

BLÁTHÚ NEWSLETTER



An update for members and friends

August 2023

Something new is mounting, growing
Deep within me, outward surging.
Seed is ripening, sap is flowing;
Power streaming, light emerging.

Fire-spirits sparkle round me, warmth and will
bestowing:

“Sing our fiery song of summer strength!”

I hear them urging.

From *In the Light of a Child*, by M H Burton

Welcome to the August 2023 newsletter!

Four seasons in one day! What an elemental experience: earth, water, air, fire are all there at play as I weed my vegetable plot.

The garden soil is the one solid, fixed thing to hold onto: Earth, while rain, wind, and bright sunshine alternate, coming and going, chasing me indoors, and then back out again. Water, air, fire, in movement.

When I stop to rest, I watch the swallows who still swoop and call overhead. Perhaps not for much longer, if they do as they usually do and prepare to leave for warmer climes. But who can tell us how they will know when to go, now that our seasons seem to be shifting.

This year, I have had the best crop of onions, round and heavy. I lifted them in early July and spread them out to dry on a table under my airy front porch. They have made good use of the elements, since I planted them in their shallow depressions in the earth; then my constant watering during our very warm dry May and June; the sun's warmth and sometimes gentle breezes have helped them to dry out before I string them up for storing in

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long plaits. But so early, I would not usually expect to lift my onions until August. I have to trust that Nature is as capable of adaptation as we humans. As we meet new phases in life, as external conditions change, we remember what transformation we are capable of. We learn something more about ourselves, and we grow.



An Roinn Léaráí, Coimisiúnais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Oige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



“Across the evening sky, all the birds are leaving, but how can they know it’s time for them to go?” So sang Sandy Denny in her beautiful song, “Who knows where the time goes?”

At the apex of the eaves above my spare bedroom window is a swallows’ nest with two beautifully-crafted extensions. On the wooden veranda below, a heap of fallen clay, small feathers and bird mess from failed or short-lived attempts at nesting. But the birds return, year after year. They don’t give up when one house falls apart. They pick up the pieces and begin again. There is another row of nests, with new rooms and extensions, clinging to my woodshed roof beams. The birds make use of all the elements to create these from earth, water, air and fire, to make a safe haven for nurturing their young ones - just as we do in the kindergartens. Of course one day, after their spell of dedicated parenting and care, those young are ready to fly. Again, just like kindergarten, when the older children make their transition to class one.

Seasons may change, but we can still mark their passing with festivals and celebration!

“So come the storms of winter and then the birds in spring again, I have no fear of time...”

In peace,
Ruth Marshall

BLÁTHÚ National Coordinator
E: nc.blathu@gmail.com
Tel: **089 2411816**



Raindrops

by Rabindranath Tagore

I long to shed my weariness,
To cast my burdens,
And plunge my soul into the raindrops.
To dance and whirl, in the rhythm of the falling rain,
To forget, to forget everything,
Except the joy of the moment,
The joy of being drenched, in the sweet rain of life.

We welcome your contributions to the newsletter

Whether you are a teacher, practitioner, parent, student - or if you are just interested in what BLÁTHÚ does - we welcome your contributions to the newsletter. Perhaps you would like to send in your seasonal reflections, good ideas, articles, stories, songs, book reviews, crafts, patterns, or recipes.

All your suggestions that can enrich our experience, and ultimately, nourish the children, are very welcome.

Please send your contributions to:
Ruth Marshall, email: nc.blathu@gmail.com
by **Mon 30th October 2023**



IASWECE



BLÁTHÚ is a recognised member of IASWECE, the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education.

IASWECE gives financial and pedagogical support to projects in order to develop and maintain the quality of Waldorf early childhood education throughout the world. For this IASWECE depends on the generous help of colleagues and friends, and therefore welcomes your donations. See <https://iaswece.org/how-you-can-help/> for bank details.

WELCOME TO A NEW BEGINNING

By Ulrike Farnleitner

Our preparation for this autumn term is filled with ideas and fruits from the reflection from before the summer break. So much work was done, so much learning happened on all levels.

In our imagination, we slip into the shoes of children and parents and feel and see what is needed to accompany all of them in this time of transition from summer time into a new rhythm in autumn. A new group will be formed over time. We are creating a warm and welcoming space.

Children often hold onto not only the hands of their parents but also to their beloved toys as an anchor of security and familiarity. We need to find a kind and tactful way to treasure this gesture of what is important to the child. Toys, or any transitional objects, are animated by love, as I remember described by Winnicott. Becoming now the “teacher,” “educator,” “care giver,” is quite a big task and ask for each of us. We offer new customs, culture and rhythms for each family. The family offers customs and identity for the child and the kindergarten offers an additional layer. Some children react strongly to new smells and visual impressions and orientate themselves in a way that shows that their consciousness is so different to that of adults. They do not judge or reflect or compare, but take in what is, and process in their very individual way.

I never will forget an encounter with a child during a mentoring visit. She approached me while I was sitting and crocheting during the morning play time. She looked into my eyes and asked, ‘Can I smell you?’ ‘Of course,’ was my answer. She stood in front of me for a moment, smiled, and continued then with her play. I still have to smile when I remember this situation. How did she perceive her surrounding, the people around her? What happened for her? What happened for me? I still smile and feel grateful for this moment of encounter with a child who was so open and receptive.

Over the course of time, the kindergarten is forming protective walls like the sheltered surrounding of a nest. Thinking of the metaphor of a nest, what is happening while the young are in the nest? My suggestion would be dear reader, create your story about the necessity of the nest

and what you are creating for the children. That clarity will bring an additional input in your planning for the year!

While we are respecting where children are coming from, all cultural backgrounds and more, we are offering a new cultural surrounding created by us for them and with them. This is the layer that kindergarten adds to the life of families. Do we continue the values that are lived in families? Which kind of values are visible? Do we understand, and can we build connections to families’ backgrounds? How far is it possible over time to build up trust and security and interest in parents for our philosophy of education shown in an everyday mode of work and play in the kindergarten?

Festivals that will be celebrated together will create a strong emotional bond between the kindergarten and the families. Recent times have shown us the importance of building true relationships and care for the children and to repeat in a certain rhythm these festivals. It gives us meaning and purpose, joy and certainty, love and happiness for the world, others, community, friends, and ourselves.



Children from kindergarten at Kildare Steiner School ready to move on up to Class I.

THE MAGIC OF RINGTIME FOR SPEECH DEVELOPMENT

By Bea v. Toenges

I would like to share here my experience of how important it is to get children into a rhythm, repetition and movement. I have been working at a speech therapy school for the last two years. This is a school where children with speech problems are educated. They have different "problems" to find their way into the language. I had the opportunity to teach Waldorf education there. What does that mean? I did so-called 'ringtime' the rhythmical musical circle time with the children every day.

This circle time with movement was entirely new to the children, they had never done it before. We did the same ringtime for at least 5 weeks. The children enjoyed this repetition. I created a ringtime that corresponded to the season. Of course, there were children who only watched at first and did not join in. But what they all ALWAYS did, they imitated the gestures. They were joyful about it, and started singing along with the songs. There were children who could hardly express anything in speech, however, they slowly began to "try out" the language.

I suddenly heard some words from the ringtime outside of the ringtime. Sometimes the children asked about meaning of words, since many are not native speakers. Through imitation, they became more and more courageous and trusted the movement. They began to understand what it

meant, and immersed themselves deeper and deeper into what was happening through movement and sound and gesture into the action. They looked forward to our "singing", as they called the ringtime, every morning.

Even during free play, I would hear a little saying or a song being sung from time to time by the children. Or sometimes they even did the ringtime together. It always touched my heart to see what can be done *in very simple steps to accompany the children into language.*

Each of the children also receive 100 minutes of speech therapy. Even the speech therapists were amazed to see how quickly the children progressed in speech development.

They asked, 'what are you doing?' I said, 'Every day, for several weeks, the same ring time!'

So what does the ringtime mean to us in kindergarten?

- Through the repetition, we give the children security.
- Through the movements, we give the children the incentive to get into action.
- Through language, we give the children the opportunity to experience the world.



Outdoor ring time at the Farmyard kindergarten
Picture: by Larry Cummins

Through repetition, we give the child security, confidence and they can engage in what is happening at their own pace. It is important not to force the child to participate, because even children who simply watch, go along with the action and participate and move inwardly. Often, tentative movements come quite suddenly. The movements must be inspired by us. What does that mean? I have to identify myself with the movement in such a way that I am completely immersed and can thus open the space for the child and the child thus 'flows' into my flow of movement. It is wonderful when we really succeed in doing this and observe how the children are immersed in participating with joy. It is similar with language. I have to cultivate a clear language of myself to be the best example for their imitation.

My motto is: ***to be in the flow and immerse myself with love.***

Singing is for me also very important. It does not have to be loud and stressful, but in harmony with everything.



If we succeed in all this - and yes I know that is a high demand - but what do we experience?

I had the opportunity to work with children who really had a hard time grasping the language. And the results were really great. The children developed joy in speaking and singing and became more and more confident in the language.

What we can do with very simple means in the development of children is wonderful. I am so grateful to be able to work with children as an early childhood educator.

That's what I wish for all of us, that we have the courage to carry something through for a longer period of time and to endure that the children then say it's boring, because then it starts to bear fruit and soon you can reap the rewards, in all areas.

I wish everyone a lot of fun in discovering the value of working with the ringtime.



**"IT ALWAYS SEEMS
IMPOSSIBLE
UNTIL IT'S DONE"**

- NELSON MANDELA

BLÁTHÚ ONE-DAY CONFERENCE : DATE FOR YOUR DIARY!

We are delighted to announce that this year's **BLÁTHÚ ONE-DAY CONFERENCE** will take place on Sat 4th November 2023, in Co Clare.

We would encourage each kindergarten / service to send at least one staff representative to the conference. As well as being a valuable opportunity to up-skill in our short workshops, this annual gathering is intended to be a truly warm social and networking event. Please come and meet others working in the same field, share your news, opinions, questions - and a lovely lunch.

Our **keynote speaker** is **Nancy Mellon**, an elder in the global storytelling renaissance. An author, psychotherapist and mentor, for thirty years, she has awakened the goodness, truth and beauty of the spoken and written word. Specialising in **storytelling as a healing art**, her books include: [Storytelling with Children](#), [Storytelling and the Art of Imagination](#), and [Body Eloquence](#).

Further details and booking information will be sent out to our membership in advance of the event, and will be included on our website. Further information, contact Ruth: nc.blathu@gmail.com

BLÁTHÚ CPD WORKSHOPS

BLÁTHÚ is committed to providing up-skilling CPD workshops for our membership and other interested parties.

9th Sept: Communications - An in-person workshop

Oct/Nov: Online - Working with Parents

Please check our website www.blathu.org for dates, further details and information on booking.

Contact Ruth, at nc.blathu@gmail.com, or tel: 089 2411816



Many problems can be avoided through clarity of communicating.

This workshop will ask:

- How can we top up our communication skills?
- How to solve small problems through art and observation?
- What are the helping tools for successful teams?
- How can art be supportive?

We will explore, in theory and practice:

- the HOW-TO of communication
- our listening skills, and non-verbal understanding
- team building as a process of respecting otherness
- the different temperaments as a key for understanding oneself and the other

Sat 9th Sept, 9.30am - 4.30pm. Farmyard Kindergarten, Cork

COST:

Members: €35

Non-members: €60

Join on the day (combined membership & workshop): €55

Bring food to share for lunch
A CPD certificate of completion will be provided.

**Farmyard Kindergarten,
Strawberry Hill, Cork City**

Saturday 9th September

Book via Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/communications-and-teamwork-a-creative-exploration-tickets-639261557527>

"What is more wonderful than the light? - Conversation."

JW von Goethe, The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily



BLÁTHÚ Steiner Early Childhood Association
Company Number: 640045
Charity No: 20204676



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Micúimais, Lánpháiríochta agus Oige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

BLÁTHÚ MEMBERSHIP 2023-24

It is now time to renew your membership with Bláthú for the year 2023-2024.

As the national organisation for Steiner Waldorf Early Years in Ireland, BLÁTHÚ is committed to upholding standards of Steiner pedagogy in early years education and care. BLÁTHÚ is committed to promoting the growth and development of Steiner Waldorf services in Ireland, and aims to support our member services to maintain the quality of care and education that they provide. As a member of BLÁTHÚ, you are part of a recognised professional body which, through its mission and actions, is committed to furthering the profile and formation of Steiner Waldorf Early Years services and pedagogy.

Proposed changes to membership requirements:

Annual membership will now run from 1st September to 31st August each year, to reflect the school year and to assist a smooth membership renewal process.

We are proposing to introduce a number of minimum standards, which will be implemented over the next three years.

Standard of Training:

We would wish to see that each member service have, or be currently working towards having, at least 1 fully-trained Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood teacher.

Commitment to CPD:

Completing a minimum of 2 relevant CPD workshops per service per year. Participation by staff members on a Steiner Early Childhood training or a foundation course in Anthroposophy, in Ireland or abroad, is also considered as CPD.

Representation at Annual Conference:

Each member service to send at least 1 staff representative to BLÁTHÚ's annual conference.

Mentoring:

We recommend a minimum of 1 mentoring visit per service per school year, plus a follow-up zoom call within 6 weeks of the mentoring visit. BLÁTHÚ offers a considerable discount if a service commits to a series of 3 pre-booked visits.

Membership Options:

Full Membership is open to Kindergartens/Early Years Services as organisations which avail of FULL benefits. 3 contact persons receiving correspondence, usually lead teacher, assistant teacher & the committee secretary. All members of staff/committee can avail of discounted entry to BLÁTHÚ workshops & events. **Cost: €75 p/a**

New or small initiatives such as parent & toddler groups can take out a **reduced** membership, which means they can avail of full benefits with one person receiving correspondence & discounts. **Cost: €35 p/a**

Associate membership is available to organisations such as VCOs, Universities or Colleges who wish to associate themselves with BLÁTHÚ, receiving updates and discounts to BLÁTHÚ events. **Cost: €65 p/a**

Individual membership is available to members of the general public and parents of children who may be attending one of our member settings, receiving updates, newsletters and discounts to BLÁTHÚ events. **Cost: €25 p/a**

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP?

Benefits to All Members

- Join with members nationwide strengthening Steiner Education in the Early Years sector.
- Receive the quarterly BLÁTHÚ newsletter
- Receive a discount on BLÁTHÚ events and publications
- Receive regular updates & job vacancy information
- Mentoring and support

Additional Benefits to Full Members

- BLÁTHÚ is a recognised professional body
- BLÁTHÚ represents you at national and international levels
- Your service's website can be linked from listing on www.blathu.org
- The assurance of quality

So, what do we do now - how do we renew our BLÁTHÚ membership?

Contact the National Co-ordinator, Ruth Marshall:

Email: nc.blathu@gmail.com or tel: 089 241 1816,

and request a membership form, or download the form from our website www.blathu.org

OBSERVING TRANSFORMATION

By Ulrike Farnleitner

Thinking about mankind and our connection to nature, I was thinking how much we have emancipated ourselves over time from the rhythms and cycles of time. We have cultivated plants and animals, and have made earth into our place of work and existence. But of course not only our physical needs are to be satisfied. Our soul and spirit also want to be nourished and enlivened. I love to look at roses and lilies and all the amazing flowers in gardens and fields, as well as at herbs and “weeds” like nettles.

To all our plants and flowers belong a whole range of insects, which find a most beautiful design in the butterflies. We could say that blossoms and butterflies belong to each other. Don't we all enjoy in our hearts to see the butterflies swaying from blossom to blossom in the sunshine? We almost feel in our soul a certain relationship to these beauties. In Greece the name of butterfly is “*psyche*” which means Soul.

Nowadays we are not only concerned with their beauty but also very much with the diminishing of their species. It is no longer a hidden fact that an incredible percentage of insects and their diverse species are becoming extinct. We can speak about this for long, and find the guilty tribes among the species of humans and their way of treating their environment!

But as “nature detectives” we need to school our eyes to discover them underneath the leaves or on stems of plants. Only if we really know what kind of caterpillar we have spotted and which food plant it has chosen, we can then bring it home and keep it in an airy transparent box filled with the right kind of food in order to witness its transformation. If we find caterpillars that we don't know, we are best not to disturb them. They all need their very specific plants for food that grow where we find them. We can of course revisit the spot where we found the caterpillars and see if we can witness their journey into transformation on site.

Just in case we can't find any - it might be the wrong time of year, or perhaps our search is not focused yet, or maybe there are just no caterpillars at all in this spot. Just to distinguish, a caterpillar has 5 to 6 prolegs for movements - a worm has no legs at all. And they need to eat a lot in order to store this energy for their next transformation.

As soon as we decide to keep one or two of these insect species appropriately, we first need to learn a lot about them, especially in order to role model care and clarity for the children who will witness this process with us.

Depending on the weather, we could witness even two or three generations in a year. What a wonder is the transformation of caterpillars and what wisdom is connected to this!



During approximately a month, the caterpillar will have changed already a few times and now looks for a suitable place to change into the chrysalis and hang down, either completely quiet or sometimes they sway although they have fixed themselves to a wall or stem. It is very important not to touch the chrysalis at all! The time in the chrysalis will take around two to three weeks.

Of course we must ensure that we never expose the box with the insects to extremes of heat, sunshine, or rain, but keep it somewhere sheltered outdoors.

As soon as we see that the chrysalis is changing colour, from the pale brown grey into a more transparent stage, where we can sense the coloured wings, we know that the day of the hatching is near. The chrysalis tears, and the insect crawls from its shelter that no longer fits. And now there is a lot of work to be seen which determines the future of the butterfly. Their so amazingly carefully-folded wings need to be unfolded. To do this, the butterfly pumps lots of bodily fluid into them, and through this pressure they create their form. They are soft and need to “harden” in the air. Then the liquid moves back into the body. This whole process takes between 2-3 hours. We must not disturb this process at all. They need their time to grow. We only admire this birth of our friends, the butterflies.

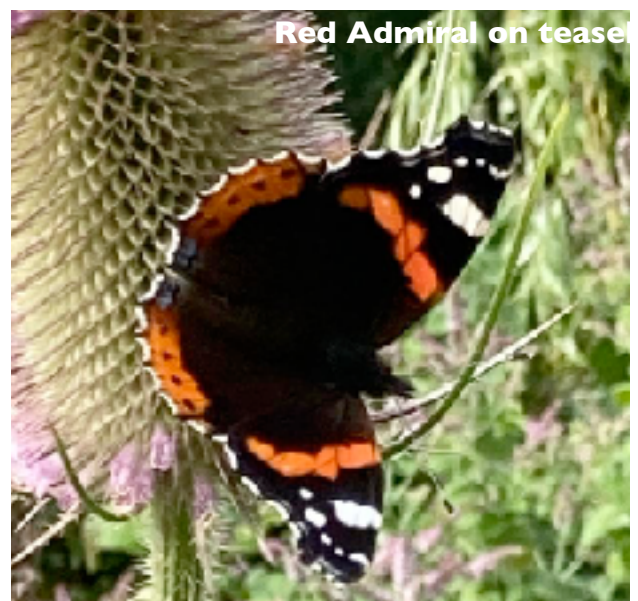
It is impressive to see them flying into the air and sometimes we have them back in the garden sitting on the plants and blossoms, offering us their beauty.

Vanessa atalanta (Red Admiral) and Aglais urticae (Small Tortoiseshell) both love nettles, as does Inachis io (Peacock), one of the largest and prettiest of common butterflies in Ireland. They lay their eggs on stinging nettles.

A butterfly memory: I was invited along to the first prize-giving presentation for the Edna O'Brien Creative Writing Award at Scariff Community College last year. The young poet who had won the award sat down after reading her poem to the audience. As she walked to her seat, a butterfly appeared and circled around her, finally landing on her hand. During the speeches that followed, she watched the butterfly crawl around her hand and sheltered it with her other palm. As soon as the speeches were over, she ran to the door, opened her hands, and released the butterfly into the bright air. While everyone else was applauding the speeches, I watched this beautiful interaction between the gifted young poet and the butterfly who seemed to recognise the gift of her words. What a blessing! - Ruth Marshall



Dr Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, who worked a lot with people at the threshold, had witnessed the death of patients and took the transformation of the butterfly as an image for this process of the soul of letting go of the physical form. What an amazing heart-warming and comforting picture!



CATERPILLAR CRAFTS

By Ruth Marshall

Make a woolly caterpillar



You will need:

Wool fleece in a variety of colours
Liquid soap and warm water
Strong thread or string, and a strong big-eyed needle

Method:

Make a series of small (max 1 inch diameter) but dense felt balls by wet felting. Using a strong thread or string on a large strong needle, tie a good knot at the end and then string the felt balls together as if making a necklace.

Tie another good knot, but leave a length of yarn to pull the caterpillar along.

A creeping caterpillar

You will need:

Green card; scissors; glue; string, or wool, for caterpillar; coffee-stirrer; green crayon

Method:

Cut out a leaf shape with a thick stem. Colour the coffee stirrer green. Make a small ring from card that will fit around the stick. Glue the ring to the leaf stem, and insert the stick. Cut a length of string for caterpillar, and mark some dots along its length. Glue its head end to the top of the stick, and its tail to the ring of card. Now, when you push or pull the stick, the caterpillar will creep up and down the leaf in that funny way that caterpillars move. Watch out, this caterpillar is hungry!



Caterpillar in a puppet



Snug as a bug in a rug!

FOR THE SEASONS - A FESTIVALS SCHEDULE

Month	Date	Festival / Event
August	1st August / 14th August	Lughnasadh / Garland Sunday / Reek Sunday Lammas First Fruits/Harvest
September	29th September	Michaelmas Harvest thanksgiving
October	31st October	Hallowe'en / Samhain
November	11th November The fourth Sunday before Christmas could be in November	Old Hallowe'en Martinmas / St Martins Advent

NEWS:

We have been working on a new publication on the theme of celebrating festivals in kindergarten. Ulrike Farnleitner, our NDO and mentor, and Ruth Marshall, our NC, who is also the author of *Celebrating Irish Festivals* (Hawthorn Press, 2003) have been working together on this project to support the work you do in kindergarten. We would hope to have copies of this publication available for sale at our annual conference in early November.

AMHRÁIN IS RANNTA DO PHÁISTÍ ÓGA AS GAELIGE DON FHÓMHAIR

With thanks to Linda Grant for contributing the Irish verses and songs

English translation:

Rolaí, polaí (x 2) suas, suas, suas,
 “ “ síos, síos, síos.
 “ “ amach, amach, amach,
 “ “ isteach, isteach, isteach.

Rolly, poly (x2) up, up, up.
 “ “ down, down, down.
 “ “ out, out, out.
 “ “ in, in, in.

Éadaí (Clothes)

Geansaí, geansaí, geansaí gorm,
 Tá geansaí, bríste is stocaí orm.
 Geansaí, geansaí, geansaí gorm,
 Tá geansaí, bríste is stocaí orm.

Cóta, cóta, cóta gorm,
 Tá cóta, hata is bróga orm.
 Cóta, cóta, cóta gorm,
 Tá cóta, hata is bróga orm.

English Translation:

Jumper, jumper, jumper, blue,
 I have a jumper, trousers and socks on me.
 (Repeat)

Coat, coat, coat blue,
 I have a coat, a hat and shoes on me.
 (Repeat)

AMHRÁIN IS RANNTA DO PHÁISTÍ ÓGA AS GAELIGE DON FHÓMHAIR

Is buachaill bó mise

Is buachaill bó mise, hó! hó! hó!
Ag marcaíocht ar mo chapall ó!
Is buachaill bó mise, hó! hó! hó!
Hí-eip! Hí-eip! Hó! hó! hó!

English Translation:

I'm a cowboy (cowherd), Ho, Ho, Ho!
Riding on my horse O!
I'm a cowboy, Ho! Ho! Ho!
Hup, Hup, Ho! Ho! Ho!

Cnag ar an doras

Buail ar an doras is féach isteach
Árdaigh an láiste agus siúl isteach
Suigh ar an stól is bí ag ól
`is cén chaoi a bhfuil tú ar maidin.

Knock on the Door

Knock on the door and look inside,
Lift the latch and walk in,
Sit on the stool and have a drink
And how are you this morning?



A náid, a haon, a do

(One, two, three, four, five,
once I caught a fish alive...)

A náid a haon a do,
rug mé ar iasc a bhí beo,
A trí a ceathair a cúig a sé,
Chaith mé isteach san uisce é.
Cén chúis ar scaoil tú leis
Mar chreim sé méar liom nuair fuair sé deis
Cén mhéar a bhí i gceist?
An lúidín beag anseo ar dheis.

Micilín Muc



Chuaigh Micilín Muc ar an aonach lá,
Ar an aonach lá, ar an aonach lá.
Chuaigh Micilín Muc ar an aonach lá,
Hé hó, Micilín Muc.

Cheannaigh sé hata **le cur ar a cheann, (x3)**
Cheannaigh sé hata le cur ar a cheann,
Hé hó, Micilín Muc.

Tháinig sé abhaile **le port na habhann, (x3)**

Sciorr a chos **'s thit sé isteach, (x3)**

Beir ar a chluais **'s tarraing é amach, (x3)**

Little Michael the Pig

Micilín Muc went to the fair
Went to the fair, went to the fair
Micilín Muc went to the fair, Hay ho, Micilín Muc

He bought a hat to put on his head x3
Hay ho, Micilín Muc

He came home by the port on the river x3
Hay ho, Micilín Muc

His foot slipped and he fell in the river x3
Hay ho, Micilín Muc

Get hold of his ear and pull him out x3
Hay ho, Micilín Muc

FOR THE SEASONS - RECIPE

When all the apples start to fall, we always look for new ideas of what to make to enjoy eating them,. Here is a recipe for apple star pancakes to help you enjoy the abundance!

With thanks to **Floris Books** for permission to include this page from their new book: **Lottie, St Michael and the Lonely Dragon**. See book review on page 15.



Apple Star Pancakes



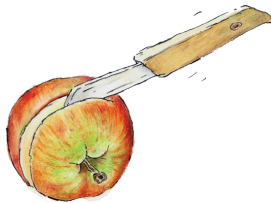
For 8 pancakes you will need:

- a small star-shaped cookie cutter
- 150 g ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup) plain or all-purpose flour
- 2 eggs
- 500 ml (2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups) milk
- a pinch of salt
- 2 apples
- oil or butter for frying
- cinnamon and sugar to serve



One person can mix the pancake batter, while another makes apple stars. Or make your batter in advance and let it rest, to allow the gluten to relax, while you prepare your apple slices.

Ask an adult to help with safe peeling, slicing and cooking.



Mixing the pancake batter

- Mix the flour and salt in a bowl, then make a well in the middle.
- Crack the eggs into the well.
- Beat with a spoon or a whisk until they are combined.
- Pour in the milk a little at a time and keep beating, until you get a nice thin batter without any lumps.

Cutting the apple stars

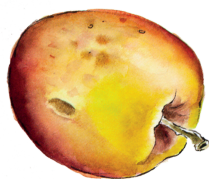
- Peel the apples.
- Turn the peeled apples on their sides and cut them into thin slices across the core (see picture, below left).
- Remove the seeds.
- Use your star-shaped cookie cutter to cut stars out of the centre of the apple slices.

Cooking the pancakes

- Melt the butter or oil in a hot frying pan and pour in a thin layer of batter.
- Drop apple stars, and apple slices with star cut-outs, into the batter while you brown the bottom of your pancake.
- When the top of the pancake is firm enough, carefully turn it over to cook the other side and brown the apple slices.

Enjoy

- Sprinkle some sugar and cinnamon over your pancake and eat!



FOR THE SEASONS -NATURE'S FRUITS

Ruth Marshall

Rosy apple, lemon and pear,
A bunch of roses in her hair,
Gold and silver by her side,
I know who shall be my bride.

Take her by her lily-white hand,
Lead her across the water.
Give her kisses one, two, three,
She's Mother Nature's daughter.

Apples, blackberries, pears, plums,
Round my garden Autumn comes.
Bring a basket, share the fun,
Pick them, pluck them one by one.

My nice red rosy apple has
a secret hid unseen;
You'd see if you could look inside,
five rooms so neat and clean.
In each room there are hiding
two seeds so black and bright;
Each is asleep and dreaming
of lovely warm sunlight.



THE ROWAN TREE

The rowan tree, or Caorthann - was also known as the quicken tree or the mountain ash, although it is not related to the ash tree at all.

There is a story of Finn MacCool and the fort of the quicken trees - a magical enclosure in which Fionn and his men were trapped - but it's not a story for kindergarten!

Rowan was always valued for its protective qualities. A rowan tree was planted outside the house to protect the home, a tradition very much still alive in Scotland when I was a child.

Its red berries and thin twigs also offered protection as charms. A small equal-armed cross made of two rowan twigs bound together with red thread was a protective amulet in times of danger. These were sometimes sewn into the lining of a coat for protection to the wearer, or pinned to a wall or doorway.

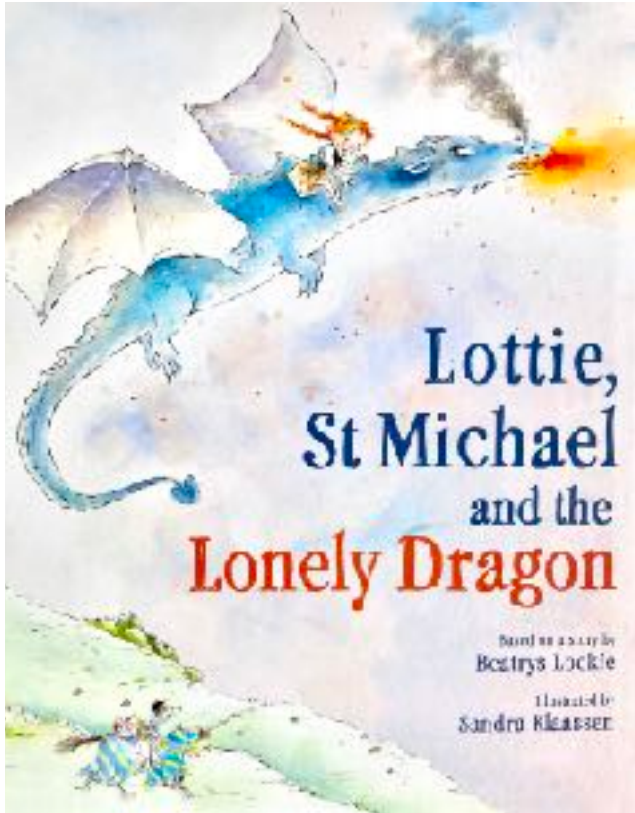
A string of red rowan berries tied around a child's wrist or throat would prevent them from being stolen away by the fairies, while a ring made from a sprig of rowan would be a spy hole. To look through this you would see the realm of the wee folk.

The berries are bitter but not poisonous. They can be cooked with sugar to make a jelly to serve with meat.



FOR THE SEASONS - BOOK REVIEW

Book Review by Ruth Marshall



Many many years ago, on the Scottish island of Colonsay, I had an encounter with a dragon.

It was late September, and I was midway through a two-week journey of exploration using Goethe's methodology, combining scientific observation and art. This was all new to me then, but grew to become a basic part of my life. I had a close encounter with a particular plant that grew in the damp ground near a pond. Gunnera, a Himalayan import, I suppose that now we'd call it an 'invasive species'. At different stages of its growth, it seemed so fiery, so coarse and leathery, so very *animal*. By the end of my journey with it, it had become a dragon, and a story had emerged about a helpful relationship that developed between a child and a dragon.

This is not the story I intended to share today, perhaps I will tell you it another time.

It is just that I remember this today because I am reading and reviewing a new book from Floris Press:

Lottie, St Michael and the Dragon.

The story is by Beatrys Lockie, illustrated by Sandra Klaassen, and offers a new view of the story of Michael and the dragon.

Lottie is a courageous child, a red-haired individual who sees things differently from the accepted way of viewing the world. When she encounters a dragon, instead of being scared, Lottie recognises that the dragon is lonely, and she wants to be its friend. We all know that dragons have little trust in humans, and of course Lottie's friendship is rejected. The dragon flies off, only to return later ready to attack her village. Everyone is worried, as they race to get within the town's protective walls. But Lottie refuses to give up on her hopes of befriending the dragon.

Meanwhile, St Michael is preparing himself for a confrontation with the dragon. He is scared, and praying for courage, when Lottie finds him. Lottie has an idea that could make all the difference. I won't spoil the story by telling you what that is, but I can assure that all ends well.

Don't we need a new approach to dragons? Aren't the days of demonising, *othering*, defeating the dragon, behind us? Contemporary psychotherapeutic approaches would have us *face* our dragons, acknowledge them, recognise them as the representations of our own wounded selves - and transform them into powerful allies. Well, that is just what Lottie, with the co-operation of St Michael, does.

Big-hearted, brave-hearted, Lottie doesn't just save the village, she brings a great gift to all its residents. The story ends, as all the best tales do, with a feast: in this case, a feast of apple star pancakes. The recipe is included.

The illustrations by Sandra Klaassen are just delightful. Lottie appears as slightly messy, slightly wild: a very ordinary child. One of my favourite images from the book is when Lottie talks things over with her chickens while she is feeding them (see below). There is something very charming about this. It is a lovely book in every way, and will make a great addition to your seasonal festival story repertoire.



Lottie, St Michael and the Lonely Dragon A Story About Courage

Beatrys Lockie;

Illustrated by Sandra Klaassen

ISBN: 978 -1-78250-830-4

27 pages - £12.99 - Hardback

Published 17th August 2023, Floris Press

FOR THE SEASONS - STORY

By Niamh Ruiseal

Once Upon a Time

Once upon a time there was a little girl who lived in a very busy castle where people ran about all the time, up and down stairs in and out. The servants ran, the maids ran, the King, the Queen and especially all the little Princes ran.

But the little girl preferred to look at the worms as they wriggled in the earth. She liked to see how a ladybird opened her hard, red shell and expanded her tiny wings and flew away. She loved to feel the soft, furry leaves of the plant they called "rabbit's ears" She loved to watch the plants slowly and silently burst in to flower.

Every now and then a visitor would come to the castle. He seemed like a very old man to the little girl. He too knew how to sit quietly and just watch. They could sit together in companionable silence for a long time.

The little girl liked the smell of the oil the old man put in his wispy white hair to try to keep it in place. She liked the old, worn clothes he wore, not like the fancy clothes worn by the King and Queen. They had many silent conversations together. They loved each other without ever saying a word.

The old man was a gardener; he had green fingers. He grew plants and flowers and trees. He came to the castle with what then seemed like exotic things such as garlic and red cabbage. He brought a beautiful raspberry pink fuchsia bush. He planted trees in the castle garden that would surely last longer than the castle.

He showed the little girl which plants grew from seed, which needed to grow from a cutting.

He knew where plants liked to grow and whom they liked to live near them.

He told the little girl stories of how her people had come over the mountain and settled by the lake. He spoke of how he climbed the mountain each morning to check the cows before walking the three miles to school. This amazed the little girl as she only had to walk a hop, skip and a jump to school in town. But she treasured all his stories in her heart.

The little girl and the old man stayed friends for the rest of his life, and although he is dead many, many years now, his raspberry pink fuchsia bush grows in the little girl's own garden.



FOR THE SEASONS - RECIPES

Millet or Spelt Muffins

Ingredients:

180g spelt or millet flour

150g butter

3 eggs

150g brown sugar (other sweeteners, such as date, agave or maple syrup or xylitol (birch sugar), can be substituted, according to experience of amount regarding the sweetness)

150g yoghurt (you can of course substitute goat's yogurt or non-dairy yoghurt)

60g cream

½ teaspoon baking powder

Method:

Put all ingredients in a mixing bowl and mix well to make a softer dough.

Fill a muffin tin with small sized muffin papers and spoon the dough into these.

Alternately you could line a baking tray with greaseproof paper and spread the mixture to fill the whole tin for a rather flat version of cake that can be cut into slices.

You can leave the mixture plain, or you add berries to the dough, such as blueberries, raspberries, red or blackcurrants. At this time of year, blackberries are widely available for the picking..

Bake at 180C for as long as needed to be slightly brown on top. Enjoy!

This recipe can also be adapted for gluten-free biscuits.



AUTUMN SOUPS NEED GOOD HEARTY BREAD

How to make a Pumpkin-shaped Loaf

Mix up your best and favourite yeast or sourdough bread dough. Leave it to prove in the bowl until it has almost doubled in size. Knead it again, and shape it into a ball, and before you leave it to rise for the second time, take 4 long pieces of clean cotton string. Cross them over a centre point in a star shape, and place your ball of dough on top of this star of twine, and loosely tie the twine around it on top to form 8 segments, and then cut off the string's tails. Place a pecan or walnut in the top just to the side of the string and then leave the dough to prove again on a flat baking tin.

Bake as you normally do, and when it is done, carefully remove the string - your loaf will look like a pumpkin.



Make a Herb or Blossom Salt:



Enjoy finding the herbs that you love to preserve!

Gather chives blossoms, or leaves like lovage leaves that you use for cooking. I picked the blossoms, mixed it well with sea salt, sealed the jar well, and put this into the fridge for three days.

Then, spread the mixture out on a baking tray and dry it gently in the oven. When all is dried, grind it down and put it in small jars with a good lid. It has a strong scent and taste.

Herb Salt makes a lovely present and is wonderful to use in your cooking. Sprinkle it on bread and butter if you want a nice herb taste!

Recipe from Ulrike Farnleitner

A missive from ELIANT : Glyphosate and GM food

On 5th July we received news of two worrying EU decisions: The EU proposes to further extend the approval of Glyphosate applications and permit the unregulated use of the new gene technology. It is clear that the views of the agrochemical lobby – supported by their own studies – have been pushed through while the alarming research findings of independent experts have led to neither a rethink nor a consideration of new approaches.

Glyphosate

Roundup contains the broad spectrum herbicide Glyphosate which harms not only soil life, the insect world and with it biodiversity, but also poses a danger to the human being – IARC the cancer research agency of the WHO, classes this herbicide as being "probably carcinogenic". Many studies also confirm that glyphosate can have a toxic effect on the DNA and the nervous system and cause damage to the microbiome of the gut – a key factor of health.

Authorisation of the latest gene editing procedures without testing

Plants bred using new genetic modification procedures are to be released untested – even though these new procedures are also a deep intervention into the plant genome and risk harming the ecosystem in unforeseeable ways. The possible negative effects of genetically modified plants can only be kept under control through risk assessment, risk management and traceability. Without this, the foundation of scientific seriousness is abandoned. It cannot be replaced by statements to the effect that mutations occurring in nature would be identical to the deliberate, rapid, artificial interventions made by human beings.

Who bears the harm and the risk?

If this EU proposal is implemented we will all be carrying the ecological risk while the possible health risks in individual cases will be – as we well know – hard to prove. The ones who are demonstrably damaged by this are the organic and biodynamic farmers who can no longer guarantee food that is produced GM free. For consumers it means the loss of a vital and important alternative and with it the freedom to choose their food, the foundation of life.

The struggle between approaches

The implementation of this proposal by member states would once again mean victory for a way of thinking whose prerogative is to serve the ideology of growth and profit. And this, despite a growing public awareness that a new approach is needed in politics, education and economics which does justice to the complex living relationships of human beings and nature. In this fundamental spiritual debate we are called to ask ourselves: What approach is determining our daily life? What kind of future do we want to bring about for mankind and the earth? Where are we able and willing to change something? In ELIANT we occupy ourselves with these questions on a daily basis in the knowledge that we are not alone. Many others are trying – wherever they may be – to develop this new approach.

In this spirit we send warm greetings from the ELIANT team - *Michaela Glöckler*

What you can do: teach the children

Show the children how to grow food in a healthy way. Starting a little vegetable plot within your service's grounds can teach the children about caring for the earth. You can start small, with one or two raised beds and grow simple things that will be ready to eat during term time.

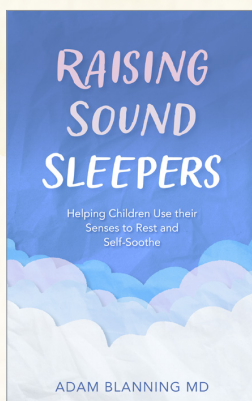
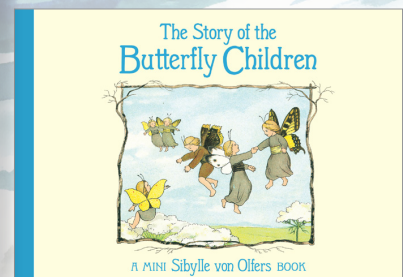
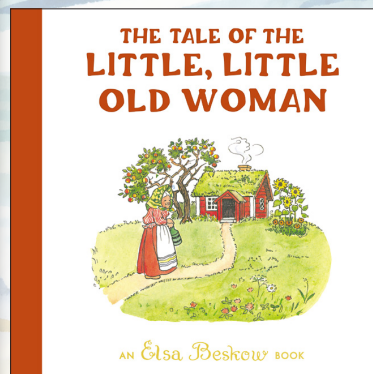
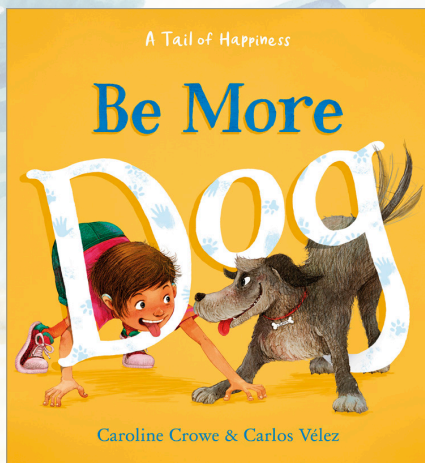
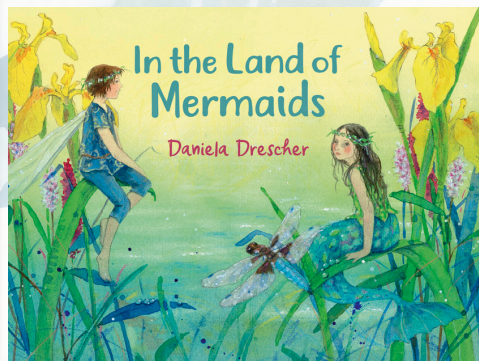
Make your own compost to feed the soil, and buy your non-GM seeds from the Irish Seed Savers Association or Brown Envelope Seeds.

- <https://irishseedsavers.ie>
- <https://www.brownenvelopeseeds.com>

And then, start to learn about biodynamic agriculture:

- <http://www.biodynamicagriculture.ie>

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