

Heroin dealer jailed for plan to rob from OAPs

A HEROIN dealer who was caught armed with a lump hammer, a claw hammer and pepper spray on his way to burglarise the home of two elderly brothers was yesterday jailed for 16 months.

Heroin addict Damien Hally was the main target of a Garda undercover drugs operation in west Clare and sold heroin, cocaine and cannabis in the Tesco car park in Kilrush to undercover gardai posing as drug addicts in February to April 2013.

The 30-year-old, of Cosy Cottage, Moyasta, Kilrush, asked the gardai to get involved 'in a job' to burglarise the brothers' home in north Clare in April 2013.

Inspector John Ryan told Kilrush District Court yesterday that it was Hally's belief that the brothers had a lot of money. Gardai

By **Gordon Deegan**

intercepted Hally on April 10, 2013, on his way to commit the burglary. Mr Hally was also in possession of a green sports bag containing a lump hammer, a claw hammer, a hacksaw, pliers, screwdrivers, a steak knife, a butter knife, hacksaw blades and a torch.

Hally pleaded guilty to a range of offences concerning the planned burglary and drug dealing. Superintendent Séamus Nolan has stated that Hally was the main target of Operation Luxor. The five-month-long operation in 2013 involved gardai from the National Drugs Unit posing as drug addicts and buying drugs from the Kilrush dealers.

Hally pleaded guilty to selling

cannabis to the value of €50 to undercover gardai in Tesco Car Park on the Ennis Road in Kilrush on February 4, 2013.

Hally also pleaded guilty to selling cocaine to the value of €100 to undercover gardai and cannabis to the value of €425.

Judge Durcan said: 'I have seldom come across a drugs case where there is such open and callous disregard for humanity.'

'The innocent elderly people would have become victims in the defendant's desire to get more money and more drugs.'

Judge Durcan said the attitude of Hally towards his prey 'was little different to going out with a gun for shooting season'.

He said that it was not appropriate to suspend any part of the sentence.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Listen to the silence. It's a song of life

WHY are we so scared of silence? Why must we fill the air with noise or crowd every space with sound? It is as though we cannot cope with the gentle hum of nature, the pure vibrations of life.

In every shop we hear booming music - and similarly in bars and restaurants where patrons strain in vain to hear each other speak.

Even in those few remaining sanctuaries of silence, people block out the tranquillity with their earphones.

I believe it is this, our constant craving to be plugged in, that is the root cause of so much angst and distraction.

Human beings can never be at peace so long as they are detached from the world. They can never savour the solace of silence so long as they refuse to listen.

Listening to silence is not a paradox. In moments of deep calm, when the world is at play, you hear a symphony of precious sounds. In the silence, you hear things which soothe, heal and console.

You sit in the garden. It is mid-afternoon and the sun is warm. You hear nothing except the sound of real life.

A breeze creates a soft rustle as it gently moves through the trees. A wood pigeon sings from above, its deep and muffled tones serving as a natural sedative. The bees are busy around the roses, their buzzing a sure sign that summer is on the way.

Without silence, none of these beautiful sounds would be audible. Silence is the background noise to wonder. It is that in which we hear the melody of creation.

To drive away silence is to detach from the sonata of the soul. It is to forget that we are as much a part of this world as the birds and the bees. Only through the harmony of stillness can we discover where we truly belong.

If so many feel distressed and alienated, it is because they no longer feel at home in their natural environment. They are strangers to the 'starry heavens above' and the soil here below. They are exiles from themselves and from each other.

In a world of endless noise, it is hard to find a way back home. It is hard to find those places where peace still prevails. That is why we must create these for ourselves.

A sign that we are in desperate need of this peace which 'surpasses all understanding' is the current popularity of meditation.

Many of those who spend their days hooked up to iPhones are signed up to mindfulness and similar meditation programmes.

It seems that even the children of 'Cyberia' recognise our deep need for stillness.

Burnout, agitation and depression

are all symptoms of our longing to reconnect, of our desire to rediscover the centre.

That mindfulness and other meditation techniques have been scientifically proven to conquer countless modern ills is a testament to the healing power of silence.

Only yesterday, it was reported that a study in the Lancet medical journal found that mindfulness could be as effective as anti-depressants in preventing people relapsing into depression.

What is surprising is that so many people are surprised by this. All the great religious traditions have emphasised silence and 'watchfulness' as the key to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Christ Himself warns us not to 'babble' when we pray, but to retreat to our 'inner room' and pray in silence 'to your Father who is in secret'.

The soul needs silence, as does the mind and the body.

This is not a new discovery, but one that is as old as humanity itself. It is the way of contemplation, of true self-discovery along the path of pure peace.

Moreover, the beauty of it is that we do not have to retreat to cloisters or ashrams to experience the miracles of stillness. We do not have to pay vast sums for something we are all naturally capable of savouring.

All we have to do is unplug, sit still and listen attentively.

THIS is what religious people call the prayer of the heart. So much prayer involves petition and recitation. However, there is also pure prayer, where we simply sit and listen for that still small voice that calls from within.

It may seem incredible that something so simple could resolve all the tensions of modern life.

Yet, I have witnessed people profoundly transformed simply by surrendering to the silence. I have seen them healed of ills that medication could not counter.

It is a wonder to behold and yet it makes perfect sense. In the sound of silence, we hear the hymn of the heart. We are no longer divided against ourselves, but are united with the core of our being.

We sit in the garden, we close our eyes and find the peace from which all joy flows. We listen to the sound of life as it sings a tune so timeless and yet, to our ears, so unfamiliar. It is the chorus of creation, a song that heals, restores and renews.

In the silence, we have discovered peace, purity and perfection. We have found our way back beyond the noise to a place without stress or strain.

We were once lost but now we have been found smiling joyfully in the sun.

Sometimes, the best journeys in life can be taken without ever leaving home.

—mark.dooley@daily@mail.ie—

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