

Joanne 'can't wait' to get robot home

Helper 'Robbie' unveiled after teenager's UN plea

By Eamon Donoghue

JOANNE O'Riordan expressed her joy yesterday after the unveiling of a robot she christened Robbie who she hopes will soon be able to help her in her daily life.

The prototype robot was developed after the Cork teenager, who was born without limbs, made a forthright plea to the United Nations to develop a robotic aid to help her with day-to-day challenges.

Robbie was unveiled to UN technology expert Dr Hamadoun I. Touré yesterday in Trinity College where the robot was made by a group of students.

In 2012 17-year-old Joanne challenged UN delegates to build her a robot capable of picking up objects. And now the feisty teenager's plea has paid off as the UN's International Telecommunication Union agreed to allocate €50,000 to fund the Trinity project.

Last night a clearly thrilled Joanne tweeted: 'Just seen Robbie the robot on @rtenews must

'I think the name's a film reference'

say class!!! Can't wait to get him home #asap fair play @tcddublin not forgetting @UN heros!!!'

Dr Touré, who is the ITU's secretary general, said he was so inspired by Joanne's positive spirit that he committed to the project.

The robot was built by a team of eight engineering students, led by assistant professor Kevin Kelly and designed by Conor McGinn.

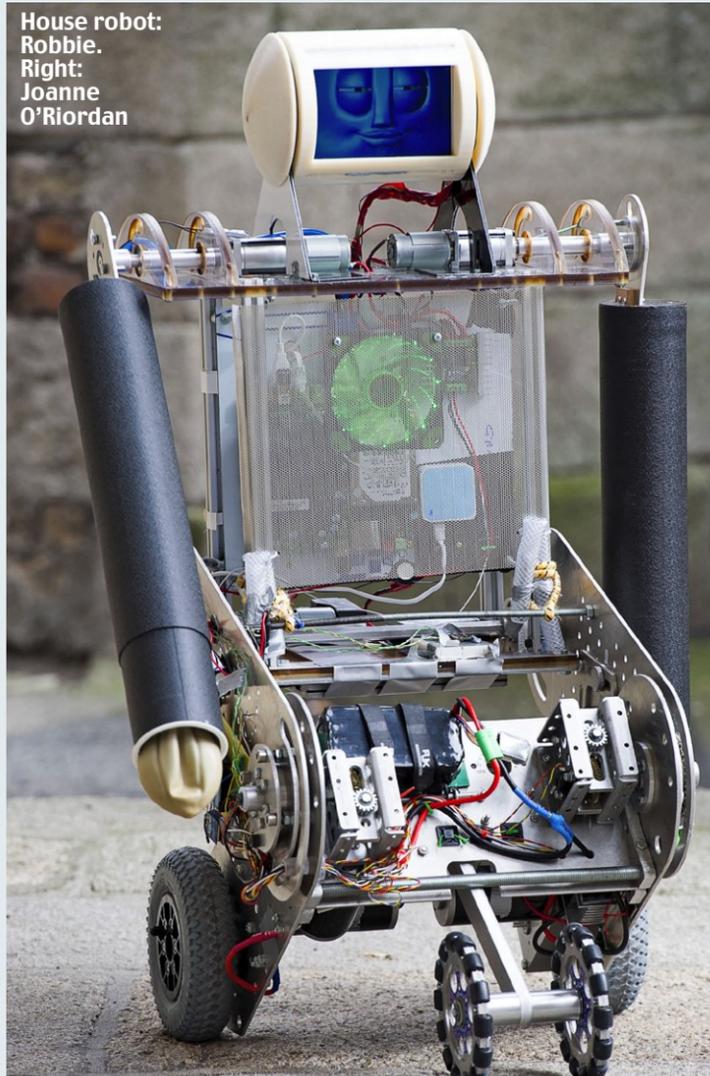
Professor Kelly said: 'Robbie was the name given to the robot by Joanne, and I think it came from a movie reference.

'Joanne has been really enthusiastic. We would have followed a very user-centric process throughout and our job as engineers was to translate all of the conversations we had into a set of needs.'

Mr McGinn demonstrated Robbie's functionality, showing Dr Touré and his wife the robot's ability to pick up a pen, as Joanne had requested two years ago.

He said of the project: 'We took it on and we're happy with what we've done but ultimately this is

House robot: Robbie. Right: Joanne O'Riordan



HERE'S WHAT HE'S MADE OF

ROBBIE is a humanoid robot built to operate in a house. He has a general leg shape, a knee, a hip and an upper body with an extendable arm. His height is 4ft and he weighs 40 kilograms.

Robbie is fitted with wheels and can bend at the knee and ankle to pick up objects. His extendable arm also contains a hand made up of a balloon containing coffee granules. This can inflate and deflate to grip various objects. It also has special grippers and a vacuum to keep a hold of objects.

Robbie is battery-powered and is controlled via an iPad control interface which includes voice control.

only a proof of concept and it shows the most basic functionality the robot will have.'

Robbie is the first robot of its kind to carry out the practical out-of-lab duties which lie ahead.

'Most of what you've seen here was built over a period of four months from the ground up,' Mr McGinn said. 'There was very little we bought off the shelves. Everything you see in front of you was created in Trinity from Ireland by people under the age of 25.'

'The Humanoids robotics field has been in existence for the past 20 or 30 years, so there are others like this, but I would argue we are the first people to try to tactically deploy a robot of this type.'

'Others may be motivated to build a robot to look good, but we've done it purely for practical reasons, and for psychological reasons so Joanne likes it.'

The unveiling of her new robot now coincides with her upcoming 18th birthday, and as the project

continues and improvements are made, it gives further hope to the Cork teenager. Dr Touré confirmed that the UN will remain firmly in support of the robot project.

'I was able to identify €50,000 to start this project and I'm going to challenge some of my colleagues, not only within the UN [but] also the private companies that are members of the union.'

'I'm sure many of these commissioners... will be interested.'

reporter@dailyMail.ie

Selfie drive raises €475k for charity

THE 'No Make Up Selfie' campaign has raised over €475,000 for the Irish Cancer Society, with 121,000 people posting photos of themselves without any makeup online.

The fundraising drive was not organised by the Irish Cancer Society but sprang up spontaneously on social media - with users posting photos, then nominating friends to do the same.

Participants were encouraged to donate €4 to the Irish Cancer Society.

The craze began in the UK where more than £2million was raised for Cancer Research UK.

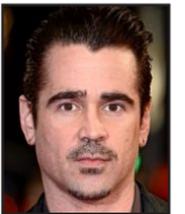
Mark Mellett of the Irish Cancer Society said last night that the charity was 'overwhelmed' by the level of donations.

Farrell's youth as a petty thief

HE misspent some of his adulthood and Colin Farrell has admitted to shoplifting in his youth.

The Dubliner, from Castleknock only stopped after being caught on CCTV. The Total Recall star, 37, said: 'I got caught stealing when I was about 12 or 13. It was Garbage Pail stickers. I had been stealing them... practically every day. Unfortunately, this newsagent in Dublin had installed a security camera. It was the first footage of "a day's shooting" that I ever saw of myself.'

'I was taken by the ear to the manager's office and he showed me myself stealing.'



Murder accused's court absence

A MAN charged with the murder of a 66-year-old woman and the attempted murder of her daughter in a gun attack was unable to attend court yesterday.

Grandmother Mary Dargan died after she was shot in the head at her home in Tallaght, Dublin, last Saturday. Her daughter, Karina Dargan, 34, suffered facial injuries.

Two days later, a neighbour, 58-year-old James Redmond, of Killinarden Estate, appeared before a court in Dublin charged with murder and attempted murder.

However, a sick warrant was furnished to the court yesterday and Judge Gráinne Malone adjourned the case in his absence until April 2.

Photographer sues Seán Kelly

A WOMAN is suing Fine Gael MEP Seán Kelly, alleging two of her photographs were used in his 2008 autobiography without her permission.

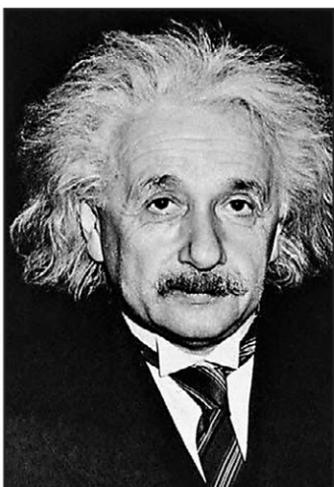
Photographer Michelle Cooper-Galvin claims the former GAA president, pictured, and publisher Gill & Macmillan infringed her rights.

The Kerry woman is seeking damages at Killarney District Court for alleged infringement of copyright. She also claims she was not paid for the pictures.

Judge Olann Kelleher yesterday adjourned the case until May.



Even Einstein got it wrong once



Physicist: Albert Einstein

EINSTEIN was wrong with a theory about the universe expanding - because he bungled his sums, Irish researchers have discovered.

Scientists from Waterford Institute of Technology have found that a lost equation written by the famous physicist incorrectly indicated that as the universe expanded, new matter showed up to fill the gaps - and all because he put a minus sign where he should have put a plus.

The equation was written before Einstein came up with the Theory of Relativity in 1916 and shows that even the great man made mistakes.

Researchers looking through Einstein's archives initially thought the theory was a draft of a paper published in 1931.

But upon closer inspection they

By Daniel Bates

realised it was something different and from much earlier on.

Cormac O'Raiheartaigh, a physicist at the Waterford Institute of Technology, said that he came across the theory whilst going through a vast archive of Einstein manuscripts held at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

He said: 'We were looking through these drafts, one by one, and one afternoon the more I looked at a particular draft, the more I got this queer feeling that this is not what everybody thinks it is.'

The newly discovered theory was never published by Einstein, and markings on the document indicate that the physicist came to realise the error in this calculation. But Mr O'Raiheartaigh pointed out that after realising his

error Einstein 'doesn't burn the manuscript, and he doesn't use it as a shopping list, which he often did'. He said: 'He keeps it. But it's true, he never, ever refers to the model again.'

The theory, developed in the days before scientists presented the Big Bang theory, sought to answer the big question of the day (formulated after astronomer Edwin Hubble observed that everything in the universe is moving outward): Why is it that as the universe expands, empty space isn't being created?

Einstein's unpublished theory put forward the solution that as the universe grew, new galaxies and stars would appear to make the universe continue look the same as it does now.

Modern-day, post Big Bang theory physicists now know this is wrong and the universe is growing as a result of the Big Bang

Church apologises over sexual abuse

THE Church has apologised after a priest was jailed yesterday over sexual abuse inflicted on a boy in Wicklow.

Fr Denis Nolan was convicted of sexual assault and ten counts of defilement on John Paul Hunter - who waived his right to anonymity - according to RTÉ News last night. The systematic abuse took place over a five-year period beginning in 2007.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin said he unreservedly apologised to Mr Hunter and his family. Fr Nolan, 61, was removed from his post in April 2012 on foot of a complaint not related to yesterday's proceedings, according to the Dublin Archdiocese.