

Personal injury claims on the rise in our courts

THE number of personal injury claims filed to Irish courts rose by 15% last year.

According to a Courts Service report, some 21,898 personal injury suits were filed in 2016 with medical negligence accounting for 1,001 of them.

Chief Justice Susan Denham launched the 2016 report yesterday with Justice Minister Charlie Flanagan – and it was also revealed that more than €168.5million was paid out in settlements across the High Court, Circuit Court and District Court last year.

The report also detailed that the number of personal debt resolution cases coming before the courts rose by 125%. The

By Emma Jane Hade

number of people engaging with personal insolvency practitioners appears to have increased as there was a dramatic rise in applications made under the debt resolution mechanisms and the Personal Insolvency Act. Some 526 people were ruled bankrupt.

New possession cases have decreased by 111% over the course of two years and there was a 32% decrease in the number of new possession cases lodged year on year.

Some 1,135 orders for possession were recorded – 47 in the High Court, a 58% fall on 2015, and 1,088 in Circuit Court, a 42%

decrease on the previous year.

The Courts Service received almost 750,000 matters last year, and supported 24,588 sittings of the courts along with 976 staff members and 170 judges.

The number of trials heard in the Central Criminal Court has increased by 48% over two years, the Courts Service said.

It also noted there was a 3% decrease in applications for divorce and a 6% increase in applications to the District Court relating to domestic violence.

There were also 7,800 orders in relation to drink driving offences, an 8% increase on the previous year.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

It's summer, so stop buzzing around and bee in the moment

THE gentle breeze blows and you close your eyes. The sun is warm and the days are long. The world is still except for the sound of nature's symphony.

You have so much to do, so much that needs tending. There is the morning mess – don't we all have to deal with that? Yes, but this is summer so the mess can wait.

School's out and the children are squeezing joy from every second. Can't you hear them giggling as they perfect their mischief making? Is this a sound of summer too?

No doubt they will add to the mess, but time will take care of that. Time: a summer luxury that allows you to excel at doing nothing. But how can you do nothing?

Aren't we always doing something, even if it is only sitting here savouring the silence? Perhaps it means opting out of the fast lane for a while. Perhaps it simply means slowing down to catch a breath.

Nature neither speeds up nor slows down. You hear a buzz by your ear, a bee at work in the shrubs. No deadlines, targets or goals, just a gentle rhythm that gets the job done.

Bees don't take vacations. Pollination can't be put on hold. Then again, the bee can't elect not to pollinate, but we are free to choose.

The beauty of a bee's life is that there is no burnout. No stress for creatures who live entirely according to nature's laws. It is, however, the price we pay for being human.

Hence the need for holidays, for doing 'nothing', for pursuing peace. The mess can wait. Everything can wait.

You think of the emails stacking up. There was a time when, before a break, you would shut your computer and leave them behind. But now they follow you around, calling to you from your phone, tempting you to take a peek.

Let them wait. Stay rooted to the spot and savour the sun, the sounds of life beyond the screen. Take a trip in the slow lane and learn to be still.

You have so much to do, but not today. Now is the time for sitting, sipping and pondering those sights to which you are so often blind.

The summer flower blooms but only for you.

For the bee, the flower is not an object of curiosity or of love. It attracts only because it is useful. For us, it is a thing of beauty, a thing of magic and majesty.

Inhale and absorb its beauty. Imagine that? We can fill our bodies with beauty, fill them with the fruits of natural art.

In doing nothing, we begin to see, taste and smell the world. What happens to the senses when living in the fast lane? We gulp and swig and run, but we rarely take time to taste.

Summer is for tasting, for savouring the flavour of things. And yes, you can taste everything: the fresh white roll, the creamy coffee, the sea air, the crisp claret, the early morning sunrise.

Remember the old psalm: 'Taste and see that the Lord is good.'

Yes, we can taste with our eyes, taste the goodness, the beauty, the wonder of things. To gaze upon the summer sky is to absorb it through the eyes, to taste the heavens with the senses.

I should really tend the garden, but not now. The house needs to be cleaned, but what's another day? And what about the shopping, the laundry, the bills, the dirty windows?

THEY will all be there after you, as my grandmother never tired of saying. But summer doesn't last, and neither do the flowers or the bees or those lazy days in the sun.

The tastes and sounds of the season come and go, and, before you know it, you are back on the fast track.

So much to do, but not now, not today. Summer is offering up its secrets and, at last, we have time to taste them. The clink of the coffee cup, a wood pigeon cooing, the sweet nectar of your favourite rose, the rolling waves – all invite you to sit, listen, smile and love.

The gentle breeze blows and you open your eyes. You have been snoozing in the sun. Time has not stood still but you have.

Once again, you hear that familiar buzz by your ear. You say: 'Why can't we live like them?'

She raises her glass, smiles and responds: 'To bee or not to bee!'

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Galway 50 Plus Expo: Radisson Blu Hotel, Galway 5th & 6th September, 11am - 5pm Daily

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