

And out of the blue, we get a week for the beach



Magic: Hayley Berry and Katie Gannon in Co. Mayo yesterday

By Aisling Scally

WHATEVER your plans for St Patrick's Day, you will be very unlikely to need an umbrella – as Met Eireann has promised dry and settled conditions for the rest of the week.

Today will be another dry day with sunny spells in most areas after any fog clears.

Eastern and southern coastal areas will be cool but elsewhere will feel mild, due to light breezes.

Temperatures will peak at 12C today. And a spokesman for Met Eireann said a high pressure system means we will enjoy similar weather for the rest of the week.

The spokesman said the calm conditions were due to an anti-cyclone near Ireland 'blocking out Atlantic rain belts'.

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STAND BY FOR SUNSHINE



TODAY

Today will be a dry day with sunny spells in most areas after any fog clears. Eastern and southern coastal areas will be cool.

High: 12C Low: 8C



TOMORROW

Sunny spells expected throughout the country. It will continue to be dry and settled for most areas, with some areas getting light easterly breezes.

High: 10C Low: 8C



THURSDAY

Sunny spells and light winds expected with winds from between southeast and northeast; fresh at times in some coastal areas.

High: 13C Low: 9C



FRIDAY

A cloudy start to the day but sunshine expected in the afternoon. Some light winds will come in from the east overnight. The weekend looks set to be dry.

High: 12C Low: 4C



Cute: Milo Duffy O'Neill in Dublin's St Stephen's Green yesterday

Attacker's six-month jail term ruled unduly lenient

By Ruaidhrí Giblin

THE six-month jail term imposed on a man who imprisoned his partner and was 'sharpening knives at the end of the bed' while gardai were outside has been ruled unduly lenient.

The DPP successfully sought a review of Brian McLaughlin's sentence yesterday. McLaughlin, 23, of St Oran's Road, Buncrana, Co. Donegal, had pleaded guilty to assaulting his partner and falsely imprisoning her at their family home in Buncrana on October 20, 2013.

He was sentenced at Letterkenny Circuit Criminal Court to three years' imprisonment with the final two-and-a-half suspended by Judge Francis Comerford on July 14, 2015.

Giving judgment at the Court of Appeal, Mr Justice Garrett Sheehan said McLaughlin and his partner Shauna McLaughlin had been out celebrating her birthday when McLaughlin left in a 'somewhat aggrieved state of mind'.

Ms McLaughlin indicated that when she got home, he was standing at the door waiting for her. He followed her up to the bedroom and punched her to the face with his fist, the judge said.

McLaughlin put his hands around her neck, 'strangling her', the judge said.

He pushed her head into the blanket such that she found it difficult to breathe. The next thing she could remember, he was leaning over her pleading with her to wake up.

She called the gardai, but McLaughlin refused the officers entry or to release her, the judge said. At this point, McLaughlin had armed himself with a 10in kitchen knife. He was finally persuaded to release her at 4.40am.

Mr Justice Sheehan said the sentencing judge held that the root of McLaughlin's offending could be found in his mental health problems.

While that may have been justified, Mr Justice Sheehan said it remained 'a fact that his voluntary consumption of alcohol contributed to his criminal offending' and did not excuse his responsibility for these offences.

Mr Justice Sheehan said the victim's injuries, the time she spent imprisoned and the fact McLaughlin was 'sharpening knives at the end of the bed while the gardai were outside' meant the length of the custodial sentence was a substantial departure from what would have been appropriate.

The court will hold a fresh sentence hearing at a later date.

Blood supplies 'may run low' over holidays

IRISH blood supplies may not be maintained over St Patrick's Day and Easter, the transfusion service has warned.

Hospitals have been asked to conserve the use of some blood groups and reserves are down to four or five days. The problem is due to an increase in the number of donors turned away, the provider said.

New EU donation limits on haemoglobin levels mean the service is rejecting a quarter of potential donors.

Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS) director Paddy Bowler said: 'While the knock-on effect of low haemoglobin levels is expected to last for some time, it is imperative that donors come forward over the next few weeks to safeguard blood supplies during the extended holiday period of St Patrick's Day and Easter.'

While donors have been attending in their usual numbers over the last six weeks, the amount donated remains low due to many having a low haemoglobin measurement.

The IBTS has scheduled six additional mobile clinics for March 20.

Talented Emma's story has just begun



Prize winner: Emma Flanagan

TRANSITION year student-turned-eagle-eyed journalist Emma Flanagan has scooped the top prize at this year's Press Pass Awards.

Ms Flanagan, a student at Our Lady's College, Drogheda, Co. Louth, captured the judge's imagination with her entry entitled The Politics Of Apathy.

The opening line of Ms Flanagan's winning entry, 'Politics is a mess', is a sentiment that has been echoed in recent weeks across the country following the General Election.

Presenting the winning students with their awards, Minister for Skills, Research and Innovation Damien English said: 'Press Pass is

By Seán Dunne

a positive initiative that can benefit Transition Year students in a variety of ways, not only by improving literacy skills and helping to prepare them for the Leaving Cert English course, but also by developing a greater understanding of the world we live in.'

The awards, which were launched in 2012, have now seen more than 60,000 Transition Year students from schools around the country taking part in Press Pass.

Vincent Crowley, chairman of NewsBrands Ireland, which organises the competition, said that the standard of entries in this year's competition demonstrated the

huge level of commitment by both students and their schools to Press Pass, as well as the educational power of newspapers in the classroom.

'Once again, this year's entries are of an exceptional standard and what's really coming through is a sense of enjoyment and love of words,' said Mr Crowley.

'The winning entries demonstrate a confident grasp of language and literacy that will stand to the students, whatever they choose to do in life,' he added.

The winners were selected by a panel of newspaper editors and journalists chaired by Professor John Horgan, the former Press Ombudsman.