



Issue 7

Living Monastic  
Life in Glenstal  
Abbey  
1927-2020

GLENSTAL ABBEY  
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Spring/Summer Edition  
2020



## Welcome

This edition of the Glenstal Chronicle is certainly unique. With the world under lockdown since before Easter and everything closed, our usual news items have dried up and this edition is online only.

The world has become silent, almost monastic, and here in Glenstal where the community have been spending this time together, we have experienced our monastery and its surrounds in a new and exciting way.

In these few pages we want to share that experience with you as we look forward to welcoming you back to Glenstal once it is safe for all of us to be together once more. A big thank you to Fr Denis for these photos.

Brendan Coffey OSB  
Abbot of Glenstal

## Contents

Magnificent Magnolia...	page 2
Easter with a Difference...	page 3
Animal Kingdom Rejoices...	page 4
Garden and Orchard...	page 6
Applause for our Health Workers.....	page 7
Website.....	page 8
Vocations.....	page 10
Garden Cemetery.....	page 11
Stadium.....	page 12
Morning is Golden.....	page 12
Sincere Thanks.....	page 13
Mindful Monk.....	Page 14
Icons.....	page 14
Lockdown End of Term..	page 15
Kenya.....	page 17
A Final Word of Hope....	Page 18



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## A Magnificent Magnolia

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It's almost as if the magnolia knew that this year we were all going to have much more time on our hands and so she decided to put on an extra special display.

Her stunning performance lasted a little longer than usual too. The weather was perfect and so the blossom lasted its full term.

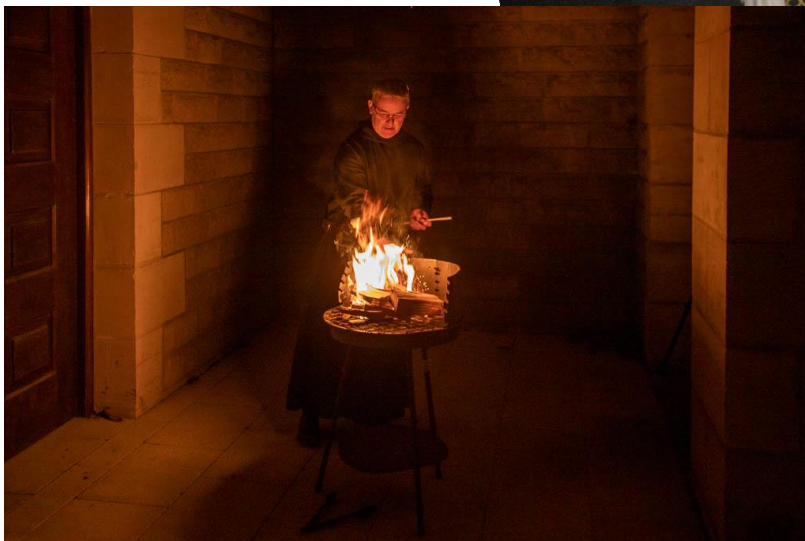


The rhododendron was not going to be outshone and decided to put on a spectacular display as well. All the while we were the beneficiaries of this inter-floral rivalry.



## Easter with a Difference

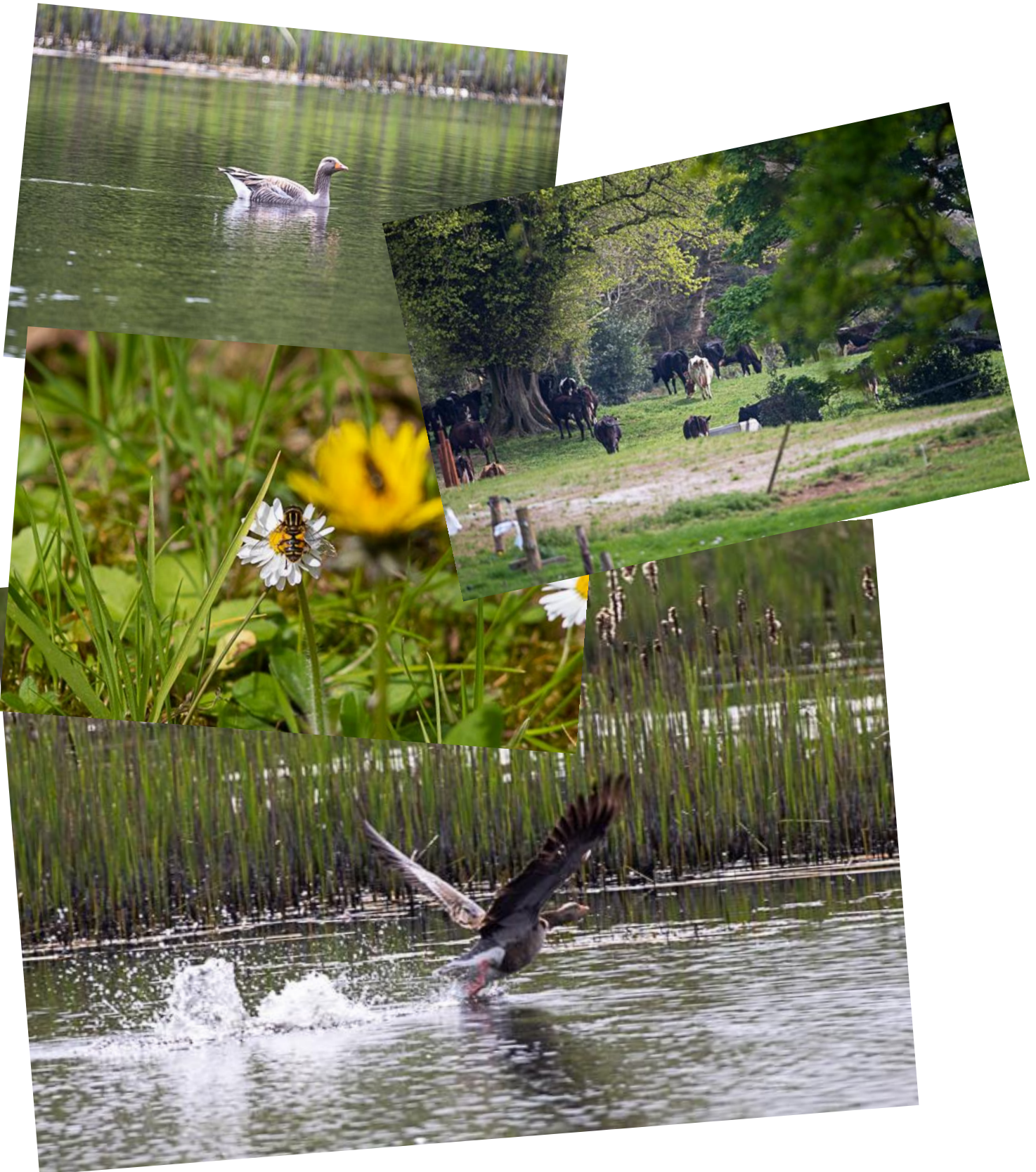
For the first time in the history of our monastery and for the first time since the reintroduction of the Easter Vigil, the monastic community celebrated the Easter Ceremonies without guests present in Glenstal. We were joined by many thousands of viewers on our webcam and it was a delight to be united with so many of you in prayer. Easter was celebrated just the same and Christ is truly Risen!



## The Animal Kingdom Rejoices

Covid-19 isn't exactly bad news for everyone. Our friends in the animal kingdom seem to be revelling in the absence of human interference. These few pages will give you a little flavour of their new found freedom.





## The Garden and the Orchard

Among the many beautiful places to visit in Glenstal in early summer, few can compare with the Walled Garden and the Orchard. As a place to reflect, be silent, hear the voice of God and absorb the beauty of nature, where could be better?



## Applause for our Health Workers

Who among us has not been inspired by the selfless dedication of our frontline workers at this difficult time? Their dedication and courage has provided encouragement to all of us in these difficult days.

Let us also remember the unsung heroes of this Covid-19 period. The parents looking after children confined in their homes, older people who have patiently endured isolation for the greater good and each one of us for playing our part and keeping society functioning. We have all played our part,

some more prominently than others, but all are necessary.

The monastic community has also been playing its role. We have been amazed by the explosion in the numbers of viewers of our monastery webcam. So many of you have been tuning in daily for Mass and the Offices to pray with us. We have received numerous communications expressing thanks for our providing this service at this time. We are grateful to God and to those who make this ministry possible via our webcam that we have been able to do so.

On March 26<sup>th</sup> the community joined in the national applause for our health workers.



## Glenstal Website and Webcam

In the modern world it is very important to make use of social media and information technology to get your message across. The wider Glenstal community have spent a great deal of time reflecting upon and increasing our presence in this area.

Our website for both the monastery and school can be found at [www.glenstal.com](http://www.glenstal.com).

We continue to receive a lot of positive reaction to our church webcam service from right around the world. It is now possible to tune in to all our liturgies, live, or to play back a recorded liturgy later. The webcam service is of particular benefit to the elderly and housebound and those who are no longer able to get to their local church. It is our privilege that so many have decided to join us in prayer each day and we give thanks to God for this blessing.



## Daily Timetable

### SUNDAYS

**8.35 pm** Resurrection Office/Vigils  
(on the preceding evening)

**7.00 am** Lauds (Morning Prayer)

**10.00 am** Conventual Mass

**12.35 pm** Sext (Midday Prayer)

**6.00 pm** Vespers (Evening Prayer –  
in Latin)

**8.35 pm** Compline (Night Prayer)

### WEEKDAYS

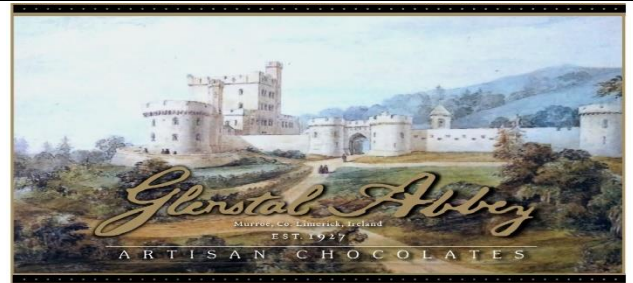
**6.35 am** Matins and Lauds  
(Morning Prayer)

**12.10 pm** Conventual Mass

**6.00 pm** Vespers (Evening Prayer,  
in Latin)

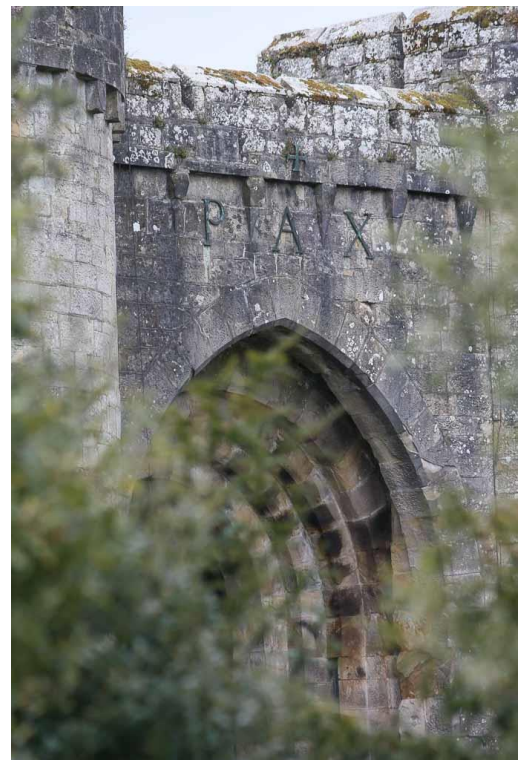
**8.35 pm** Compline (Night Prayer –  
Monday excepted)

All services, except Vespers are chanted in English, with some Latin hymns and antiphons. While the Eucharist is celebrated in English, the ordinary and proper chants are sung in Latin. Please note that the timetable may change slightly on certain solemnities and feastsdays.



*Glenstal Abbey Artisan Chocolates specialises in the use of liqueurs from monasteries of Europe to flavour the fondants of chocolate truffles, in particular, famous liqueurs such as Chartreuse and Bénédictine. We also use a Mandarin Orange liqueur which we import from the Abbaye de Lérins, on an island off the coast at Nice, where St Patrick is said to have studied in the fifth century, and a walnut liqueur, Nocino, which we source from an Italian Cistercian convent. In addition our range includes an alcohol-free collection derived from desserts for monastic feast days. The boxes are in 260g and 130g sizes. We also have 75g chocolate bars with quotes from the Rule of Benedict in English and the original Latin and a range of dairy-free bars with fruit from our garden.*

Enquiries welcome at [chocolates@glenstal.com](mailto:chocolates@glenstal.com)



# Vocations

Every Christian is invited to respond to the calling lovingly offered to them by God. Monastic life is one such response.

Since 1927 men have sought God at Glenstal Abbey; in prayer, in work and in community living.

Monks are not superheroes. They know their need for God's mercy and for the support of their brothers. Monks are not fugitives. Monasticism is not a flight from the world but life lived in loving, prayerful connection with the Church, the Body of Christ.

Monks do many things, and sometimes do them well, but they are not defined by their job descriptions. At all ages and stages of the monastic journey, the search for God is the primary focus, the one thing necessary.

Monastic life is not for everyone, but it may be for you. How can you know this?

You will have a desire for God, a need to spend time in prayer, an attraction to the Eucharist, the Liturgy and to the Word of God, a taste for solitude and reflection. You will be

curious about this lifestyle and about this place. You will sense that this life may make sense of your life.

As a community, we also have some requirements.

Candidates must be male, Catholic, free from debt and family obligations and ideally aged between 24 and 45.

We value life experience, a demonstrable capacity to complete an education, hold down a job and live independently.

Our life is challenging and rewarding. It requires a loving heart, robust mental and physical health and an ability to live generously with others.

If this is you, then perhaps you should get in touch.



**Br Colmán Ó Clabaigh OSB**  
**Glenstal Abbey**  
**Murroe**  
**Co. Limerick**  
Email: [vocations@glenstal.org](mailto:vocations@glenstal.org)

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## Glenstal Abbey Garden Cemetery

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### The Garden Cemetery

The Garden Cemetery provides for the interment of cremated remains only. Each space can accommodate one or two urns. The internal plot dimensions for both the single and double plots are 7½ inches in diameter. Each space is marked with a plaque of local grey granite for engraving individuals' names and dates.

Selecting a cemetery and purchasing your memorial space is an important decision. Arranging the details in advance gives you peace of mind and shows thoughtfulness and caring concern for your family. With pre-planning the final arrangements become less of a burden.

Please contact the Bursar's Office at **061 621045** or email us at [gardencemetery@glenstal.com](mailto:gardencemetery@glenstal.com) with questions or to arrange a personal tour.

## Studium News

Before the Covid-19 lockdown, last February, another Studium programme was held here in the monastery. The programme was taught by members of the Glenstal community and a number of outside participants were present.



## Morning is Golden

Fr Denis captured some beautiful photographs of the dawn here in Glenstal. It really does pay to get up early to see this daily miracle!



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## A Sincere Word of Thanks

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During this time the monastic community has received from so many of you words of thanks and encouragement. Knowing that the monastic community continues to pray for the needs of the world is something very important for a great many people. The impact of the live-streaming of our liturgies has taken us by surprise. We never anticipated that so many people would be watching, or that it would prove so invaluable a tool. We, here in the community, have been touched by your thanks and encouragement.

We cannot let this edition of the Chronicle go without saying a word of thanks of our own for the help and support we received during this unprecedented time. Firstly, to our own staff here in Glenstal. Your dedication to your work and your commitment to this place is so very appreciated by the monastic community. So many of you continued working from home, while a small few came in to work and keep essential services functioning. Our committed teaching staff did trojan work online delivering classes to our students. Every one of you, without exception, played your part and we are so very grateful to you all. This was not without personal sacrifice. So many of you are trying to balance work with taking care of young children, or elderly relatives. This has been a difficult time for

everyone and we are so grateful to you for all you have done.

To our many oblates, associates, friends, parents and donors we say thank you. Without your support in so many ways Glenstal would not have been able to survive this difficult period. Although these difficult times are far from over, it is important to acknowledge the goodness and generosity of so many to this community in these past months and also throughout the years.

We have a long and difficult road ahead as we emerge into very challenging economic times. However, we do so with great confidence and trust, because we have the support and help of such a talented and generous cohort of staff, friends and benefactors. May the good Lord reward you for your generosity and your kindness to this Abbey.

Sincerely,

*Brendan OSB*  
*Abbot of Glenstal*

## Mindful Monk

Not everything in Glenstal is under lockdown and this time of Covid-19 has seen some members of the monastic community respond to Pope Francis' invitation to find new and creative ways to reach people in these difficult times.

Fr Simon began making some YouTube videos with some help from Br Timothy and Fr Denis. "At the beginning of the pandemic, I asked myself if there was anything I could do to help. I opted to share my experience of what I find helpful. It began as the "Heart Centre" and then, at the suggestion of a local friend of mine, I changed it to "The Mindful Monk". Having been Bursar, you can be sure Mindful Monk merchandise can't be far behind!"

These videos are available on the monastery social media pages and also on the monastery website.



## Virtual Visits to the Glenstal Icons

Another duo have tried their hand at producing some YouTube videos. Fr Luke and Br Justin have begun to produce a series on the Icon Chapel which is also available on the monastery social media and the monastery website.

Glenstal Abbey is home to a large and diverse collection of icons from Russia, South-Eastern Europe, especially Greece and beyond. The first large donation to the collection was made in the 1950s by the Grattan Esmonde family and further donations have followed since. The vacant crypt underneath the church was converted into a chapel to house the icons in the late 1980s. The chapel was officially opened in 1988 to celebrate a thousand years of Christianity in Russia. In 987 Vladimir the Great had sent envoys to study the religions of the world. In the great church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, the envoys reported: "We no longer knew whether we were in heaven or on earth, nor such beauty, and we know not how to tell of it." The elaborate liturgy and iconography made a lasting impression not only on them but on the Russian people. Vladimir was baptised in 988 and this is recognised as the birth date of Christianity in Russia.

The diverse collection of icons witnesses to the belief of many generations of Christians from a wide geographical area. This has become more evident since some of the icons have been cleaned and professionally restored by Stefan Harlacher and Anne Dietrich. Many of the icons were damaged over time due to candle burns or soot damage and were overpainted, sometimes multiple times. The restorers have carefully documented with digital photographs the various layers of overpainting as they removed them and reveal the hidden earlier images.

The community continues the chain of Christian witness with these icons by regularly praying in the chapel. During term time, Fr Fintan accompanies some senior students of the school who come to pray weekly. Over the coming months, a short video will be produced each week on an icon from the collection. The intention is to allow viewers discover the icons' witness to the faith of so many and also to invite them to join in this chain of witness.



## A Lockdown End of Term

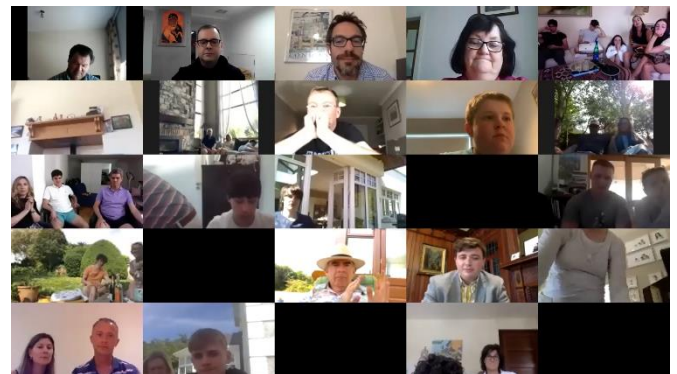
School Sports Day normally takes place at the end of May. It's usually a day for all the family, with Mass in the morning with the community, followed by a concert, picnic and barbecue lunches, sporting competitions and prize-giving. Such a gathering was not possible this year, but, nevertheless, the school community came together online to mark the end of the year.

On Thursday 28 May, Headmaster, Fr Martin, assisted by Chaplain, Fr Denis, and other members of the monastic community, celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving in the school for the blessings of the past year. Many students, parents and staff joined the celebration via Zoom.

The finale of the year was an online Assembly and Prize-giving on the afternoon of Sunday 31st May. Again, this gathering took place via Zoom. Several hundred students, parents, siblings and staff were online for the occasion, which lasted over 90 minutes. Families logged on from many different countries around the world. Since the traditional picnics weren't possible, families were invited to have a picnic lunch at home and to post the photo to the school Twitter account. A selection of these photos were shown on screen at the beginning of the Assembly. During

the course of the Assembly, the winners of over 70 prizes were announced, with each winner's name and photograph being shown on the screen. The announcement of winners was interspersed with 13 separate student musical performances, all recorded at home. The range of tastes and talents on show was very broad, and included a performance of a Beatles song by three brothers and one where the same student played all four instruments. The afternoon also included addresses by the Principal and the Headmaster, and a tribute and blessing for the graduating 6th Year Class of 2020.

Towards the end of the proceedings, the Principal, Carmel Honan, announced that the Vice-Captain of the school for the 2020-21 academic year will be Ted Collins, from Nenagh, while the Captain will be Tom Rooney, from Westport. The final business of the day was to announce the winner of the Maredsous Cup, the school's supreme award, awarded each year to an outstanding graduating student. Fr Martin announced that the 2020 laureate is Donagh Hyland, from Abbeyleix. It is planned to present the cup to Donagh in person at the Debs' Ball in November. Many thanks to all who contributed to this unusual but memorable end to the academic year.



## A Cool Case of Serendipity

In former times it might have been called 'providential' but in any case it is sooooo fortunate that this year there was no 'Kenya crew' bound for the African interior! Getting travel money back would have been the least of our problems. And, to boot, we were nonetheless able to help out our friends in need at this time. The Carol Service provided some funds, as did the TY Fair; a few donations and a dig into our resources meant we could put together €13k for a new classroom at Entasopia. The old one fell down in a storm two years ago and ever since the young people are being taught under trees.

But, as you can see in the photos, Joel, Shani and others have cleared the spot for construction and high quality blocks have been delivered; some are for foundations, some for the walls. The classroom will be as good as the one we supplied at Oloika last year. Extreme rain conditions were followed by a Covid-19 lockdown, but that is supposed to stop on 6 June so Shani will have his men at work the week after. Thanks to all who contributed! Every cloud has a silver lining!



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## A Final Word of Hope

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Not since the last Ice Age has a woodpecker been seen in Murroe. Now, not only has one returned, she has successfully raised a new generation!

