wild Atlantic Way.

MEATH

Tayto Park
Huge toy soldiers and elves lead the way into Santa’s grotto; big lollipops; chocolate snowman; polar bears and giant gingerbread men magically transform the Rafter Room into a real life land of Candy Canes.
Until 23rd December.

WATERFORD

Winterval festival
Includes the Santa express train, the museum of toys, Waterford on Ice, live movie screening, archery, a Christmas crafts fair, and penguins at the palace.
From 24th November – 23rd December.

WEXFORD

Santa’s magical Forest of Dreams
Explore the magical forest under the big top, and meet the main man in his grotto. Chill out on the GIANT ice slide, get your face painted, and have your photo taken.
Until 23rd December.
A Christmas Carol is probably Charles Dickens’ best remembered story. The tale of the bitter and miserable miser Ebenezer Scrooge, a character who cares only for money and profits and who, one fateful night is shown the error of his ways by three spirits: the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future, who in the end completely transform the man into a better person. A tale that very much came from deep inside Dickens’ own personal experience as a child.

When Dickens was 10 years old, he had to leave school because his parents could no longer afford the relatively inexpensive fees. He went to London to work in a blacking factory where they made polish for various metal surfaces. He hated the fumes and harsh conditions of the factory, where he was often bullied by his co-workers. When he was 12 years old, his financially irresponsible father, John Dickens, was forced by his creditors to go to the debtors’ prison in Southwark, London. Charles’ mother and younger siblings joined him there while Charles went to stay with a friend of the family. This experience of being poor and impoverished in Victorian London would stay close to the writer’s heart as he developed his craft.

The Man Who Invented Christmas takes us on a whirlwind journey with Dickens as he struggles to bring this most famous seasonal story to the page. It’s a movie that needs your imagination to help you through the scenes as Dickens fictitious characters come alive and interact with him in the most hilarious fashion as he is thinking them through development. Scrooge is played here by the great Christopher Plummer in brilliant comic form. I would love to see a remake of A Christmas Carol with Plummer as the lead in it.

Charles Dickens is played by Dan Stevens who is no stranger to period dramas. The nicely rounded cast includes Jonathan Pryce as Dickens father, Simon Callow, Miriam Margolyes (Harry Potter), Ian McNeice, Morfydd Clark and Donald Sumpter (Game of Thrones).

Looking at the poster and advertising for this movie I was expecting a Christmas style tale with all the trimmings but the movie that unfolds is totally different. It is both a warm feel good tale of love and goodwill to all but also an incredibly detailed movie in the way it portrays the Victorian past life and a clever study of the mind of a struggling genius writer in those times as he battles with his own inner imagination to get a personal story to paper that the masses can share and enjoy.

Ronan Power
There have been surprisingly few films which incorporate the contemporary phenomenon of social media and on-line celebrity status as themes. This film addresses that and the widespread malaise of pretence which afflicts those addicted to this cult. Directed and co-written by Matt Spicer in his debut feature, *Ingrid goes West* is an original and engaging story about one young woman’s journey towards her dream, i.e. becoming ‘besties’ with someone cool who has a very large following on Instagram.

Spicer and his co-writer David Branson Smith have concocted a witty and original story embedded with some disturbing home truths. It will likely guarantee Spicer a shot at directing another feature with perhaps a bigger budget – though perhaps less artistic freedom. He is very well served by his principal and supporting cast.

We learn early on that Ingrid has spent time caring for her now deceased mother – and also spent time in a mental health institution following a wedding day mace attack on the bride. Ingrid would argue the attack was understandable given that the bride (an on-line and off-line ‘friend’ of Ingrid), had neglected to invite Ingrid to her wedding.

Ingrid has what might be regarded as an unhealthy interest in on-line celebrity figures. Many in this film and in life subscribe to the practice. Celebrity status can derive from the number of followers one has on Instagram. Enter Taylor Sloane, an attractive young woman living on the west coast with a very large following. Ingrid decides to follow Taylor in more ways than one – hence the title of the film.

*Ingrid goes West* has a range of quirky, though few likeable, characters. The credibility of the characters was greatly aided by the casting. Aubrey Plaza in the lead role of Ingrid managed to convey a mixture of manic determination and vulnerability. Though Ingrid’s behaviour ranges from misguided to deluded, she manages to evoke more sympathy than one might expect. Elizabeth Olsen as Taylor Sloane, is very good in a role more complex than her recent impressive turn in *Wind River*. Among the supporting cast, Billy Magnussen in the role of Nicky Sloane (Taylor’s brother), is excellent as the most dislikeable character I have seen for quite some time. My favourite character was Dan Pinto, Taylor’s landlord, played by O’Shea Jackson Jnr. (son of Ice -Cube) with remarkable screen presence. Pinto is one of the few characters without a hidden agenda. Though no saint, he exudes an integrity which is palpable and refreshing amidst an assorted range of charlatans.

The music and sound track by Jonathan Sadoff and Nick Thorburn are good and very conducive to the mood and tone of the film.

Matt Spicer has done very well on his first outing.

Brian O’Tiomáin
THROUGH THE LENS

John Copley, Frank Dunne, Denis O’Neill and Brendan Murphy

Mick Valentine, Alan Williamson and Brendan Murphy

Annette Power, Ronan Power and Kathleen O’Sullivan at the reception in Phoenix House after the annual Courts Service Mass of Remembrance

Annette Power, Ronan Power and Kathleen O’Sullivan at the reception in Phoenix House after the annual Courts Service Mass of Remembrance

Patricia Hickey, General Solicitor at her Peru Crafts fair in Phoenix House which raised over €1,000 for a charity in Peru

Bob Flynn, Rose O’Sullivan, Bernard Neary, Joe McLoughlin, Maurice McMorrow and Tony Donnelly

Courts Service staff and friends who sang at fundraising event in the Powerscourt Centre, Dublin

Members of a Chinese delegation who met with Ms Justice Isobel Kennedy and President of the High Court Mr Justice Peter Kelly