

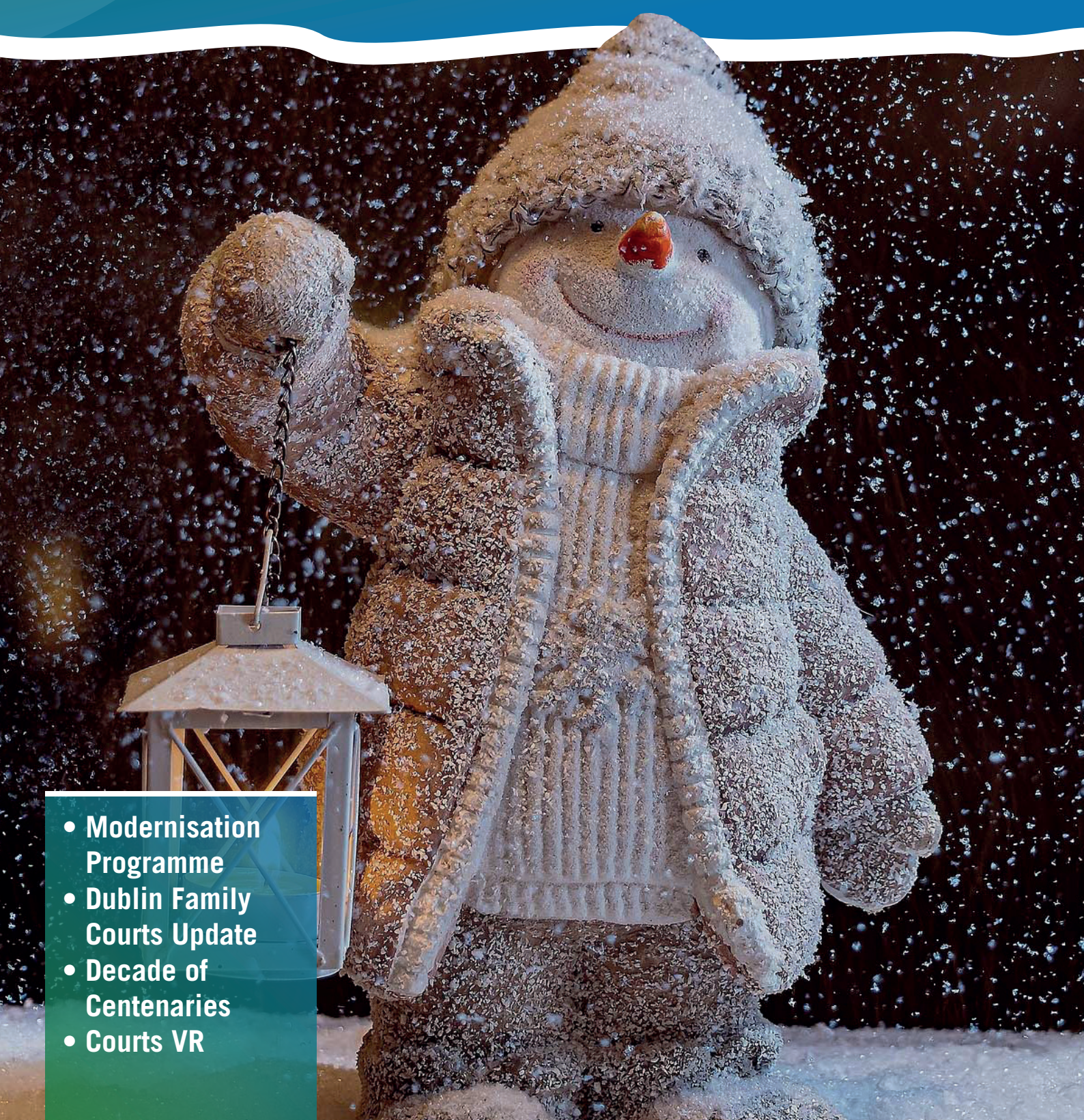


Courts Service News

Nuacht na Seirbhíse Cúirteanna



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna
Courts Service

- 
- Modernisation Programme
 - Dublin Family Courts Update
 - Decade of Centenaries
 - Courts VR



Seasons Greetings	3
Dublin Family Courts Update.....	4
Courts VR Experience.....	5
Modernisation Update	6
Civil Reform - making strides in 2023.....	8
ICT Review of 2023	9
New Office Meeting Pods installed in Merchant's Quay, Limerick.....	10
HR - investing in our people in 2023.....	11
Bréagcúirt Uí Dálaigh Moot Court Competition won by King's Inns for the second year in a row!.....	11
Inclusion Group review of 2023.....	12
Innovation Team review of 2023.....	14
A focus on safety	15
Sustainability - supporting the Reduce Your Use campaign.....	15
Decade of Centenaries	16
V-SAC review of 2023.....	18
Retirements.....	19
Appointments.....	20
Film Review.....	22
Festive Favourites	23
Through the Lens	24



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna
Courts Service

If you would like to contribute an article,
a book or a film review, please contact
the editorial team at
courtsserviceneeds@courts.ie

Welcome to the December issue of **Courts Service News**

**We're delighted to bring you the annual
printed edition of CS News for 2023.**

We start as usual with festive messages
from our Chief Justice, The Hon. Mr.
Justice Donal O'Donnell, and Angela
Denning, CEO.

In the last few years, the defining theme
reflected in these pages has been the
work involved in keeping courtrooms open
and safe during and after the pandemic.
Safety remains a priority for us – and you
will find an update on the work of our
Safety, Health and Wellbeing team in this
edition. You will also find that our focus is
very much on the future and we have lots
of coverage of our extensive Modernisation
Programme.

1924 is a significant year in Irish history,
with the formation of a new Courts system
in the Free State. Our article looks forward



to the significant centenary, while also
covering some of the events we marked
in 2023.

We have our regular coverage of
appointments and retirements, as well as
our quiz, seasonal recipe and a review of
the movie Napoleon.

We wish all our readers a happy and
healthy Christmas and a peaceful New
Year.



Women and the law exhibition

We hosted an exhibition featuring
pioneering women in the law in Ireland
in the Four Courts at the start of the
legal year. The women were the first to
hold their roles and in the intervening

years, we have seen more women
succeed them in these and other roles.

The exhibition has ended, but we have
memorialised it on our website - visit the
page at courts.ie/women-law.

Courts Service News is the magazine of the Courts Service. Contributions are drawn
from a wide area and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Courts
Service. The editors reserve the right to edit all contributions.

Courts Service News,
Communications and Media Unit
15-24 Phoenix Street North,
Smithfield,
Dublin 7.

Email courtsserviceneeds@courts.ie
Web www.courts.ie

Design and Print
Outburst Design and Print



Christmas Message from The Chief Justice Mr Justice Donal O'Donnell

It is a great honour to be both Chief Justice and Chair of the Board of the Courts Service. Both these positions allow me to see the vast range of activities, plans and projects which are necessary to both provide the current service to all users of the courts and to plan for improvement.

I am very aware of the pride that everyone working within the courts system has in the administration of justice in Ireland, and I recognise the cooperation and goodwill of everyone, whether working in court offices, or on the bench in seeking to deliver the highest level of service to the public, who rely on the courts system.

2024 will be an exciting year. It will mark 100 years of the existence of an independent courts system. That will provide an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved, and on how best to build

upon the achievements of our predecessors. The further implementation of the recommendations of the Judicial Planning Working Group, will be a challenge, but opens up the possibility of significant improvements in the courts system.

This, however, is an opportunity to look back, on another year. I would like to express my gratitude to everyone working within the courts system, for your willingness to embrace change and modernisation of the system, and the work done on a daily basis.



I wish each and every reader of this publication every good wish of the season and a peaceful New Year.

Happy Christmas.

Donal O'Donnell
Chief Justice



A Christmas message from Angela Denning CEO

As this message is being published in our once a year printed edition of *Courts Service News*, I would like to say a particular hello to those of you who only receive this magazine in print form, especially our retired readers. I was glad to meet so many of you at the recent Mass of Remembrance for past colleagues, family, and friends in Merchants Quay. I very much welcomed the opportunity to meet afterwards in the Barristers' tearooms to catch up and hear how people are doing.

In 2023, with the publication by Government of the Judicial Planning Working Group report, there was an acceptance that the courts system needed extra resources for an increased population and rising demands for legal services. It is important that to maximise the impact of this expansion for the benefit of the public, all areas of the justice system are aligned, and I welcome the ongoing work across the sector to that end.

We will, in time, look back on the initial steps taken in relation to improved data management and our Unified Case Management System this year as being transformational. That said, I must acknowledge that the transition has not always been easy as we switched off some old systems and moved some case types to the new while continuing to support courts as normal. Thankfully, we can now begin to see the possibilities the future will bring as we continue to build upon the work undertaken to date. These and other initiatives, such as better family law information for users on our website, have also provided us with the opportunity to start looking beyond what we traditionally do with a view to co-designing improved or alternative ways of

delivering services for our users into the future.

Any expressions of gratitude must start with my colleagues in the Courts Service who continue to ensure we deliver across all areas of our mandate. Working hand in hand with the judiciary for another year, together we have embraced the changes that have come with new legislation and technology, extra courts, our significant recruitment, and training effort and, at times, uncertainty. The joint endeavours of our board, senior management team, and staff across the country, helped us support the judiciary and enable the public avail of better access to justice over the course of the year. Change is challenging, I offer a thank you to you all for your unfaltering work and commitment.

Our colleagues and friends in the wider justice community, and in government departments and agencies, have been generous in supporting us where and when they could. Similarly, legal practitioners and civic society groups/NGOs have been so generous with their time and feedback, so we can respond better to the needs of court users. In thanking them all, I can say that the year



to come will see us keep going with our modernisation journey – in collaboration with all concerned.

Christmas is a time to share with family, friends, and our communities but it can also be a time when many struggle with loss and loneliness. Our staff, in our latest survey, emphasised how much they value and place importance on their support for each other. As we await lengthening days and the hope that comes with spring, it is important that we remain kind, compassionate and committed to each other and to those who are vulnerable.

I hope you all have a happy and peaceful Christmas. I wish everything good for you and your family for the coming year, and very much look forward to working together in 2024.

Angela Denning CEO
The Courts Service





Dublin Family Courts Project Update

The Dublin Family Courts Project continued to gather momentum during 2023 with a number of significant milestones reached by year-end. The compilation of the planning application was a very significant undertaking, and a major milestone was reached on 27 November when the development was submitted to planning. Particulars and drawings in relation to the development are currently available for inspection for a six week period at both Phoenix House, Dublin and at OPW offices.

The aim of this ambitious project is to provide a modern, purpose-built court facility where family law cases can be held in a dignified, secure and non-threatening environment with a range of support services at hand. The new complex is being designed with the specific needs of family law court users in mind. On completion it will replace existing family law facilities at Dolphin House, Chancery Street and Phoenix House.

Plans approved in early 2023 provide for a 5-storey over-basement building that will in summary provide:

- 19 x Family law courtrooms
- Staff and judicial accommodation
- A Family Law court office
- Interview rooms and bookable rooms for consultations/mediations.
- Public waiting areas including child

and family friendly waiting areas.

- Accommodation for the Legal Aid Board
- Accommodation for legal practitioners, visiting professionals and providers of Domestic Violence support services.
- A public cafe.
- Custody facilities
- Separate, secure circulation for Judges/staff, members of the public and persons in custody.

The new Family Courts complex will be a landmark public building with civic status that will enhance its urban surroundings and Dublin city's legal quarter. The planning process is being undertaken on behalf of the Courts Service by the OPW.

The project will be delivered as a Public Private Partnership (PPP)

initiative. The project team worked very closely with the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) throughout the year. The main focus of activity has been on the appointment of project advisors. In September a procurement for technical advisors was advertised. Evaluation of responses received is taking place at present. The appointment of project advisors over the next few weeks will represent the achievement of another key milestone.

Other notable developments that took place during the year include the decoupling of the Garda projects from the Justice PPP project bundle which included the Family Law complex.

Approval from the Department of Justice to proceed with the project as a standalone Courts Service PPP project was received in July 2023.

2024 will see the decision in relation to the planning application. It will also see the Courts Service continue to work very closely with partners in the OPW and the NDFA to progress the detailed preparatory work in connection with the PPP procurement process.



The Courts **VR Experience**



Left: The VR Experience at Tyndall College Carlow. **Top-Right:** Filming the VR Experience. **Bottom-Right:** Minister McEntee with the Courts Service team at the VR booth during the Ploughing Championships

September 2023 saw the debut, at the National Ploughing Championships, of our new Courts VR (Virtual Reality) Experience. The project seeks to address the needs of users not familiar with the court environment, to better prepare them in advance of Court hearings.

In the shared justice sector tent, the public had its first chance to experience the technology and we had a fantastic user response, with queues of people, young and old, forming to try it out. The user dons a VR headset and is immersed in a 360° view of a courtroom, where they can look around at their surroundings and select the content they wish to interact with. Ministers McEntee, Browne and Chambers also dropped by to try the VR out.

The VR project was a partnership with Emagine that followed the successful rollout of our 360° Virtual Tours of court buildings in Dublin. Ultimately,

the VR is a unique opportunity for victims/witnesses to experience a real courtroom environment and hear from the participants before their day in court.

This project was a result of engagement by the Courts Service with support services, that suggested some court users experience considerable uncertainty and anxiety when attending court environments. Many people, including victims who have already suffered trauma, are going to court for the first time, and the VR experience helps to inform them of what to expect from the people they will meet in the courtroom.

This is not a way-finding virtual tour (as with the 360° tours mentioned in our Innovation article) but an opportunity to place the user directly in a court scenario using VR technology. Since the Ploughing Championships we've brought the headsets around the country, with demos at various locations and events. The next step will be to make the experience more widely accessible.

The VR experience is an opportunity to make Courts and the people who work there more accessible. There are additional opportunities to work with NGOs and schools etc, expanding the reach and bringing the Courts to the public in an innovative and immersive way.



Modernisation Programme - **Reflecting on Milestones: Concluding year three of our Modernisation Journey**

As the third year of the Modernisation Programme ends, we extend our gratitude to all our colleagues, partners, stakeholders, court users and those who support them, who collaborated with us on various projects and workstreams throughout the year. Your continuing commitment to engaging with us is deeply valued, as it plays a crucial role in our ability to deliver improved tools and services. In this feature, we highlight some of the notable progress achieved in the past year.

Family Law Reform – empowering users and supporting access to justice:

The past year for the Family Law Reform team has been marked by significant milestones and progress. From the successful launch of plain language family law information in March to the beginning of a comprehensive redesign of court forms, to supporting the implementation of the Family Justice Strategy, substantial steps have been taken in realising our vision of “empowering people and families to take the best path for their individual circumstances.”

The team has focused on areas related to the provision of information, mediation, alternative dispute resolution, and the implementation of our future service delivery model.

Provision of Information – Plain language family law information pages

March 2023 saw the introduction of

comprehensive Family Law information on the Courts Service website. Encompassing topics such as Divorce, Maintenance, Children’s arrangements (including Guardianship, Custody, and Access), Domestic Violence, and more, these pages offer step-by-step guides, eligibility criteria, and insights on court proceedings, including what to do when served with a court summons or application.

Additionally, the pages feature information about accessing legal advice and support services alongside practical tips and short animated videos to help people prepare for court.

Increasing awareness and promoting mediation

To support the policy objective in the Family Justice Strategy to increase awareness of mediation, the Family Law Reform team has expanded online information resources. Users can now get a better understanding of mediation, its benefits, the procedural aspects, and locate a mediator. The introduction

of a new animated video further aids in explaining the mediation process.

Collaborating with the Legal Aid Board, the team has raised awareness and provided sessions to Courts Service staff on mediation and alternative dispute resolution, complemented by additional resources on our internal Learning and Development platform.

Implementing an ideal service delivery model – modernising court forms

A focal point of our efforts involves revamping the existing 125 District Court family law application forms to reduce volume enhance simplicity and user-friendliness. Addressing feedback received regarding the complexity, quantity, volume and structure of existing forms, we have developed draft modernised forms for various applications.

These include a new draft application form for Guardianship, Custody, or Access under the Guardianship of Infants Act 1964, a consolidated form for Maintenance orders, and new forms for Domestic Violence Orders. Continual testing and improvement, in collaboration with Judges, staff, practitioners, and end-users, remain integral to the refinement process.

Work is underway to reimagine the Divorce Civil Bill, with ongoing efforts



An Ireland's Children's Court Service

Mediation



Get help to resolve your Family Law issue



Mediation can help you:

- Resolve disputes
- Make arrangements that provide the best outcome for your family
- Spend less time in court

For more information on Mediation, please scan the QR code or visit our website www.courts.ie/family-law

We are increasing awareness online and promoting mediation.



Minister Donohoe tries out our VR experience.



Engagement in practice at a meeting of the Civic Society Forum.

focused on enhancing and modernising forms throughout 2024.

Appointment Booking Service

The ongoing rollout of the Appointment Booking Service project to various offices nationwide is progressing. Currently, 19 offices have successfully implemented the service, and an additional 12 Circuit and District Court offices are scheduled to go live before the end of the first quarter of 2024. For a comprehensive list of active offices and more information, please visit our dedicated Appointment Booking Service webpage on Courts.ie.

Improved Engagement

Redesigning our services to better align with user needs involves active engagement and relationship building with various user groups and stakeholders. Essential groups, such as the Judicial Modernisation Engagement Working Group, Legal Practitioners Engagement Working Group, and the Civic Society Forum, have been established. These

groups convene regularly to facilitate enhanced communication, the exchange of improvement ideas, and to collaborate. Additionally, an Access to Justice group has been created specifically for engagement on Civil topics.

We recently had the opportunity to collaborate with members of the Civic Society Forum at the 2023 National Ploughing Championships, where we shared space together at our information stand.

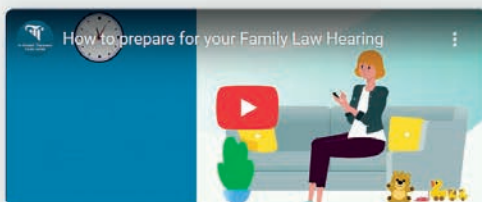
The Courts Service is committed to the ongoing introduction of digitally-enabled services, making evidence-based decisions to transform user interactions, and streamlining operational processes. Through these efforts, we aim to improve day-to-day operations, working closely with users to enhance their experience and contribute to a modern, high-performing courts system for Ireland. (Check out our full features on Civil Reform and our Digital Journey from ICT Directorate)

Virtual Reality Headset

A notable milestone for the Courts Service was the debut of our Virtual Reality headset experience at the Ploughing Championships in September. The “Who’s who in the courtroom?” Virtual Reality Experience offers victims/witnesses a unique opportunity to familiarise themselves with a real courtroom environment before their actual court appearance and to learn about the individuals involved in the court proceedings.

Ready for 2024

As we end another transformative year in the Courts Service Modernisation Programme’s journey, we are really seeing the benefits of our work unfold. Our commitment to innovation, efficiency, and access to justice remains unwavering. Here’s to another year of transformation ahead!



Video: Preparing for Family Law Court

This video outlines how to prepare for a court hearing in Family Law Court.

It covers how to plan your journey, what documentation you are required to bring, as well as other topics, like accessibility needs.



Video: Attending your Family Law hearing

This video outlines what happens at the courthouse on the day of your court hearing.

It covers what to do when you arrive, who can accompany you, where to wait, and other helpful tips.

We launched Family Law information and accompanying videos in March.



Civil Reform – making strides in 2023

We reflect on our human-centric approach to our transformation work in 2023, as we work towards our vision of ‘providing quicker and easier access to justice for all’.

Progress Reporting on the Kelly Recommendations

Throughout 2023 we have remained committed to monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the recommendations from the Report of the Review of the Administration of Civil Justice (known as the ‘Kelly Report’). These recommendations incorporate the reform of court practices and procedures, and strategic changes to the justice system. Our focus remains on activities in these three key areas:

- Rules of Court
- Operational and Digital
- Provision of Information

To streamline our efforts, this year we established a Courts Service Implementation Working Group dedicated to execution of the Kelly report. This group consists of Courts Service colleagues from across the organisation and is responsible for overseeing the implementation of relevant recommendations. The Civil Reform team provide secretariate for this working group and ensure transparency by providing regular updates to the Department of Justice on progress made.

Assistance with the 360° Virtual Tours

The team is delighted to have contributed to the 360° Virtual Tour project. These tours provide court users with a glimpse of the inside of certain court buildings, as well as information on what to expect in court. The videos were designed and developed in response to feedback received from court users that court environments can be intimidating and difficult to navigate. This project originated from the Civil Reform team, and we worked closely with our colleagues in the Innovation team throughout all stages of the project to successfully launch the tours in March 2023. To view the experience, visit services.courts.ie/virtual-tours.

New Civil law-related Information

A significant focus for the Civil Reform Team in 2023 has been the development

of Civil Law-related information, aligning with a recommendation made in the Peter Kelly Report ‘to establish a centralised online information hub’. To address user pain points, which we identified by engaging with a variety of people involved with civil courts, we undertook the following initiatives:

- Revising the current information webpages, ensuring that new information is written in plain language and aligned with court rules.
- Building this revised information in a new, more user-friendly and responsive content management system, which will eventually replace the current Courts.ie webpages.

Our topic of focus throughout 2023 was Debt. To develop the new Debt information, the team engaged with a range of people. These individuals reviewed the revised content, the proposed structure for each new page, and provided invaluable feedback.

This collaborative effort aims to enhance access to Debt information for the public, legal professionals, and Courts Service staff who can direct people to this information. The anticipated outcome will help users better understand Debt processes and procedures, and the available support. Watch out for the launch of our new Debt information on Courts.ie over the coming weeks!

Supporting the New Unified Case Management System (UCMS) Project in the High Court

The Civil Reform team provided continuous support to the ICT (Civil) team in delivering UCMS to the High Court, to replace the legacy Progress case management system. Led by Peter Kennedy, the support given from the Civil Reform team included

activities such as testing, migration, mapping, and providing continuous assistance to the High Court staff and High Court UCMS Project team, before, during, and after implementation.

Development of a Standardised Debt Claim Notice

We are continuing our work on designing a standardised Claim Notice (Debt) applicable across all jurisdictions, collaborating closely with our colleagues in the Legislation and Rules Unit as needed. Next year we plan to engage with both internal and external stakeholders to gather their inputs as this work continues. Watch out for further updates on this project in 2024.

Changes in the Civil Reform Team

The team has seen some changes this year. In February, we welcomed Peter Kennedy who serves as the subject matter expert for the High Court. More recently, Deirdre Moore joined as the newly appointed Head of Civil Reform.

Thank you

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has engaged with us and shared invaluable insights during 2023. A special thanks to those who gave us significant feedback on our Debt information work this year, including Courts Service staff, the Judiciary, legal practitioners, representative groups, and members of the public. We look forward to further collaboration on a range of civil activities throughout 2024.





Looking back on 2023 in the ICT Directorate

Tech in our Courts

Following the successful delivery of modern digital desktops (Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Teams, etc.) for all of our staff in 2022, a similar upgrade has been rolled out to the Judiciary this year. This desktop technology is designed to facilitate its integration with the technologically enhanced judicial benches we are planning for courtrooms in 2024. We have now completed a full estate survey, of all judicial benches, ahead of their tech-enablement, with works to commence during 2024.

In 2023, the Video Courtroom Enablement Project successfully implemented 16 new video-enabled courtrooms, facilitating the remote participation of witnesses, prisoners, and Gardaí in physical courtrooms, along with the display of digital evidence. Planning is now underway for the sites for delivery in 2024, which will complete the 3-year program approved under Modernisation.

Wi-Fi expansion & Cybersecurity

Another multi-year programme kicked off this year expanding Wi-Fi services. This included the installation of Wi-Fi services across 23 sites in the Courts Service estate. This countrywide rollout will continue over the next two years and aims to provide Wi-Fi coverage in all networked court offices and courthouses.

We also ran an important cyber security awareness drive, to improve users' understanding and behaviour in relation to ICT security, during the latter half of this year. This involved a multi-channel awareness campaign in conjunction with our Communications team. The campaign comprised of a simulated cyber phishing attack and the introduction of a training course, inviting those who fell victim to the simulated attacks, to undergo a relevant training module. The ongoing awareness campaign is set to extend into the future.

Unified Case Management System

Another multi-year initiative, to re-imagine and migrate all case-related activity, to be underpinned by a single **unified case management system** (UCMS) began this year. Our vision is to enable end to end digital journeys for case work, improving the administration of justice, increasing transparency, and significantly improving access to quality data.

Full nationwide rollout of the Digital Jury system early in the year was further enhanced to produce an Irish Language Summons, and a data dashboard that provides up to date data on the jury system.

A major milestone was reached in October 2023, with the delivery of the High Court UCMS system. This replaced the legacy Progress case management system in the High Court. In addition, we simultaneously launched a new High Court Search portal for the public and legal practitioners. This allows us to move forward and build in a series of improvements for

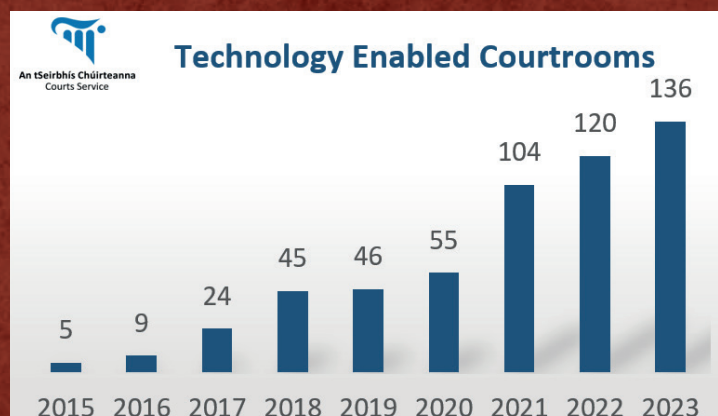
staff in the High Court, and importantly paves the way to introduce an electronic portal that will support eFiling / ePayments in the future.

The launch of a UCMS solution for the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act in April 2023 was accompanied by a campaign of onsite training in all Circuit Court offices. Over 200 staff have been trained to date.

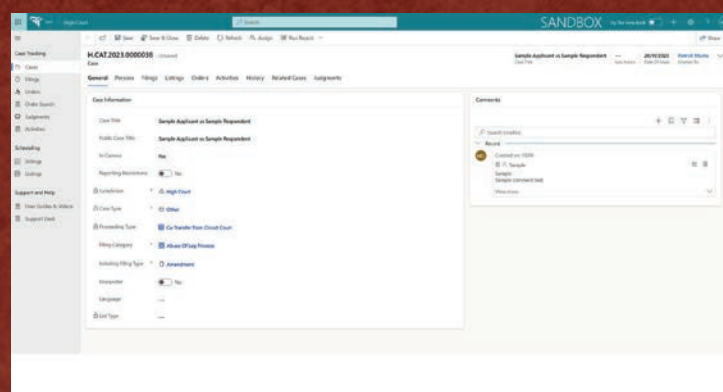
Replacement of the twenty-six legacy Circuit Court systems for Family Law cases commenced with a pilot of the UCMS based Family Law solution in the Portlaoise office during the year. Cavan and Cork offices joined the second wave of the pilot ahead of a planned nationwide rollout in 2024. This work paves the way for an online portal, which will target Circuit Court Divorce cases initially.

The General Solicitors Office (GSO) have taken delivery of a new practice management solution as a configured off-the-shelf solution helping the GSO to digitise their operations.

Following detailed review of existing content, a new Intranet and Organisation Chart solution (as part of the Build to Share



The number of tech-enabled courtrooms increases year on year.



The High Court UCMS system was launched in October.



programme, Office of Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) went live in October 2023 to align with the Public Service Transformation Week. An e-Audit tracking solution was developed for Internal Audit during the year, which we hope to rollout in the coming months.

Our Data

The focus on data driven decisions in Courts Service drives a continued momentum for developing dashboards across all business areas. During the year a range of dashboards were delivered for sittings, waiting times, Probate, Jury, Video Court utilisation, among others. All data reporting is now launched from a new single reporting portal.

Development continues for dashboards on ICMS data, UCMS, ADMC and the new High Court UCMS. A commitment to Open Data was underpinned by the approval to create an online platform to serve as a central hub for the publication, access, and sharing of Courts Service data, as a programme in 2024.

Looking forward to 2024

The staff's cooperation and enthusiasm in supporting these improvements is a testament to the collaborative spirit within the organisation. The ICT Directorate's gratitude

and wishes for a happy and peaceful Christmas reflect a recognition of the efforts of all involved. Our organisation moves towards 2024 having laid the groundwork in 2023, which sets a promising trajectory for continued advances in technology, efficiency, and accessibility within the Courts Service.



Data Dashboards



Four Courts 100 App



The 'Four Courts 100' app was developed to give people everywhere access to the history of the Four Courts. The app explores how the Four Courts were built, the occupation and battle, the rebuilding and finally the future of the Courts Service. Enter the app and explore the

timeline of the building's history, look into the past through our 2-and-a-half-D images and watch historical archive footage of key events.

You can take a virtual tour of the Four Courts and understand how the battle unfolded over those momentous days. The app can also be used for a self-

guided tour to take you through the buildings; members of the public are always welcome to enter the complex during any working day.

To download the app please go to any app store and search for "Four Courts 100" or use the QR code to get the link from our App website.

New Office Meeting Pods installed in Merchant's Quay, Limerick

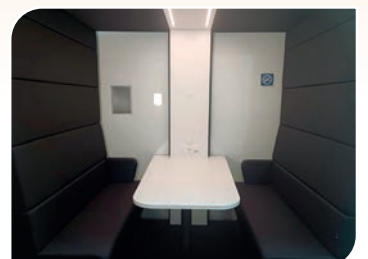
The Courts Service and the Legal Aid Board have worked together with local court users as part of an initiative to improve services for family law users in Limerick. As part of this work, the Limerick Steering group identified that it would be beneficial to court users to have more consultation space at the Courthouse in Merchant's Quay Limerick and particularly on the ground floor where there was no private consultation rooms.

The group looked at several options and a decision was made to install office meeting pods to facilitate consultations in Limerick on a pilot

basis. This was considered the most cost- and design-effective way to address this issue.

We now have three, four-person pods on the ground floor. One pod is an open door pod which allows parties to quickly enter and exit. The pods provide a private space for solicitors to consult with their clients on sensitive matters which were previously discussed in an open area.

The pods were installed on 14 October and are located on the ground floor beside the two main courtrooms.





HR – Investing in our people in 2023.

The goal of our People & Organisation strategy is to bring us closer to being a Courts Service reflective of a modern digital Ireland by 2030, by delivering on our commitment to invest in our people and by enhancing our culture so that change becomes business-as-usual.

Implementing Strategy is like creating a garden. Last year we prepared the soil. This year the seeds have been sown and are now beginning to blossom.

Recruitment

The Court Service has changed how it does recruitment. In 2023 we took to the market ourselves and ran 43 external competitions and welcomed almost 200 people through our doors. We kicked off a national Court Registrar campaign with an aim to hire talented individuals into our Court rooms in 2024.

Much of our success in the market can be attributed to the growth of our online brand. Our approach, rooted in transparency has helped us grow as a trusted employer. A major achievement was growing our online following to

almost twenty thousand followers. Our grassroots approach was to speak to talent directly at recruitment fairs, university visits and the even the Ploughing Championships!

We ran five internal competitions that resulted in 55 people being promoted.

New Entrant Programme

The Courts Service welcomed 200 new staff in 2023. As we continue to hire in big numbers, our focus shifts to providing them with a gold standard new entrant experience.

We are dedicated to creating a tailored training and development programme for all our new entrants. Our first pilot was completed in 2023 and we have ambitious roll out plans for 2024.



The New Entrant Programme will serve as the cornerstone of the future Courts Operations Training. This programme integrates our purpose, values and culture as well as on-the-job training and a support to get promoted.

We ran our second Healthy Place to Work staff engagement survey. In 2022, 72% responded and we achieved a Healthy Place to Work score of 51%. This year, 75% responded and our overall score increased to 52%. There is a lot more to do and we are committed to increasing our score by investing in initiatives.

Bréagcúirt Uí Dálaigh Moot Court Competition won by King's Inns for the second year in a row!

Bréagchúirt Uí Dhálaigh Moot Court was held in the Supreme Court at the Four Courts on Friday, 17 November 2023, and Hugh Ó Laoide Kelly, King's Inns emerged victorious.

Gael Linn has been running this competition for over twenty-five years in honour of the former President and Chief Justice of Ireland, Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh. It is a great opportunity for law students, with an interest in the Irish language, to improve their advocacy skills.

Teams from University College Cork, University of Limerick, King's Inns and University College Dublin were involved in the preliminary rounds. The judges praised all the teams for their preparation, effort and their ability to defend both sides of the case.

Two teams progressed to the final - King's Inns (for the Appellant) and University College Cork (Respondent).

The final was held in the Supreme Court with former Judge Bronagh Ní Anlúain as chairperson, along with Clíona Kimber, Senior Counsel (Chair - Climate Bar Association) and Mr. Cormac Ó Dúlacháin, Senior Counsel (Chair - Cumann Barra na Gaeilge) also on the bench.

The winner, Hugh Ó Laoide Kelly from King's Inns, was delighted when he was presented with a Gael Linn trophy and a cash prize of €600. Runners-up Oisín Ó Síocháin and Amergin Ó Caoidealbháin from Cork University College were awarded a cash prize of €300.

Réamonn Ó Ciaráin, Chief Executive of Gael Linn, thanked Barristers Cormac Ó

Dúlacháin, Daithí Mac Cárthaigh, Alice Maguire-Spencer and Cillian McGovern who helped run the event and were available to give help and advice to the teams during the weeks prior to the event. He also praised the cooperation that Gael Linn receives from King's Inns and the Courts Service.





The Inclusion Group – A Year in Review

As we come to the end of a busy, but rewarding, year, we aim to provide insights into our endeavours over the past 12 months. Throughout 2023 our focus remained on organising activities, impactful events, and refining policies to create a more inclusive organisational culture. Additionally, we are working to develop a Maturity Model to assess our efforts in promoting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. We are encouraged by our colleagues throughout the organisation who support, engage, and volunteer their time to help promote equality, prevent discrimination, and protect the human rights of our staff, users and everyone interacting with our services.

Highlights of our events throughout 2023.

Talk on 'Justice Systems in Afghanistan'

A talk given by our then staff member Syed Muzaffar Shah.

Muzaffar spoke about the formal Justice System in Afghanistan, Sharia Law, the Taliban Justice system in place since August 2021, and the system of Customary Law in the country.

Afghan Judicial Communication Project - with the arrival of Afghan citizens in Ireland following the Taliban takeover in 2021, the Courts Service had the privilege in providing a link between several Afghan Judges with the Irish Judiciary, providing a unique support in their arrival to the Irish community.

International Women's Day (IWD)

The theme for IWD 2023 was embracing equality.

A lunchtime talk was held on March 8, where we heard from colleagues involved in football before Ireland's Women's Football Team headed to the World Cup. We heard from Bohemians player Rachael Kelly from the Dublin Civil Office and referees Hilda McDermott and Rob Rogers of the Courts Service.

Law Society Human Rights and Equality Committee

The Inclusion Group invited colleagues to attend this summer lecture, hosted by the Law Society, where Florida-based Judge Ginger Lerner-Wren spoke on America's first Mental Health Court.

As described by Judge Lerner-Wren, the court seeks to divert mentally ill persons, charged with misdemeanour (summary) and non-violent offences, into community-based treatment as an alternative to incarceration. The court promotes a human-rights strategy, prioritising dignity, and restorative justice goals.

Pride month



Legal Guardianship Event - Our inaugural Courts Service Pride marked a significant milestone, featuring fascinating talks from our esteemed colleagues Jenna Bailey-Redmond and Hillary McSweeney. Special guest speaker Judge Colin Daly shared his first-hand experience presiding over cases in Dolphin House under the new legislation.

Angela Denning, our CEO, who opened the event, said: "I wanted to put on the record today my commitment, and the commitment of my Senior Management Team colleagues, to stand up for the human rights of our LGBTQIA+ colleagues. We want to make the Courts Service a safe and supportive environment for all our staff to be open about their identity, recognising the blurring between people's personal and professional lives. Led by our Inclusion Group, I look forward to being involved in more initiatives to demonstrate our commitment to the human rights and equality of all our staff."

Beyond the event, a considerable number of Courts Service staff actively participated in the Dublin Pride Parade and took part in Pride events all over Ireland. Colleagues, accompanied by friends and family, all enjoyed the uplifting atmosphere, festive spirit, and sunny weather.

Disability Awareness Webinar with Sinead Burke

Courts Service Staff attended a Town Hall with Sinead Burke, which was open to everyone across the Civil and Public Service who are interested in creating a more accessible workplace.

Courts Service feature on the Fifth Court Podcast



The Fifth Court Podcast is an Irish Podcast hosted by Mark Tottenham, BL and Peter Leonard, BL. In September our colleagues Patricia Hickey and Gary Lee of the General Solicitors Office, featured on the podcast. They shared our goals and explained about the work being done by the Courts Service Inclusion Group and wider Courts Service staff, to create a more accessible and inclusive service for all persons with disabilities. In addition, they spoke extensively about their work in the Office of the General Solicitor,



changing legislation and the criteria of wardship.

Episodes of the podcast can be found on www.thefifthcourt.com - Patricia and Gary feature in episode 42.

Courts Service Neurodiversity Month - Lunch & Learns Online Series



In October we held three separate talks under the umbrella of Neurodiversity to support and educate our colleagues or loved ones who know and/or care for someone with Autism, ADHD, or Dyslexia.

There are so many other initiatives and projects happening around the Courts Service that we are incredibly excited about. These include opportunities to train in **Trauma Informed Practice** and **Plain Language** (provided by the National Adult Literacy Agency, NALA), and a call for expressions of interest for **Deaf Awareness Training**.

In our pursuit of fostering inclusivity within our workplace, we have collaborated closely with various public sector networks. Additionally, many other public bodies and agencies have approached us, creating opportunities for the exchange of ideas and the collection of valuable feedback.

We look forward to an even more inclusive year in 2024.

Brought to you by The Inclusion Group

Traveller Court Support Initiative for Transformation Week



Cork hosted a Traveller Court Support Initiative in October



Traveller Support advocates trying out the Court Service VR experience

Courts Service staff and court users in our Cork office had the opportunity to try the Courts Service virtual reality headsets, which gives a virtual tour of the inside of a court room and the lobby of the Criminal Court of Justice in Dublin. As part of the Traveller Court Support Initiative, a timeslot was allocated to the Traveller advocates so that they could become more comfortable in a court setting. This was a highly successful event that received great feedback.

Aims and Objectives of the Traveller Court Support Initiative

- Co-design novel training and advocacy programmes for culturally sensitive, peer-lead court supports for Travellers at the District Court.
- Development of Traveller 'Court Support Workers' network (6-8 women) in conjunction with Travellers of North Cork and Cork District Courts (proposed Washington St).
- Development of trust-based relationships between Traveller Community and the Courts Service.
- Empower and support Traveller victims of discrimination, through a peer-led, culturally sensitive manner.
- Engage in participatory and community engaged research and outputs.

If successful, the TCSI will be the only programme of this kind in Ireland, which represents excellence and potential for the funder to contribute to justice-engaged, inclusive responses to the unmet legal needs of the Traveller Community.

Photos courtesy of Samantha Williams, UCC.



Courts Service Innovation 2023: A Year in Review

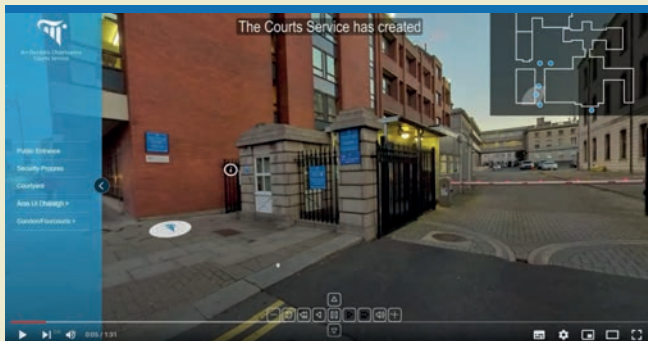
As we embark on the final stretch of our current innovation strategy, Year 3 has been dedicated to the ambitious task of scaling up innovation within the Courts Service. Join us in reflecting on the highlights and achievements that have shaped this transformative year.

Welcome to Emer Darcy, Our new Innovation Sponsor

This year commenced with a warm welcome to Emer Darcy, our new Innovation Sponsor and acting Head of the Strategy and Reform Directorate. Emer's passion for innovation, particularly in design thinking, has proven invaluable. A heartfelt thank you goes to our previous sponsor, Audrey Leonard, for her pioneering efforts in establishing innovation within the Courts Service over the past few years.

360° Virtual Tours: Navigating Courts with Ease

In March, we proudly launched our 360° virtual tours, a milestone made possible through funding from the Public Service Innovation Fund. These tours empower court users to familiarise themselves with the court environment before their visit, promoting engagement with the justice system. To experience it for yourself, watch our 360° VT promotional video on our Courts Service YouTube channel and take a virtual tour via our website: services.courts.ie/virtual-tours



Starting point of the Four Courts 360° Virtual Tour.



The innovation team pictured with the CEO and Chief Justice at the launch of the 360° Virtual Tours.

Innovation Advocates: Learning-by-Doing

This year, our Innovation Advocates engaged in a unique learning-by-doing project aimed at developing new skills in design thinking and project work. Triggered by an idea from Maria Keaveney, an Innovation Advocate in the Criminal Courts of Justice, the project focuses on enhancing support for jurors. Applying a design thinking methodology, the team delved into the juror's journey, identifying areas for improvement: lack of information before selection and post-jury service support. The ongoing work aims to address these concerns, further demonstrating our commitment to creating a culture of innovation.

Public Service Transformation Week; A Showcase of Innovation

In October, we actively participated in Public Service Transformation Week, contributing to internal and external events. Our exhibition stand at the National Public Service Transformation Conference showcased innovations in the Courts Service, fostering connections for future collaborations. Virtual reality showcases, a webinar on Digital Transformation, and participation in various events underscored our commitment to sharing insights and scaling up innovation.



The Courts Service lanyard.

Innovation Idea – a new Lanyard

An innovative idea that emerged through the innovation pathway materialised this year – the development of a new staff Courts Service lanyard. Signed off by the Inclusion Group, this lanyard symbolises our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion within the organisation, soon to be worn by Courts Service staff.

Looking ahead to 2024

As we wrap up 2023, our focus turns to the future. Collaborating with our Learning and Development Unit, we're developing additional modules for our innovation education program. The development of a new Innovation Strategy is underway, promising more ideas brought to life through our "learning-by-doing" approach to problem-solving.

A Grateful Acknowledgment

Our sincere gratitude extends to all our Innovation Advocates, the wider Innovation Team, Court Service staff, and the Senior Management Team for their help, assistance, and support in fostering a culture of innovation within the Courts Service.



Focusing on the safety of staff and court users – the Safety, Health & Wellbeing Unit

The primary objective of the Safety, Health, and Wellbeing Unit (SHWU) is to ensure the wellbeing of all our employees, and everyone that works in and attends courts and Courts Service buildings around the country. To achieve our objective, we give significant focus to five particular areas of safety management:

- Legal Compliance
- Emergency Response
- Personal Safety
- Wellbeing
- Positive Safety Culture

2023 was another busy year for us. Some key SHWU highlights this year to date are:

- Being a key partner in ensuring the Courts Service is a Healthy Place to Work;
- Redesigned H&S training programme for all new entrants to the Courts Service;
- Rolled out of new look manual handling training programme with over 250 staff trained to date with the aim that all staff will have completed this training by Q2 end 2024;
- Court messenger safety awareness training completed in mid-November with a new court messenger safety and security programme being launched in Q1 2024;

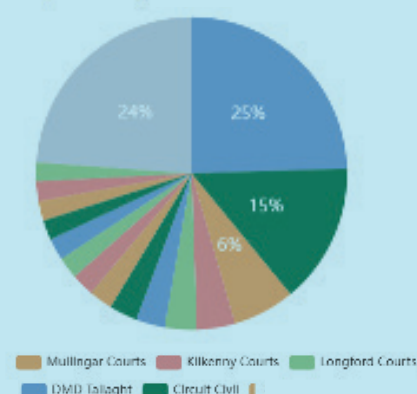
- Over 300 ergonomic risk assessments carried out;
- Over 900 scheduled monthly safety inspections completed by site Safety Champions across the estate on our bespoke Safety Culture digital platform;
- Implementation of the new Blended Working risk assessment portal;
- 15 Health & Safety Authority (HSA) inspections with no improvement plans or enforcement notices issued;
- Continuous safety, health and wellbeing promotion in our staff fortnightly newsletter The Brief;
- New staff health and safety training programmes currently being designed for 1) General safety, health & wellbeing awareness, 2) Health and Safety management for managers and 3) General fire safety awareness. These programmes will be launched in early 2024.

We are also currently developing a

new Occupational Health and Safety Management System, which will be implemented in full in Q1 2024. The long-term objective is achieving ISO 45001 certification for our health and safety system by year-end 2026. We look forward to working closely with all staff and court users in 2024 and beyond.

930

Inspections by Site



Sustainability – Courts Service supporting the Reduce Your Use campaign

The Courts Service are delighted, once again, to be taking part in the Government's winter 'Reduce Your Use' energy efficiency campaign.



Now, more than ever, we need to be mindful of how we use energy in our daily lives, from the moment we wake up, to the moment we switch off the lights at night. Together, we can make a difference by taking these small but effective energy saving actions.

The Public Sector has been challenged to take a leading role in reducing our nation's energy demand, and it is expected that this campaign can deliver 5 - 10% energy savings overall across the sector, and up to 15% in buildings.

This campaign is an effective way to assist with increasing our energy security, lowering energy bills, and meeting our targets relating to climate change.

The Sustainability Unit is taking the lead in this campaign by providing energy efficiency information to our staff including links to interesting webinars,



while promoting regular energy saving actions to take.

Energy saving tips!

To date, we have brought attention to heating, drawing particular consideration to **radiators** in our workspaces and what we can do to make them work at their best.

More recently, we brought some useful information on the ESB Networks 'Is This a Good Time?' programme, which provides useful information and tips via email and SMS to help you learn how to take control of your home's electricity usage and have the opportunity to get rewarded with vouchers for taking control when prompted. It lets you know when

the best times are to use your electrical appliances (i.e., outside of peak hours of 5-7pm or when renewable electricity is being generated).

Last year over 18,000 electricity customers all over Ireland signed up and took more than 40,000 actions to help support Ireland's security of supply and help reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

Further information on the 'Is This a Good Time?' programme is available - visit www.esbnetworks.ie

If you or your friends or family are struggling to pay home energy bills this winter, there is **help and support available**. For more information on this or on the Reduce Your Use energy efficiency campaign, please visit gov.ie/ReduceYourUse.

The Sustainability Team



Centenary of the Courts of Justice Act 1924 and the establishment of our modern courts system

2024 will mark the centenary of the passing of the Courts of Justice Act 1924 and the establishment of our modern courts system.

As we enter this final year of our own decade of centenary events, we review 2023 and look back at the significant events that took place in 1924.

The Courts in Dublin Castle

11 April 2023 marked the centenary of the Courts moving to new purpose-designed courtrooms in Dublin Castle. The Courts had found themselves scattered around the city following the occupation and destruction of the Four Courts in 1922. Most business was carried out in the Kings Inns in the immediate aftermath, but shortage of space was acute and the Lord Chief Justice even heard cases in his own living room.

The Provisional Government announced in September 1922 that the State

Apartments in Dublin Castle were to be fitted out as new courtrooms and law library while they considered the future of the Four Courts site. The Courts duly opened the following April without ceremony and not without some confusion as to which court sat where...

The hurried fitting out of the facilities was occasionally evidenced – James Creed Meredith was once hearing a case in Court Four (the Throne Room) when, after heavy rainfall, a rush of water fell through the roof. He ensured to save the documents first, adding jokingly that the people 'can swim'.

The Courts remained in the Castle until they returned to the Four Courts in October 1931.

101 Years later, the Rory O'Connor Communiqué returns to the Four Courts

28 June was the 101st anniversary of the start of the battle of the Four Courts. At 9am, 28 June 1922, the occupying forces issued a communiqué, signed by Rory O'Connor, announcing the attack and calling for support. It was, in essence, the announcement that a civil war had commenced.

It was composed and printed in difficult circumstances and with very limited equipment just hours after the National Army began their assault on the Four

Courts. Not many original copies still exist and we procured one in 2022 for our Four Courts exhibition. We've now put it on permanent display in the hall between the Supreme Court and Round Hall. To mark the occasion, the Chief Justice performed a 'ribbon cutting' ceremony, with the CEO and members of the Courts Centenary committee.

The text of the communiqué is: "9 a.m. Wednesday, June 28 [1922]. Seventh Year of the Republic.*

At 3.40 a.m. this morning we received a note signed by Tom Ennis* demanding on behalf of "The Government" our surrender at 4 a.m. when he would attack.

He opened attack at 4.07 in the name of his Government, with Rifle, Machine and field pieces.

The boys are glorious and will fight the Republic to the end. How long will the misguided former comrades outside fight those who stand for Ireland alone?

Three casualties so far, all slight. Father Albert and Father Dominic with us here. Our love to all comrades outside, and the brave boys especially all of the Dublin Brigade.

(signed) Rory O'Connor, Major General, I.R.A."

*A reference to 1916.

We have some more background information on our website at courts.ie/four-courts-and-civil-war

'This is surely
a precious
moment...
the moment
when Irish
courts are
thrown open
to administer
justice
according to
laws made in
Ireland by free
Irish citizens'

100 years
of the Irish Courts
1924 - 2024

A quote from Chief Justice Hugh Kennedy at the opening of the new Irish Courts in June 1924.



Members of the High Court and Supreme Court in 1924. Hugh Kennedy is seated centre.

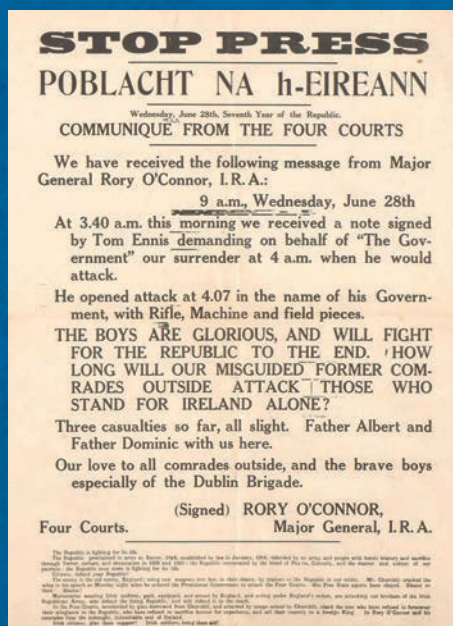


Courts of Justice Act 1924

In January 1923, a Judiciary Committee, chaired by former Lord Chancellor Lord Glenavy, was appointed to advise the Executive Council (Cabinet) of the Free State on the establishment of a new court system. In a letter to its members, WT Cosgrave wrote, *"there is nothing more prized among our newly won liberties than the liberty to construct a system of judiciary and an administration of law and justice according to the dictates of our own needs and after a pattern of our own designing."*

The committee produced a report in May 1923, with detailed recommendations for the establishment and operation of the District, Circuit, High and Supreme Courts. The Courts of Justice Bill 1923 was published in July and after much debate, the Courts of Justice Act 1924 was signed into law and commenced in the summer of 1924.

District Courts replaced the court of petty sessions and the Justice of the Peace. The Justices of the District Court were professional judges and had jurisdiction over minor civil and criminal matters. The Circuit Court had jurisdiction in more serious civil and criminal matters. It had



The O'Connor Communiqué

appellate jurisdiction (the power of a higher court to review the decisions of lower courts) over District Court cases. On the criminal side, the most serious offences, such as murder, were reserved to the High Court. A Court of Criminal Appeal to hear appeals from the Circuit and High Courts was also established. Provision was made for a further right of appeal to the Supreme Court on a point

of law of exceptional public importance. The Supreme Court was created as the final court of appeal, to be presided over by the Chief Justice.

The transition to the new court system was complicated by the fact that two court systems had been in operation since 1920: the ordinary court system and the 'Dáil courts'. The latter comprised the Parish Court, which dealt with the most minor civil and criminal matters, the District Court, which dealt with more serious civil and criminal matters, a Circuit Court composed of four circuits, and a Supreme Court, operating as both a court of first instance and an appellate court. While successfully suppressed by the British in Dublin, these courts operated with some success elsewhere. Following the signing of the Treaty, the Dáil wound up these courts.

The Act is one of the most significant pieces of legislation passed in the Free State. It established the basic structure of our courts system, which has endured for a century, with only the addition the Court of Appeal in 2014.

We will be marking the year with a number of events during 2024 – please keep an eye on future editions of Courts Service News.

The contested will of Boss Croker

31 May 1923. An early case heard in Dublin Castle that received a lot of public attention was the probate suit brought by the children of Richard 'Boss' Croker, against his 2nd wife, Beulah. Every seat in the public gallery was taken.

Croker, born near Clonakilty, became famous as an alderman, coroner, and boss of the political organisation Tammany Hall in New York. A ruthless man, he amassed a fortune through corruption and was even charged with murder. However, he was never convicted of a crime.

He returned to Ireland and, in 1914 aged 71, married Beulah after his estranged first wife died. Beulah, who was described as a 'Cherokee princess' and had a history in showbusiness, was 40 years younger. "He is the youngest old man imaginable", said the New York Tribune in 1919.

Croker died in 1922, leaving almost his entire fortune to Beulah, disinheriting his children. Richard Jnr lodged a challenge to the will, claiming it had been subject to

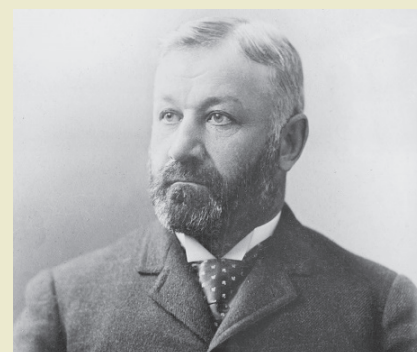
fraud and also claimed that the marriage was illegal as Beulah was already married to another man.

It was said in court the will had been changed due to her 'undue influence' and the domination to which he (Croker) was subjected. 'The old gentleman, at the end of his days had become fascinated by a young, attractive and as clever a woman as had ever appeared in any court.'

Beulah swore an affidavit that she 'had been continually harassed and embarrassed by persons who spied upon her movements and tried to get into her house and even her motor car.'

In court it was stated. "During eight years of matrimony, she was never away from him for a night." The response was cutting, "Because she was afraid that this old man would get out of her sight and the spell would be broken, and he would make peace with his children."

After 12 days of hearings, the jury found for Beulah, a decision met by loud cheers



in the gallery. A clearly incensed Chief Justice Molony stood and said he "very much regretted that the last scene of a great case should be disgraced by the conduct of people who ought to know better."

The jury had found that Croker was of sound mind and that his will had not been 'obtained by undue influence'. They said Beulah had not contrived to keep the children from the will, nor had committed any fraud. They also agreed she had not been married at the time she wed Croker. Further cheers greeted her as she left the courts.



Remembering the **United Irishmen**

The Courts Service was delighted to be involved with a series of events to mark the 225th anniversary of the Irish Rebellion of 1798 and to commemorate the death of Theobald Wolfe Tone.

A well-attended screening of Alan Gilson's comprehensive new documentary 'United Irishmen' on November 14 stirred a great deal of debate at the Irish Film Institute. The

film, which brings together dozens of historians, examines the larger Age of Rebellion and the legacies of the Sheares Brothers, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and Robert Emmet.

On November 15, there was a full house – or rather a full courtroom – at Green Street for The Treason Briefs: Corrupt Judges and Hostile Juries; Curran's defences of the United Irishmen in the 1790s, an absorbing lecture delivered by Mr. Justice Kevin Cross. Special thanks to everyone who attended and facilitated the event, including volunteers, our tour



guide Noel Doherty, and historian Dave Swift who enlivened proceedings with a 1798 pike used in the rebellion.

The judge's lecture can be enjoyed on our YouTube channel - just search for 'Courts Service'.

V-SAC review of 2023

Victim Support at Court is a charity that provides support for victims of crime, their families and prosecution witnesses when they come to court. It is funded by the Department of Justice and has been on the go since 2005. It has a permanent presence in the Criminal Courts of Justice and has continued to expand its services since 2018, reaching more victims year on year.

Working with Courts Service

V-SAC was welcomed and accommodated by the staff of Courts Service as we started to establish our court accompaniment service for victims of crime into the Western, Midlands and Northern courts. The Courts Service have continued to work with V-SAC in the courts across the whole country to ensure victims have a separate area, away from the hustle and bustle of the public areas within the courthouse and where they can wait until they are needed in court. V-SAC were delighted to be 'stars' in the Courts VR Experience which was led by the Courts Service and was a real magnet for visitors to the Department of Justice tent at the National Ploughing Championships. Well done to all involved.

2023 – V-SAC's busiest year on record

The number of people supported by V-SAC is increasing and it is expected that the total figure will be approximately 2,500 by the end of 2023. This will be an increase of ~20% compared to last year. The number of individual contact meetings with the people supported during the year demonstrates how busy the service is becoming. Already the contact meetings are up on the overall total for 2022 to just over 6,000 as at end October 2023.

COVIS

The COVIS (Court-based Victim Support) project, led by Victim Support Sweden and co-funded by the European Union, got underway in late 2022. It is an exciting project for V-SAC to be involved in as it explores best practice in supporting victims through the criminal justice system. The project team had site visits in Sweden, Ireland, and Portugal

(photos bottom left). Other visits will include Croatia and France early next year. COVIS is also hosting international webinars with the Netherlands, Australia, and the US. These visits and webinars help the project team to learn about the support in other European countries and share information on best practice when it comes to providing support to victims of crime.

An award-winning year!

V-SAC was recognised on a local, regional, and national level throughout the year. It demonstrates the esteem in which V-SAC is held in the communities it serves across the country and is an acknowledgement of the commitment and dedication of our wonderful volunteers and coordinators.

V-SAC was nominated for the **Galway Mayor Awards** – Ita Burke, V-SAC Volunteer and Emily Healy, Regional Coordinator (photo on right)

Patrick Caldwell, one of our trained volunteers, was nominated for the **Monaghan Volunteer of the Year** award (photo on right)

Dympna Kenny, V-SAC General Manager and 2 of V-SAC's CCJ Volunteers, Anne and Mary (photos bottom right) were honoured to accept the Community Recognition Award presented to V-SAC by the Dublin City Public Participation Network. V-SAC was nominated and shortlisted for a National Volunteer Ireland Award in the Large Group Category. While V-SAC was not an awardee on the evening, it was great recognition for the organisation to be seen as worthy cause on a national level. Well done to all nominees and awardees!

All in Victim Support at Court look forward to continuing to work together with the Courts Service to ensure that all victims have access to the support of V-SAC volunteers when they come to court. V-SAC would like to wish everyone in the Courts Service and all our stakeholders a very Merry Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.





RETIREMENTS

Geraldine Mason retires

The Courts Service has lost a very valued member of staff in Geraldine Mason, who after 41 years of public service, 27 of them being with the Courts, has decided to move on to the next chapter in her life.

For a small person she has had the biggest impact on the Court Office in Limerick and will leave the largest void. She was the "go to" person for so many people that have passed through the Court Office. Her professionalism, kindness and helpfulness will be her legacy and I have no doubt that the many customers, staff, students, solicitors, barristers, Judges and criers would agree.

She more than deserves her retirement and I hope that she has a long, happy and healthy retirement.

Audrey McCarthy, Limerick Court Office



Miriam Stack retires

Miriam's career spanning over 42 years, began in the Department of Health. After doing her time in the big smoke, which also included time working in Minister Michael Noonan's office, Miriam made her way back to her beloved Cobh and took up her post in Cork District Court Office in 1997, spending time in the county court section, the warrants office and family law before moving to the Southern Regional Office on promotion in 2008.

Miriam went to Limerick Court Office in 2016 on promotion and managed the crime office until 2018, before returning to the Southern Regional Office. She took up the post of Office Manager of Cork Court Office, Washington Street in April 2022.

Miriam will be remembered for her integrity, empathy and her good humour and we extend every good wish for the future to Miriam, her daughter Ciara and her son Shane. We hope to see her name in Hollywood lights as she starts the next chapter and pursues her acting career!

Ann Kissane, Washington Street Courthouse



Marianne White retires

During a recent sitting of the Commercial Court, colleagues paid tribute to Marianne White, retiring from her role as a High Court Registrar.

The farewell speeches painted a vibrant picture of Marianne's career and the deep respect and affection all her colleagues held for her. Mr. Justice McDonald welcomed everyone and extended a warm welcome to Marianne's daughter, Alannah, along with other dignitaries, colleagues, and members of the legal profession. The gathering, both in person and remotely, highlighted the impact Marianne had on the legal community.

Mr. Justice McDonald acknowledged her significant contributions as a court officer, colleague, and friend, particularly during his transition into his role.

Angela Denning, CEO of the Courts Service, shared her appreciation for Marianne's long and dedicated public service career, which included many years spent in the Accountants Office, highlighting her ability to spot and mentor talent within her team and her infectious spirit. She also wished Marianne well in her new role as a grandmother.

Finally, Marianne herself expressed her gratitude to all her colleagues, past and present, and acknowledged the support and friendship she received throughout her career both in the Accountants Office and in the High Court.

We wish Marianne a long, happy, and healthy retirement as she settles into a new chapter, runners on, to keep up with her little granddaughter Iris!

High Court Colleagues



Suzanne Creegan, Ann Gaughan and Syra McQuaid retire

We recently had a double celebration in the CCJ with two team members retiring in October.

Suzanne Creegan retired from the District Court after 24 years working in the Courts Service. Suzanne started in the Bridewell and moved to the new CCJ building in 2010. Suzanne trained and mentored so many staff over the years and will remain a good friend to so many of us here in the CCJ. Lunch time chats with Suzanne are missed by us all.

Ann Gaughan retired this October after 23 years of dedicated work in the Courts Service. Ann was most recently the Office Manager for the Court of Appeal – Criminal in the CCJ. She also provided her guidance and generosity to roles in Blanchardstown District Court and Phoenix House. Ann is a cherished colleague and friend who will be missed by all.

Syra McQuaid retired recently from the CCJ after working in The Courts Service for more than 20 years.

She was a highly valued member of the CCJ, and her expertise and great sense of humour will be sorely missed by all her colleagues and everyone in the CCJ. We wish her well in her retirement and hope she enjoys her new found freedom.

Amy Carter and Elaine Shelley, CCJ



Maureen Fallon retires

Pictured at the top of the table is Maureen Fallon who retires from Kilkenny Courthouse after 4 years service with us. Maureen transferred to Kilkenny on mobility in April 2019 from the Property Registration Authority in Roscommon.

We wish Maureen every health and happiness in her retirement and pastures new.

Staff of Kilkenny Court Office





Appointments



The Hon Mr Justice Brian O'Moore, Mr Justice Brian O'Moore has been appointed as a Judge of the Court of Appeal. Educated at Trinity College and the King's Inns, he was called to the Bar in 1984 and the Inner Bar in 1999. He was appointed as a Judge of the High Court in 2019 where he worked in the Commercial Court.



Mr. Barry O'Donnell, SC Barry O'Donnell, SC, has been appointed as a Judge of the High Court. Educated at UCD and the King's Inns, he was called to the Inner Bar in 2016. He also served as part-time chair of the Mental Health Commission from 2006 to 2011.



Ms. Nuala Jackson, SC Nuala Jackson, SC, has been appointed as a Judge of the High Court. Educated at Trinity College and the King's Inns, she was called to the Bar in 1988 and the Inner Bar in 2015. She served as chair of the Legal Aid Board and as vice chair of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board.



Mr. Conleth Bradley, SC Conleth Bradley, SC, has been appointed as a Judge of the High Court. Educated at Queen's University Belfast and the King's Inns, he was called to the Bar in 1994 and the Inner Bar in 2005. He was also a Senior Council in the European Court of Human Rights, Court of Justice of the EU and the UK Supreme Court.



Ms. Denise Brett, SC Denise Brett, SC, has been appointed as a Judge of the High Court. Educated at Our Lady of Mercy College, Carysfort and the King's Inns, she was called to the Bar in 1996 and the Inner Bar in 2015. She served as vice chair of the Bar Council.



Mr. David Nolan, SC David Nolan, SC, has been appointed as a Judge of the High Court. Educated at UCD and the King's Inns, he was called to the Bar in 1985 and the Inner Bar in 2003.



Mr. Simon McAleese, Solicitor Simon McAleese, solicitor has been appointed as a Judge of the Circuit Court. Educated at UCD and the Law Society, he qualified as a solicitor in 1990 and established Simon McAleese Solicitors LLP in 2002. He specialised in media law before being appointed to the bench earlier this year.



Ms. Elizabeth Maguire, SC Elizabeth Maguire, SC, has been appointed as a Judge of the Circuit Court. She practiced on the Dublin and Western Circuits and was called to the Inner Bar in 2021. She edited the Irish Family Law Handbook 6th edition.



Mr. Gerard Meehan, SC, Gerard Meehan, SC, has been appointed as Judge of the Circuit Court. Educated at University of Galway, the King's Inns, UCD and Trinity College he was called to the Bar in 2004 and the Inner Bar in 2022.



Ms. Jennifer O'Brien, Solicitor, Jennifer O'Brien, Solicitor, has been appointed as a Judge of the Circuit Court. Educated at UCD and the Law Society, she qualified as a solicitor in 1997. She lectured at the Law Society since 2005.



Ms. Fiona O'Sullivan, SC Fiona O'Sullivan, SC, has been appointed as a Judge of the Circuit Court. Educated at Trinity College and the King's Inns, she was called to the Bar in 1999 and the Inner Bar in 2022.



Ms. Nicola Jane Andrews, BL
Nicola Jane Andrews, BL, has been appointed as a Judge of the District Court. Educated at UCD and the King's Inns, she was called to the Bar in 2004.



Ms. Monika Leech, BL
Monika Leech, BL, has been appointed as a Judge of the District Court. Educated at UCD, the Law Society and the King's Inns. She qualified as a solicitor in 1992 and was called to the Bar in 1999.



Ms. Stephanie Coggans, Solicitor
Stephanie Coggans, Solicitor, has been appointed as a Judge of the District Court. Educated at Trinity College and the Law Society, she qualified as a solicitor in 1992. She served as managing solicitor at the Legal Aid Board's Monaghan Law Centre.



Ms. Fiona Brennan, Solicitor
Fiona Brennan, Solicitor, has been appointed as a Judge of the District Court. Educated at University of Galway and the Law Society, she qualified as a solicitor in 1993 and practiced in criminal law.



Mr. William Aylmer, Solicitor
William Aylmer, Solicitor, has been appointed as a Judge of the District Court. Educated at UCD and the Law Society, he qualified as a solicitor in 1994. He also lectured at the Law Society.



Mr. Philip O'Leary, Solicitor
Philip O'Leary, Solicitor, has been appointed as a Judge of the District Court. Educated at University College Cork and the Law Society, he qualified as a solicitor in 1985. He served as chair of the Property Services Appeal Board.



Mr. Adrian Harris, Solicitor
Adrian Harris, Solicitor, has been appointed as a Judge of the District Court. Educated at University of Galway and the Law Society, he qualified as a solicitor in 1997. He was senior associate solicitor at Padhraic Harris and Co Solicitors prior to being appointed to the bench.



Mr. Michael Ramsey, BL
Michael Ramsey, BL, has been appointed as a Judge of the District Court. Educated at Queen's University Belfast, Salve Regina University Newport RI and the King's Inns, he was called to the Bar in 1995. He served as a member of International Protection Appeals Tribunal.



Mr. Michael Connellan Jr., Solicitor
Michael Connellan Jr., Solicitor, has been appointed as a Judge of the District Court. Educated at the University of Wales and the Law Society, he qualified as a solicitor in 2000. He served as general manager solicitor at the Child and Family Agency.



Ms. Catherine Hayden, Solicitor
Catherine Hayden, Solicitor, has been appointed as a Judge of the District Court. Educated at Trinity College and the Law Society, she qualified as a solicitor in 2006.



Mr. Mark O'Connell, Barrister
Mark O'Connell, BL, has been appointed as a Judge of the District Court. Educated at Trinity College and the King's Inns, he was called to the Bar in 1999.



NAPOLEON

Napoleon Bonaparte, the man, the myth, the legend. The ambitious French Emperor and military genius who reshaped Europe's political landscape through his conquests. Celebrated for the way he revolutionised military organisation and training. Though his driving passion was the military expansion of France he was also responsible for many reforms that have left a lasting mark on the institutions of that country. To make a movie and encapsulate the story of such a man would surely take at least six hours of viewing time, maybe a part one and part two like the studios did with Frank Herbert's *Dune* movie recently. No, not for director Ridley Scott, we get the whole epic adventure in a solid 2 hours and 38 minutes.

Ridley Scott has a particular flair for the visuals which has always put him ahead of his contemporaries. His background in set design and years of making adverts for British television has resulted in Scott's incredible talent to turn any genre of movie into an experience for the senses. It is easy to study the results of these skills by simply reading the director's resume.

Scott is the director behind such gems as *Gladiator*, *Alien*, *Thelma and Louise*, *Black Hawk Down* and one of my favourite movies of all time *Blade Runner*.

Napoleon is a visual feast. A spectacle-filled action epic that details the chequered rise and fall of the iconic French Emperor, played by Oscar-winner Joaquin Phoenix. Interesting fact, Napoleon was not a short man (as often is mistaken), in fact at the time of

his death in 1821 he was measured at 5 feet, 7 inches which was above average height. Phoenix does a masterful job against a stunning backdrop of large-scale filmmaking. The film captures Bonaparte's relentless journey to power through the prism of his addictive, volatile relationship with his one true love, Josephine, showcasing his visionary military and political tactics against some of the most dynamic practical battle sequences ever filmed. The movie covers in graphic detail some of Napoleon's most famous battles, certainly the ones that had the widest effect on his life and career including the siege of Toulon, The battle of the Pyramids, the battle of Austerlitz and the battle of Waterloo.

The story moves at a fast pace for its subject matter and Joaquin Phoenix gives a powerful performance. I feel we get knocked off-kilter at times in the



story when it relates to the tumultuous relationship between Napoleon and Josephine. Josephine, played by BAFTA award-winning actress Vanessa Kirby, comes across as a cold and distant character and one can only be left to question was there any real love on her side for this man. There is a lot crammed into this movie and many will argue that this historical figure is not getting to tell his full story. The true nature of his ambition, his thought process throughout this journey as he encounters his triumphant victories, and his terrible defeats are not fully explored.

All in all, watching this movie is an exciting window into the past, as if all those old history book paintings we see of Napoleon suddenly came to life. Most of what you see on screen is practical film making using real people and physical set pieces. The hi-tech computer graphics are only used for the impossible like cannon balls shooting through the air and doing their terrible damage to man, horse and equipment.

Let us not forget that during the Napoleonic wars the total combat deaths on the battlefield were between 2.5 million and 3.5 million and civilian deaths numbered in the region of 2-3 million.

Napoleon is currently on general release in cinemas.

Ronan Power





Festive Feast in a flash – Christmas CharcutterTREE Board!

Christmas is undoubtedly a time for joy, laughter, and the company of cherished friends and family. However, it also tends to bring its fair share of unexpected guests, and let's face it – we don't always have the luxury of hours spent in the kitchen crafting culinary masterpieces. In the whirlwind of festive gatherings and impromptu celebrations, a quick solution is often the need of the hour.

Enter our Christmas Tree Charcuterie Board – not only saves you precious time but also adds a touch of festive flair to your table. This delightful

spread is perfect for those moments when you want to indulge in delectable bites without committing to a full-on feast. The great thing about a charcuterie board is that you can change it to suit your own tastes or the dietary requirements of your guests. You can add a different type of cheese or add some dark chocolate or red onion marmalade for some added sweetness. Let's savour the season together with a dash of charm and a sprinkle of simplicity.



Ingredients

Cheese

Sharp Cheddar cubed
Havarti cubed
Colby Jack cubed
Provolone Slices
I like to include brie and a nice oak smoked cheddar.

Meats

Various salamis
You can use any cured meats like prosciutto or serrano ham.

Fruit

Blackberries
Raspberries
Black or green olives, or you could include sundried tomatoes.

Extras

Pretzel sticks or any crackers you have
Chocolate Covered
Shortbread Stars

Garnish

Rosemary

Instructions

First, cut shapes out of the provolone slices using snowflake and star cookie cutters.

Next, prep your salami by making salami folds and piling 3-4 pieces on a decorative toothpick.

Build your tree starting from the bottom with a row of cheese, then continue up the tree making sure each layer is slightly less wide than the last to ensure the triangle tree shape.

Create a tree trunk using pretzels at the bottom of the tree.

Garnish with rosemary sprigs to evoke the tree branch feeling, then finish with star-shaped cookies and provolone cut-outs to mimic ornaments.

2023 Christmas Quiz

Q1



Q3



Question

1. Ireland's most famous Judge, accompanied as always by O'Brien & Godmother, criss-crossed the country from '67 to '82 in what vehicle?
2. This city was founded on Christmas day 1599, the clue really is in the name?
3. Name the 1955 Robert Mitchum movie that ends with everyone enjoying Christmas without him?
4. What colour was Santa Claus's suit before Coca Cola co-opted him as their brand mascot?
5. Who was the Great Dictator who died on Christmas day 1977?
6. Which Julian was first introduced to the world in 45 BC but fell out of favour from 1582 AD thanks to Gregory ?
7. Name the gatling gun toting actor who defends Santa's home from terrorists in a spoof movie within a 1988 movie retelling of a Christmas Carol?
8. In what city did Henry transform his cousin Bruno into Leo on Christmas day 1048?
9. What Webb was launched on Christmas day 2021?
10. In 1957 the Starkey's bought their teenage son Richard a drum set for Christmas transforming him into ... who?



Closing date for entries is Friday 26 January 2024. To win a €50 An Post 'One for All' voucher send your answers by email to courtsservicenews@courts.ie or John Whelan, Communications and Media Unit, 6th Floor Phoenix House, Smithfield, Dublin 7.



Through the **Lens**



Angelsea Street
public counter



Southern Regional
Office Cork



Limerick



Limerick



Crib at Carlow Courthouse



Kilkenny Courthouse



Midleton Courthouse



Naas Courthouse



Phoenix House



Washington Street



Waterford Courthouse