



*We wish you a Merry Christmas  
& a Happy & Healthy New Year*



## Kerry Social Farming Newsletter

15<sup>th</sup> edition  
December 2021

Welcome to our final Newsletter of 2021! We take this opportunity to wish you and your families a safe and peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year. It's been another challenging year and we are grateful to everyone whose hard work and dedication ensured that social farming took place safely across Kerry this year. Thank you all for your time and effort, which is so necessary to keep delivering this wonderful and unique project. Thank you to all who promoted our events and those who joined us, online and in person at our events. Enjoy a break at Christmas and we really look forward to seeing you all in 2022.

### The late Ger Casúr O'Sullivan

As 2021 draws to a close, we sadly bade farewell to one of the most ardent champions of social farming, Ger 'Casúr' O'Sullivan who passed away at home in Cahersiveen on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November.

*Earl & Ger welcoming us to the farm walk at Laharn South, in August 2019 as part of Cahersiveen Festival of Music and the Arts*



### Eamon Horgan Chair of the KSF Working Group pays tribute and outlines Ger's involvement with social farming.

As Chair of the Kerry Social Farming Working Group, I have been asked to pay tribute to one of our outstanding host farmers, our dearly departed Ger (Casúr) O'Sullivan. Ger was an exceptional man with a big heart and so, while I write this with enormous sadness, as he is greatly missed, it is a great honour for me to write this tribute to Ger Casúr on behalf of Kerry Social Farming.

Ger had a rare quality of being a man of great vision who also was a man of action. 'Consider it done' was his motto, and one he lived by through his actions. A great, kind and community-minded man, without hesitation I can safely say that Ger embodied what the Kerry Social Farming Project is all about – supporting people with disabilities work and engage in local, ordinary farms and farm families in the community, putting the talk about social inclusion into real and meaningful action. Nothing that Ger said and did was ordinary, it was exceptional.

A native of Cahersiveen, Ger and his wife Mary Anne, who own a holding in Laharn South came on board the Kerry Social Farming initiative in the early days of the project in 2014. Their participant, Earl Leahy, who attends Kerry Parents and Friends Association, Tigh an Oileáin in Valentia, Co. Kerry started out with Ger and Mary Anne and soon became part of their farming life and part of the family. Ger enthusiastically came on board as host farmer, and true to Ger he always focused on Earl's ability and they became great friends. With Ger's guidance Earl has blossomed as a person and has had fantastic opportunities to become fully involved in his community and beyond. In enabling Earl to learn new skills on the farm and getting out and about, Ger has enabled Earl to grow in confidence. Earl was warmly welcomed by Mary Anne, Ger and Ger's brother Tim and has spent several Christmas's with them at their family home, and many trips involving both Kerry Social Farming and outside the project. One such trip was to go to Old Trafford in Manchester – for Earl's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, Ger gave Earl a trip of a lifetime to go and see Earl's favourite team Man United play. This was a dream come true for Earl and even more an exciting adventure with his farm family, the O' Sullivan's.

Ger's involvement with Kerry Social Farming did not stop at the farm gate. He was a true ambassador and advocate for Kerry Social Farming and the participants. Being a man of action, he worked tirelessly to promote the project. I have had the pleasure of working alongside Ger over several years in preparing farms for host farm walks and events, including the launch of the Kerry Social Farming Evaluation Report in 2017. We travelled far and wide setting up our stand at various locations, sometimes in very inhospitable weather. Ger also supported other host farmers get set up to start social farming, and he had a great way of generating enthusiasm and was a great support to other farmers. He had a brilliant way with participants and farmers alike and he was wonderful in building their confidence.

Wherever Ger went Earl was with him, they were fantastic ambassadors – this includes representing Kerry Social Farming in Westport at a Project Ireland 2040 launch, where Earl and Ger met with the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, Ministers Michael Ring and Michael Creed. Ger and Earl also attended a HSE event in Cork to speak about Kerry Social Farming and left a positive lasting impression on HSE Directors and services who attended.

The passing of Ger Casúr has left a great void to all who knew him. Ger, on behalf of Kerry Social Farming we hope to continue the vision and action you brought to the project. Our deepest sympathy to Ger's wife Mary Anne, Ger's brothers and sisters, his extended family and to his dear friend, Earl.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam

*Eamon Horgan*

*(Chair of Kerry Social Farming Working Group)*



*Ger and Éamon at Kerry Social Farming Stand at the National Ploughing Championships, Tullamore 2018*



Ger at home in Laharn and a selection of Ger & Earl's travels with KSF, to Puck Fair 2019 where Ger discovered his artistic side, to Westport in 2018 for the launch of Project Ireland 2040 with then Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, to Kenmare with Mary Anne to promote KSF in 2019.

Here is a link to a KSF Video of Ger & Earl which was shot by Tadgh Hayes a few years ago

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDcQgLcMdh8>



## Skellig Six18 Aonach Bia event October 24th

Skellig Six18, a gin distillery based in Cahersiveen hosted an Aonach Bia on the October bank holiday weekend. Kerry Social Farming were invited to have a stand there to showcase the work of host farmers as well as social farming participants for the local community to see. Host farmers and participants from the Iveragh area attended to support the event and shared stories and information on the project with all those who attended. Our video showcasing the growth of social farming and insights into social farming on 4 farms was shown which really engaged the audience as they walked around the venue. Link to video is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kR0bA6B4PU4&t=515s>



*Host farmer Irene Brune setting up at Aonach Bia in Cahersiveen*

## New farms and participants

Cathal Moriarty has started social farming with Christy McDonnell through the National Learning Network Tralee. Cathal got stuck in on his first day on the farm, digging out the raised beds in the tunnel with Christy and Earl Leahy. Many hands may light work and the men worked their way through half of the raised beds in the tunnel while having the craic and chat about football and soccer!



Welcome on board to Daniel Casey! Daniel has joined us through his work experience opportunity in Coláiste na Sceilge, Cahersiveen. Daniel is here checking out the seat in Mike O Sé's vintage tractor where he has started his social farming experience. Daniel enjoys feeding the cows and has a keen interest in what is going on around the farm and what everything is for. Daniel and Mike might end up doing more talking than farming 😊

And in case Mike does not keep Daniel busy enough, Daniel is also going to join Irene Brune on her farm to work with her and learn more about vegetable growing as he is a keen vegetable grower himself and may expand his own garden!



James Kenny has started social farming with John O Shea in Blackwater. James attends with John Flynn (KPFA) who is no stranger to social farming. James is supported by the two Johns to engage in the countryside which he loves and with all the farm jobs are on the cards, including taking notice of the fowl, sheep and dogs on the farm.





Peter Murray, through Rehabcare, is joining the social farming team at Blueberry Hill farm, Sneem; Yvonne & Sigi (host farmers), Emma who already participates in social farming here and Amanda McCarthy from Enable Ireland services.

Peter is a young man who is keen to work with the animals here and already named one of the young rabbits Snowflake, on his first visit to the farm. Welcome to the team Peter, we are sure you will be busy and happy at Blueberry Hill farm. Peter is pictured here feeding the sheep with Yvonne



### **New Host Farmer Dawn Roberts, Quarry Cottage, Tralee**

Welcome to Dawn Roberts our newest host farmer. Dawn and her family live just outside Tralee. She runs a very quaint and unique smallholding. This farm has years of history, chiseled into its banks as a section of property contains an old quarry on site. The old quarry basin is the home to a polytunnel and vegetable garden area. Dawn is a keen gardener and grower.

Growing mostly in raised beds outdoors Dawn and participant Joe Joe will work mostly here or in the tunnel area. Dawn is also a beekeeper and wild flower grower they will be lots to do here. Joe Joe is a new participant from Kerry Parents and Friends, Castlemaine. Already he likes feeding the alpacas and grooming and feeding the donkeys.



Quarry cottage farm has a wide range of biodiversity it has its own mini microclimate due to the quarry basin.

It will be a lovely place to work on a sunny day and we wish Dawn and Joe Joe all the best in their social farming adventure together.

*Dawn , Joe Joe , Anne support worker (KPFA)*



## Manual Handling training

We have had 2 training sessions for Manual Handling during the autumn, with eight participants as well as a number of farmers and support workers taking part. This training is crucial in promoting safety awareness on farms and ensuring that all farm tasks are completed with due regard to the safety and wellbeing of all. Well done to all involved.

Below left Earl, Patrick and David are engaging in manual handling at the McDonnells farm, Kells. Mary & Christy, as well as Irene Brune and Joe McCrohan passing on their skills and knowledge!



Above right; Mohammed, Michael, Vincent, Roger and Liam practicing manual handling techniques on Noel Lynch's farm, Kilcummin

## Appointment of Biodiversity Officer

Welcome to Luke Myers who'll be joining us in January as Biodiversity Officer for Kerry Eco-Social Farming Biodiversity project. He will be meeting you all in early 2022, as this exciting and innovative project takes shape on host farms across Kerry. This is an exciting new area for social farming and we look forward to working with Luke, our host farmers and participants, to increase awareness of biodiversity and carry out initiatives across the county.



*Lukecutting a meadow with a scythe working on a river site with giant hogweed*

## UCC Graduations

Congratulations to all who received their Certificates in Practice Support in Social Farming qualifications at UCC recently. Our class of 2019 had their in-person event on 26<sup>th</sup> October.



*2019 group graduation. Front row (l-r) Mary O'Neill McDonnell (Kells), Breeda O'Sullivan (Glencar), Rena Blake (Ballybunion), Maura Sheehy (Tralee), Belinda Gascoigne (Programme Co-Ordinator and Lecturer, Skellig CRI & UCC) and Dr Seamus Ó Tuama (Director of Adult and Continuing Education UCC). Back row (l-r) Christy McDonnell (Kells), Éamon Horgan ( Kilgarvan), George Kelly (Beaufort) and Batt Healy (Kilcummin). (picture courtesy of Mary O'Neill McDonnell).*



*2021 class graduate from UCC (l-r) Amanda Bentley Curran (Ardfert), James O Donoghue (KPFA), Evelyn O'Connell (Cahirsiveen), Mike O'Sé (Dromid), Tom Sears (Tralee), Peter Curran (Ardfert), Belinda Gascoigne (Programme Co-ordinator and Lecturer UCC/Skellig CRI), Adrian Griffin (Waterville) Julie Brosnan (Kerry Social Farming/ACE UCC) and James Hurley (Clonakilty). (picture courtesy of Adrian Griffin).*



On November 6<sup>th</sup>, it was the turn of the class of 2020/2021 to receive their Certificates. Well done to you all and while everyone could not be present in Cork, you and your families share in the success. We are very proud of you and of the hard work that you have done to achieve this qualification.

Enrolment is open for the next intake of students to this course, which begins in late January 2022. You can contact any of the KSF team for more information or visit the UCC website <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ace-cpsf>

### Radio Kerry – Saturday Supplement Show with Frank Lewis

We are delighted to let you know that Kerry Social Farming will start off with a bang for 2022 at 9am on New Year's Day morning. 7 of our host farms; host farmers, participants, job coaches & participant families will be featured on the Saturday Supplement with Frank Lewis.



*Frank & Siobhán Lewis, Bronagh & Rena in Ballybunion*

Frank was busy throughout December out visiting the host farms, meeting many of our social farming families and we look forward to hearing everyone's stories and experiences of social farming. Tune in at 9am on New Year's Day!

Also, there will be a call out to other new farmers to get involved in social farming. And we'll highlight all the benefits of being involved in this wonderful project. Having social farming on the airwaves of Kerry on New Year's Day morning is a great kick start for 2022.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Frank Lewis and his wife Siobhán for initiating this program, and also to Radio Kerry for all their support over the last year to KSF.



*Save the date 01/01/2022!*

## Sheila Kelleher

Many of you will have met Sheila who did her Masters research with us in Kerry earlier this year. We'd like to congratulate her, firstly on achieving her Masters—an MSc Co-operatives Agri-Food & Sustainable Development -with First Class Honours from UCC and secondly on being appointed as Social Farming Co-Ordinator at IRD Duhallow, in Newmarket. IRD have begun a new social farming initiative in North East Cork and we look forward to working with them in promoting and developing this social farming model, so that more participants can avail of social farming. As you'll see below, the good work has already started!

## KSF Attending IRD Duhallow Social Farming event 15<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Kerry Social Farming was invited by Sheila Kelleher and IRD Duhallow to attend this information session to share information and experiences of social farming with their potential host farmer in North Cork area. KSF facilitators Rena & Evelyn along with host farmers Joan Brosnan and Seamus Howard each spoke at the event. Evelyn and Rena spoke about the facilitator role and what is involved in starting out as a new host farm and answered questions that the host farmers had in relation to social farming.



Joan and Seamus spoke about their own experiences of joining social farming and the rewards they receive weekly in observing participants progressing and engaging in farm activities with them. KSF offered to Sheila and potential host farmers to visit host farms in Kerry and see social farming in action and get a sense of the voluntary model of social farming on the ground.

Sheila spoke about Duhallow social farming and their plans for the project and gave all the attendees a tour of the grounds at James O'Keeffe Institute. It was a very enjoyable event of networking and supporting each other for the ongoing development and progression of social farming throughout Munster.



## Christmas Fruit Cake



### *Ingredients*

9 oz plain flour  
1 level tsp of mixed spice  
12 oz raisins  
12 oz sultanas  
12 oz currants  
2 oz mixed peel chopped  
3 oz glazed cherries (chopped)  
8 oz butter  
8 oz brown sugar  
4 eggs (lightly beaten)  
2 tsp black treacle  
3 tbs of brandy

### *Method*


1. Line an 8-inch round baking tin with grease proof paper (at least 3 layers).
2. Mix all ingredients in a large bowl and mix them very well.
3. Pour mixture into the lined cake tin.
4. Place cake in middle of the oven and bake for 3 hours at 150°C /300°F
5. Then reduce the oven heat to 140°C / 275°F / Gas Mark 1 and bake for approximate further 1-1.5 hours.
6. Dip a clean knife down through the centre of the cake and if the knife is dry the cake is done.
7. Remove from oven and leave in tin for 10 minutes until cool.
8. Turn cake out onto a wire tray (carefully) and cover with a clean tea-towel to keep the moisture in.
9. Allow the cake stand for about 6 hours

As easy as that, enjoy

*Rena*

## A BIG THANK YOU

*From all the team at Kerry Social Farming, we'd like to take this opportunity to say thanks all our host farmers, participants, families, service providers and support workers for all their dedication and commitment to social farming over the past year. And we're looking forward to working with you again in 2022. Enjoy your holidays and stay safe.*



We wish you a  
Moo'ry Christmas  
and a prosperous  
New Year

As always, we welcome your input into this newsletter, if you would like to write or share something please get in touch with us; Rena, [renablake@newkd.ie](mailto:renablake@newkd.ie) Evelyn, [eoconnell@skdp.net](mailto:eoconnell@skdp.net) and Julie [jbrosnan@skdp.net](mailto:jbrosnan@skdp.net). If you've changed your contact details recently for example, your email or postal address, please let us know so we can make sure the Newsletter gets to you each month. If you know of someone else who'd like to get our Newsletter by post or email, just let us know their details.



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Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine

