

NEWS IN BRIEF

HOUSE TAX COURT DATE

A HEARING date has been set for the first ever prosecutions in the country for the non-declaration of the household charge.

At Westport District Court last week, Judge Mary Devins put the charges in for hearing on July 4 next, for the non-declaration of the household charge against Pether Anthony (Tony) Keegan of Belcare, Westport.

OUT-PATIENT NO SHOWS

ALMOST 8,000 patients of Roscommon and Portlucula Hospitals did NOT turn up to their out-patient appointments last year it has been revealed.

2,177 patients didn't turn up at Roscommon Hospital last year, representing 15% of all appointments. At Portlucula Hospital, 5,579 patients or 12% of the total number of appointments didn't show up.

PICTURE SUNDAY WORLD EXCLUSIVE



SHEEPISH: Our Geraldine with George Graham



KEEPING IN TRIM: Wexford sheep shearer George Graham let Geraldine Comiskey be his apprentice for the day

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IT COULD BE EWEE...

BY GERALDINE COMISKEY

THE *Sunday World* is always in touch with the changing seasons.

So when we heard that Spring was finally here, we sprang into action – and set off to shear some sheep.

Thanks to the long winter, the creatures are in serious need of a haircut – and, when you're a sheep, bald is beautiful as summer approaches.

But, while most people count sheep to fall asleep, I still have nightmares when I think of the last time I sheared one. I meant to give her the Sinead O'Connor look but she ended up looking like Jedward.

Still, with the All-Ireland Sheepshearing and Wool-Handling Championships coming up again, it was time for Ireland's worst shearer to give another unlucky ewe a baaad hair day.

Sponsors Clik (who provide worming remedies for sheep),

wanted to show what NOT to expect from the experts who will be displaying their skills at the competition in Millstreet, Co



Top Irish shearers take on the best in the world

Cork next month. So they arranged for champion sheepshearer George Graham to take me on as an apprentice for a day.

The Wexford man, who holds the Irish record for shearing 483 sheep in nine hours, will be competing against rivals from New Zealand, England, Scotland and Wales in a race against the clock.

Practice

More than 3,000 sheep will be sheared during the two-day event, which is expected to attract 15,000 spectators. Hosted by St John's GAA club and organised by the Irish Sheep-Shearing Association, it will also include a dog-show, funfair, arts-and-crafts display and food market.

When I joined George last week, he was getting in some practice on a flock of 100 ewes owned by Con Healy and his neighbour, wool-merchant Dan Buckley on Con's farm near Millstreet.

My first client was a small ewe and it took all my strength to hold the heavy, vibrating clippers in my right hand while hanging onto the sheep with my left – especially when she kicked! I was afraid to shave too close to her skin in case I cut her, but George told me to stretch her skin taught and keep a steady hand.

I passed her over to George for the tricky bit – I didn't fancy giving a sheep the equivalent of a Hollywood bikini wax!

Next we did it the old-fashioned way – with a hand-clippers. It looked like a gardener's pruning shears, only it was a lot sharper and harder to handle. I barely trimmed some fluff off the sheep before handing it over to George to finish the job.

Meanwhile the sheep were getting used to being naked! Without their winter woollies, they looked a bit...well, sheepish.

● The Clik All Ireland Sheepshearing and Wool-Handling Championships will take place in Green Glens, Millstreet, Co. Cork, on Saturday, May 25 and Sunday, May 26. For more info see www.sheepshearing2013.ie