

r down the drain

WATER METER READINGS THAT DON'T ALL ADD UP



Surprised:
Laura
Brady
with son
Rian and
daughter
Fiadh

LAURA BRADY

Wednesday's reading: **51838**
Thursday's reading: **52082**
Usage: **244 litres**

WITH three children under the age of four, Laura Brady believed her water usage would have been higher than average. Her eight-month-old baby Bronagh and toddlers Rian, three, and Fiadh, two, require lots of water to keep them clean - with a full load of washing going in to the machine every day.

But the actual figure came as a surprise to the mother from Ballina, Co. Mayo. 'I wouldn't have had the foggiest of what I am using, I wouldn't even have been able to give a ball-park figure,' she said.

Mrs Brady says the family are trying to cut down on their water consumption: 'We have become more conscious of not boiling the kettle too much.' However, she is currently toilet training her second eldest, Fiadh, something she says requires a lot of water.

LARRY BURTENSHAW

Tuesday's reading: **00074**
Wednesday's reading: **00074**
Usage: **0 litres**

DESPITE having a functioning water supply since charges came in, Larry Burtenshaw's meter shows he has not used a single drop of water according to his meter.

He said he will be calling Irish Water to complain that his meter isn't working. 'I will be asking them what the hell is going on,' he told the Mail. 'I have no idea how they are doing this. There's water coming through because I am using it but the meter says I have no water. I have no idea what's going on with it, not a clue.'

The pensioner who lives with his wife in Raheny, north Dublin, said of the Irish Water set-up: 'It seemed a mess from the very start.'

No reading:
Larry
Burtenshaw

However the utility company added: 'Irish Water advises anyone worried about how their meter is working to contact Irish Water on 1890 278 278 or email us through the Irish Water website www.water.ie.'
reporter@daily mail.ie



Mandy O'Rorke and family

THE O'RORKES

Wednesday's reading: **13141**
Thursday's reading: **13182**
Usage: **41 litres**

MANDY O'Rorke says that her family did not adjust their water consumption since the billing period began.

Ms O'Rorke, from Kilcock, Co. Kildare, is a mother of four and she says that she was at home all day during the 24-hour period, although her children and her husband were gone for long sections

of the day.

She and her husband had power showers lasting seven or more minutes, which combined should have expended 350 litres.

Speaking about the reading that showed only 41 litres used, she said: 'It couldn't be right, both of us had a shower of around seven minutes. The baby had a bath, two big loads of the washing machine went on, and we have a bigger than average washing machine. The dinner was cooked as usual, the dishwasher went on, I filled the sink two or three times... and so on.'

time. Only two of us are in the house and we're both retired but I work part time at the moment, and six hours isn't all that long to be gone out of the house.'

Meanwhile, the Irish Daily Mail asked a variety of households to

record their meter readings on Irish Water's first full day of operation last Wednesday.

The results varied dramatically, with one family of six consuming just 41 litres and one retired couple's daily consumption recording

absolutely no water usage for the 24-hour period, according to their water meter.

Last night Irish Water said it was not aware of any problems being reported with meters since the charges started on October 1.

supported Irish Water findings about water usage in Ireland.

'The ESRI concluded that for every extra person in the household, the range of additional water consumed by adults is higher than the range of additional water consumed by children.

'However to err on the side of caution, the 21,000 litres (figure) was calculated using all of the data to ensure it was not set too low.

'This means that there are no "assumptions" made in recommending an allowance of 21,000 litres - it is as a result of hard data and detailed mathematical

analysis. Getting this figure right is important for all customers - not just those with children because if the allowance is too high then households without children will end up paying more than they should.

'Getting the balance right and being fair to all customers is essential. Irish Water will continue to conduct research into water usage and will report this to the regulator every quarter.

'This is important to ensure that as water consumption patterns change, allowances are adjusted accordingly (it has been shown in

other countries that households with a meter change their behaviour).

'There has been much confusion and speculation around this issue.

'The important message is that the water for children will be free in line with the Government decision.

'This, along with the household allowance of 30,000 litres, and the additional €100 for those in receipt of the Household package from the Department of Social Protection, will make Irish Water bills among the most affordable in Europe.'

'CHILDREN USE JUST AS MUCH WATER AS ADULTS,' SAYS EXPERT

FIGURES from Europe's largest water company have cast doubt on Irish Water's belief that children will use only 21,000 litres a year.

This coincides with figures from England and Wales's water services regulation authority OFWAT, which found that the average child uses 38,000 litres a year.

A spokesman for the Berliner Wasserbetriebe, Europe's largest integrated water supply and disposal company, told the Mail that 'the average person uses 110 litres a day [40,150 litres a year] to do all the things that you do at home'.

And he said that, in his experience, there was no evidence that children use any less than this.

'It is possible that children use less, but I do not believe that there is a difference between children and adults. The greatest individual use of water is the toilet, and children use the toilet just as much as adults if not more so.'

'Children may also require more clothes to be washed, and even though an adult does on their behalf, we would regard that water as being consumed by the child.'

'They eat the same meals, and even if they have a few less potatoes or smaller portions, their share of that water use is comparable.'

While children are less likely to use showers, the spokesman pointed out that a child will tend to use more water in a bath because they displace less volume, so more water is required to fill a bath to the same level.

In Germany, there is no free child allowance so every person is charged at the same rate.

The BWB spokesman also said that he did not subscribe to Irish Water's theory that every household has a 'base consumption' level to which the

'That logic doesn't work for water'

other members of the household then add. This 'base consumption' model is the fundamental basis of Irish water's belief that the average Irish child will use 21,000 litres of water a year.

'That logic may work for gas and electricity, where heating a room for four people isn't very different from heating a room with one person in it,' he said. 'But I don't believe that logic works in the same way for water.'

'The majority of water use is personal - the toilet or the shower - and these are not things we do together. Of course there are some general basic household uses of water, like watering the plants, but that's far less so than for other utilities.'

The spokesman was speaking without having seen the household consumption data on which the Irish Water model is based. Irish Water says its data shows that a single-person household uses 66,000 litres a year, and that each additional person in the house - man or woman, adult or child - uses an extra 21,000 a year.

The BWB spokesman also revealed that a family of four in Berlin would pay around €880 for their annual water supply, whereas a family of two adults and two children here will ahead probably pay around €278 in 2015, and a family of four adults will pay around €480. However the discrepancy between the two could indicate that in years ahead, assuming Irish Water operates as efficiently as its German counterparts, bills here will have to rise to cover costs.

CHILD WATER CONSUMPTION, INSISTS IRISH WATER

size household was using. We did this twice to make sure we had it right.

'In the first survey (which happened in April) we asked how many people live in the house so we could calculate how much water different sized households were using. Following the Government announcement to give free water to children, we conducted a second survey where we also asked about the number of children living in the property.

'Irish Water gave all of this data to the highly respected ESRI for independent analysis. The ESRI