

# CORK PROFILE

## Padraig Fitzgerald

Kinsale Peace Project

### When you were small, what did you want to be as a grown-up?

I've always loved listening to music, listening to the radio and 'Top of the Tops' when I was 10 or 12, so I would've loved to have been a DJ or maybe an astronaut! Andy Summers (guitarist for The Police) was living in Kinsale when I was younger and I actually got his autograph in the local Supervalu!

### Tell us about your career progression to your role today:

In 1986, I started my career as an insurance broker and then in 2003, I took over the family business - PJ Fitzgerald Insurances, Kinsale. With the Kinsale Peace Project, it's been a drawn out process. My wife and I were on honeymoon in Kenya around 20 years ago whilst there was an attempted overthrow of the president at the time. It was a very informative trip. More recently, I got involved with the promotion of Fair Trade goods in Kinsale and we actually won the best Fair Trade town in 2008 and got to meet President McAleese. We were rewarded with a trip a Malawi to go and meet

some of the growers of Fair Trade goods and following on from that we invited one of the coffee growers to come and speak in Kinsale. After that, things kept going and we began to broaden the subjects out towards politics and other issues into what it is today.

### What is the most enjoyable aspect of what you do?

Well in business, it's problem solving and providing first class service to my clients. With the Kinsale Peace Project, I enjoy bringing a voluntary and informative series of events to the people of Cork.

### Who's the best speaker you've had visit Kinsale?

In recent times, it would have to be the late Martin McGuinness who visited us in January 2016 before he became ill - a very engaging chap. Growing up with the Troubles in Ireland, I thought he was a very different man, but he was an absolutely perfect statesman. I found it interesting that he admitted what he'd done and he actually apologised on the day for all the casualties during the conflict caused by different groups.

### What motivates you?

My family and also the voluntary work being done in local communities. I also get motivated by bringing awareness of certain issues to the people of Kinsale. I had a doctor over from Gaza who lost three of his children when an Israeli tank shell hit their home and a lot of people came to the talk not because of the political issue, but due to the personal story.

### What advice would you give your 15 year old self?

Not to worry so much. I was always a worrier and being the eldest in a family of six, you're the experiment going out into the world! I was also born with six fingers, so in the teenage years between that and my acne caused me problems.

### If you weren't in the job you have, what would you be doing?

I'd love to be working with an aid agency, or something along those lines! Standing up for peoples' human rights.

### What is your greatest life or career achievement to-date?

Definitely my biggest life achievement is my marrying my wife Lisa and having my three kids. I learn something new from my kids every day, I find it absolutely fascinating - life lessons.

### Who has had the biggest influence on you in your life?

My wife Lisa, definitely. She's my best friend and helped me along through the years. She's always supported me in my work, being self-employed and going through the recession here was tough but she was there. She also helps with my human rights work, I couldn't ask for a better person or friend.

### What is the life dream now?

I'd love to travel the world. Because I've been so connected to Pales-

tine and Gaza through the Peace Talks, I'd love to visit there. Machu Picchu would be another one, the Great Wall of China too. But definitely the Gaza area would be the main one, without a shadow of a doubt.

### How do you switch off?

I love reading and watching films. I try to read as much as I can, but my youngest is eight and by the time the noisy soccer matches finish outside, it's usually about 10pm! He's a Man United fan as well but don't we all have our problems! I love historical biographies. Films I love include 'The Good, The Bad and the Ugly' and 'The Guns of Navarone' - all that kind of stuff. During my teens, I loved the film 'The Mission' and then later on 'Hotel Rwanda'. We actually brought Paul Rusesabagina to Kinsale for a speech not too long ago.

### What is your favourite Cork memory?

Seeing U2 at Cork City Hall in 1982 performing 'New Year's Day'. One or two years before the concert, my cousins in Dublin used to live on Cedarwood Road, where Bono grew up. So they told me that there was this new band and they showed me the album 'Boy' and told me that the singer lived down the road there! I remember it was my first big concert and Bono was jumping around the place preaching something, as Bono does; he hasn't changed much. I was only 20 feet away from the stage, it was very innocent and they were fantastic.

countryside and the sea. It's a good place to grow up for the kids as well, there's good access to the GAA, hockey, sailing, everything!

You can go out fishing as well, within five minutes you're on the sea. You don't have to travel miles to go for a nice walk on a Sunday.

### Do you have a favourite quote or motto?

In my job as an insurance broker I use 'honesty is the best policy' and when I'm outside of work, 'he who saves one life, saves the world entire world'.

### When are you at your happiest?

Solving problems at work or getting Peace Project visitors to my home town of Kinsale. Time spent with my family is also wonderful.

### Any regrets?

As I was born in the 1960s, without all of my fingers, (I have five fingers on one hand and



a thumb on the other), I did grow up self-conscious about the way I looked, especially as a teenager. Today as I see it, it's an ice breaker.

### What is your hidden talent?

Still trying to work that one out! But I like photography, I love taking pictures. I try to take photos that aren't staged, without filters. Mine are FF, filter free.

If you have a decent phone you can capture special moments now, whereas years ago you had to have a big camera

with you all the time.

### What might we be surprised to know about you?

That I have six fingers! I also still have all my LPs, 45s and copies of Smash Hits! in the attic.

I have to explain to my kids that LPs are long playing records, sure they don't have a clue!

Anything else you'd like to share with us? How long have you got! Be sure to visit [kinsalepeaceproject.com](http://kinsalepeaceproject.com) for all the updates on our upcoming speakers. Do pop down sometime!

### factfile

**Name:** Padraig Fitzgerald

**Age:** Over 21!

**Lives:** Kinsale

**Family:** My wife and Friend, Lisa, and my three kids, Isabelle, Lily and Benjamin

**Pets:** Two cats named Tom and Tigger





**Favourite thing about Cork:** The people and the humour

**Least favourite thing about Cork:** The lack of all year round venue for big shows and rock concerts

**One thing you'd change about Cork:** To build or supply a year-round venue for those big shows

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