



What's the story?

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# Soilse News

## Arthur's Day—good for us?

A massive global media advertising campaign is underway. Called Arthur's Day, it commemorates the birthday of the man who invented Guinness. The campaign gives the impression that drinking Guinness is a cause for global happiness. The inference is also that you celebrate occasions by drinking Guinness.

Guinness is the flagship brand of parent company, Diageo, and is sold in over 180 countries.

Guinness is recognised internationally for the iconic nature and power of its advertisements and Diageo spends hundreds of millions of euro annually just promoting 'the black stuff'. The Guinness Hop Store is Ireland's number one tourist attraction. Indeed our na-

tional symbol, the harp, is also the Guinness logo!

However, the reality is different. There is no balance in the way alcohol is portrayed. Indeed, we have a major drink problem in Ireland. Guinness is a mature man's drink and research shows that where parents drink, children follow.

Significant health risks arise from drinking alcohol. These include injuries, traffic accidents and deaths, falls, drowning, burns, violence, risky sexual behaviour, risk of miscarriage, alcohol poisoning as well as neurological, cardiovascular, psychiatric, cancer and liver diseases. Suicide is a major risk. Alcohol can also cause deep personal and family social problems such as unemployment, partner violence, relationship break-



down and child mistreatment.

In Ireland, we don't drink socially but tend to binge drink. For those recovering from heroin addiction, alcohol is the lubricant which brings people back to their drug of choice.

As a society we must embrace a community and public health response to regulate against arguably our most pressing national social issue. This means increasing pricing, limiting promotion and curtailing availability. If we are serious as a society in addressing alcohol abuse, we need to be as vigorous and creative as Guinness in combating it. Maybe we could start by having a requiem on Arthur's Day for the countless victims of alcohol over the last 252 years.

Gerry McAleenan  
Head of Services

## Sobering thoughts

- ☛ 3 in 10 road crash deaths are alcohol-related.
- ☛ Irish 16 to 17-year olds spent €145 million on alcohol in one year.
- ☛ Between 61,000 and 104,000 children in Ireland live in families negatively affected by alcohol.
- ☛ Every seven hours someone in Ireland dies of an alcohol-related illness.
- ☛ There are four times as many deaths due to alcohol as due to all other drugs combined.
- ☛ Over half of all Irish drinkers have a harmful pattern of drinking, that's 4 in 10 women and 7 in 10 men who drink.

## True or false?



## Test your knowledge

Answers on back page

1. Alcohol comes from the Arabic word 'Al Kuhl' which originally described: a) gold, b) poison, c) make-up.
2. Alcohol is a stimulant. True or false?
3. You are not an alcoholic unless you drink every day. True or false?
4. Most of the short-term harm associated with alcohol is due to: a) drinking every day, b) drinking more than the safe drinking levels, c) getting drunk, even on weekends.
5. Which of the following can help reduce a hangover? a) hair of the dog, b) coffee, c) time
6. The liver can eliminate approximately: a) one standard drink an hour, b) one pint an hour, c) one bottle of wine an hour?
7. After drinking, you can feel tired because: a) your body is working to expel the alcohol, b) you've been out dancing until three in the morning, c) it's the fifth time you've been drunk this week.

## Part of who we are?

For as long as the Irish have been drinking, we always seemed to overdo it, always took it to the extremes and it was always accepted. Whatever happened due to drink, it was always easy to blame it on the drink. That was the answer when it came to domestic violence or sexual abuse.

It is still the same to this day. An Irishman is not an Irishman unless he has a drink. Everybody knows the risks and consequences of drink but because it is legal, it is seen to be ok to drink or that you are helping the economy. And because of the long acceptance around alcohol and the abuse in many forms that comes with it, it will always be part of our culture and heritage.

As an Irish citizen, you're programmed to be a drinker from a young age and also programmed to never admit your weakness around drink or the power it has. Until the acceptance around drinking is taken away, it will always be a problem that will consume our country.

John

### Answers to quiz

1. c. 'Al Kuhl' was a fine powder of 'kohl' used for eye make up.
2. False. Although alcohol may be initially stimulating, it is primarily a depressant.
3. False. Alcoholism is not about how often people drink but whether they can control their drinking once they start.
4. c. Most of the short-term harm linked with alcohol results from single episodes of drunkenness, frequently associated with weekend drinking (such as accidents, violence, unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections).
5. c. The body breaks down roughly one standard drink an hour so the best cure for a hangover is time.
6. a. Nothing speeds up this process - if you have more than one standard drink an hour, it just builds up in your body.
7. a. Your body's trying to get rid of all the toxins produced by too much alcohol.

## My story

I started drinking at a very early age. It started with just drinking a couple of cans on a Saturday night but got to where I was drinking to a scale where I needed a detox.

I think alcohol is everywhere. I felt under so much pressure from friends and basically society because drink is involved in everything we do - soccer, golf, cinema, straight after we go drinking.

Ireland is really a drinking culture. I think the younger generation doesn't stand a chance with the way alcohol is so freely available.

I had a problem with alcohol but it took me years to realise I had a problem. Then, when I realised, I was in too bad a way to give it up on my own. I worked to feed my habit. I was a binge drinker. Dublin Simon Community helped me to detox five years ago. I've had a few slips but nothing like I used to be.

I just hope the younger generation don't make the same mistakes I did.

Paul

### Parents and drink

Irish people think it's alright to get a drink and to have their kids with them when they're drinking whether it's in house parties, pubs, clubs or away on holidays which I think is wrong to do. It should be like America where you have to be over 21 years old and have an ID pass from the government.

Amy

### Young people and drink

Teenagers today are drinking more alcohol than even two years ago. Teenagers feel it is the norm to drink from age 14 upwards. Some families would let their sons or daughters drink on special occasions like Christmas or birthdays but a lot of Irish teens are drinking in parks and fields away from their families.

If you don't drink, people might think there was something wrong with you and start to bully you. My first drink was at the age of 14 which is very early.

Vincent

## What you can do to prevent a relapse



1. Remember that alcohol is a drug. If you drink, you've relapsed.
2. Where possible, cut all connections with the people, places and things associated with your past alcohol use.
3. Attend self-help groups like AA, NA and GA. Get a sponsor. Think about taking up a secretary position at a meeting. To increase your chances of staying drug-free, get a counsellor and commit to an aftercare recovery group.
4. Aim for a balanced lifestyle. Where possible, avoid overly stressful situations as too much stress can push you to relapse. (Causes of stress include relationships, court cases, exams, being dishonest, bills, and so on).
5. Get into the habit of talking about your feelings and problems. Remember that it's ok to *think* about using but it's vital to open up and tell your sponsor, counsellor and other recovery supports that you are thinking about using.
6. Find a productive outlet for excitement in your recovery. Take part in team sports such as football or physical activities like running, the gym or dancing. If they're not your thing, find something that is - drama, water sports, cooking, the list is endless.

### And if you do relapse...

1. Stop using. Remember, a relapse can be used as an important learning experience in your recovery.
2. Ask for help - go to a meeting, ring your sponsor, contact your counsellor and aftercare immediately and put a plan in place.
3. Avoid the trap of self pity and the 'blame and shame' game. Focus on solutions. You can look at why you relapsed later; the most important thing now is to stop using and **ask for help**.

Noel Murphy