

The perfect wedding gift? Donor kidney that would change my life

LIKE any groom-to-be, David Beirne has an ever-growing to-do list ahead of his July wedding day.

But the one task he won't be able to forget on his big day is his appointment for kidney dialysis just hours before he walks down the aisle.

Roscommon man David has a condition that affects his kidneys so severely that they do not function properly.

It means travelling to hospital in Galway three times a week for treatment – even on the week that he will marry his partner, Irene Nestor.

It also means that the couple's choice of honeymoon destination has been curtailed.

As Organ Donor Awareness Week got under way, David, who is on a waiting list for a donor kidney, spoke about looking forward to married life, while living with a condition that severely limits his choices.

'First of all it dictated what day

By **Gerry Hand**

we actually decided to get married on,' said David, from Knockcroghery, Co. Roscommon.

'I am currently on dialysis every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, so those three days were ruled out.

'We'd opted for a Friday wedding, but, then, to allow me to enjoy my first full day as a married man on the Saturday, the hospital decided to bring me in for treatment.

Dialysis on wedding day

ment on the morning of the wedding. It's what you call making the best of a bad lot.'

Meanwhile, as David explained, 'the honeymoon is a bit up in the air at the moment – except one thing is for definite: it will have to be in Ireland.'

He went on: 'When you are on the list for a transplant you cannot travel abroad. If you do, you



Transplant list: David Beirne will marry Irene Nestor in July

have to suspend yourself from the list, because if a suitable donor is found you have to be available immediately.

'We decided not to take the risk as it would be just my luck that I would get a call saying they had found a match.

'The other problem would be organising dialysis abroad. That's not an easy thing to do.'

However, David remains philosophical. 'Ah, look – it'll be a great occasion, but this illness has affected a lot of things around the big day,' he said.

David was diagnosed with IgA nephropathy in 2013, shortly after he met his fiancé Irene. Having seen David's experience at close quarters, Irene has been

inspired to sign up for a donor card. She said: 'Funnily enough, I had always told my family I intended to get a card but never got around to it.

'Then I met David, and shortly afterwards he was diagnosed with the problem so I got one straight away.'

David believes more people should carry organ donor cards, and discuss with their loved ones what they would like to happen in the event of their death.

'A transplant will give me my life back, and the more people who carry the donor card the more chance there is of that happening,' he said.

● For information on Organ Donor Awareness Week, see ika.ie

Woman killed trying to save her dog from moving train

By **Tom Shiel**

A 70-YEAR-OLD mother of two was killed over the weekend while trying to save her pet dog from an oncoming train.

Bridie McHale, from Straide, near Foxford, Co. Mayo, died instantly in the horror impact near her home on Saturday. Her beloved collie dog was also killed in the incident.

A distressed neighbour gave details of what happened, saying: 'When Bridie's dog rushed onto the tracks, she went after him.

'That's how this awful accident occurred. We are all numbed with shock over what happened and the loss of such a lovely lady.'

Mrs McHale is understood to have sustained 'devastating' injuries when she was struck by a passenger train travelling from Manulla Junction to Ballina in Co. Mayo on Saturday morning. There were about 20 passengers on the feeder train at the time. None of them was injured.

The victim's remains were removed to the mortuary at Mayo University Hospital for a postmortem. The circumstances of the accident are to be investigated by Irish Rail, the Department of Transport and gardai.

The impact occurred at a level crossing known as Knockshanbally.

There have been a number of accidents over the years at this level crossing, which is unautomated and unmanned. These incidents include a tragedy in 2008, in which a retired local farmer was killed when he was struck by a passenger train.

Number of dead babies in Tuam home may be higher

Stillborn babies were not recorded... but were in a different home

By **Neil Michael**
Chief Reporter

THE number of babies' bodies in the Tuam mother and baby home burial plot could be higher if stillborn babies are included, new research suggests.

Studies of maternity ledgers at a mother and baby home in Co. Westmeath released recently show that at least 77 babies were stillborn.

And historian Catherine Corless, – whose research led to the discovery of two burial sites in Tuam for 796 babies and children – has told the Irish Daily Mail it's possible more bodies are buried there.

Unusually for a mother and baby home or Ireland as a whole, until the 1990s, nuns who ran St Peter's Maternity Hospital – also known as Castlepollard Mother and Baby home – recorded stillbirths.

They are in addition to 203 babies for which there are death records.

Ms Corless said the number of babies buried at Tuam could

'Eerie' parallels between Canada and Tuam



Pain: Hervé Bertrand

A FORMER orphan who was abused in a mother and baby home in Canada has said the similarities to the past care of children in religious-run homes in Ireland are 'eerie'.

Hervé Bertrand, 74, was placed in the care of the religious orders in Quebec because his mother was an unmarried teenager.

Social workers who later helped him trace his family said his father was Irish and was serving in the Canadian Army at the time. During those years, he said he was abused regu-

'potentially' be higher if stillbirths there are included. Indeed, it could also mean that burial plots in the 14 mother and baby homes being investigated by the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes could also be larger than estimated.

Ms Corless told the Irish Daily Mail last night: 'It is amazing that Castlepollard registered stillbirths. In society in general, still-

births just were not registered up until the 1990s.'

When asked if a similar stillbirth rate of around 38% of registered baby and child deaths were to be applied to St Mary's in Tuam, could there be potentially more babies buried there, she replied: 'It is possible. But I can't really say. I'm sure there were some stillbirths and surely they would have put them down [in the chamber]

By **Alison O'Reilly**

larly by a male employee who worked in the orphanage.

He is one of thousands of children left in the care of religious orders in Canada from the 1940s to the 1960s.

Speaking to the Irish Daily Mail from his home in Canada, Mr Hervé said he was still 'reliving the horrors' of the home and can sympathise with survivors here. He said: 'I have so many memories of the three different homes I was placed in.'

– absolutely, yes. But I can't know that for sure.' She added: 'It is a fact that all stillbirths were not allowed into consecrated ground all across Ireland.

'I didn't concentrate on stillbirths in my research because if you look around the country in the bogs, in the woods – stillbirths were buried everywhere and anywhere. Nobody seemed to care about them.'

An estimated 6,000 babies and children are believed to have died in mother and baby homes.

Their bodies have lain for decades in what were mostly unmarked graves on abandoned wasteland adjoining graveyards.

A spokesperson for the Bon Secours Sisters, which ran the Tuam home until it closed, said last night that they could not comment on stillbirth figures. They said this was 'due to the ongoing work of the Commission of Investigation'.

A spokesperson for the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary, which ran Castlepollard, said of stillbirth stats: 'We are dealing directly with the official Commission of Inquiry on all such matters.'

The Castlepollard Mother and Baby Home group spokesperson, Paul Redmond, said last night: 'There are 77 recorded stillbirths in the ledgers for the 24 years they are available. It is doubtful that the full total will ever be known but it almost certainly runs to considerably more than 100 stillbirths.'

neil.michael@dailymail.ie