

Lifestyles

Louise Creagh spoke to 12 people who recently joined a controversial '10-day fast to health' and to dieticians who condemn it

Well on the way to starving

ON A balmy June evening recently 12 people got together to embark on a journey that they were told could change their lives.

"Remember you are taking a step outside normal life — that makes you an exceptional person. You are doing something which begins the process of your own self-realisation. Very few people do that."

So said Martin Forde, the organiser of the controversial 10-day fast run by the Tony Quinn organisation at their Eccles Street headquarters in Dublin, to the group who were indeed eager to change something, whether it be a burgeoning waistline, unhealthy eating habits, or a vague sense of lack of well-being.

If the 12 who were setting off down the road that they were told Moses and Jesus, and even St Patrick, travelled, had tuned into a recent Gay Byrne show they would have heard the fast criticised in no uncertain terms by a leading nutritionist who said it could damage your health and that it was "appalling" that such an exercise should even be advertised.

In the organisation's 'Blueprint For Living — Summer 1992' magazine Tony Quinn writes to you: "The FAST way to lose weight. Fasting classes for those who wished to do a 10-day fast under supervision were being offered at a cost of £45 per person. Readers were also urged to pass the article on to someone they knew was trying to lose weight."

At the beginning of June Martin Forde, a qualified osteopath and naturopath, President of the Irish Health Culture Association and the Irish Association of Holistic Medicine, supervised the third fast of its kind in Eccles Street.

Martin said that he had completed a four-year full-time course in fasting, nutrition and osteopathy. He had supervised many fasts, including having completed a 40-day fast himself. He claims that he is qualified both to advise and supervise on fasting in general.

"Fasting is a brilliant, effective, quick, morale-raising way of losing weight," Martin said. "As opposed to going on and off diets people should consider fasting once a year; it puts you in touch with yourself, gives you the energy, drive, mental and spiritual resources to get up and make a change in your life."

The class of June 3, which included 10 women and two men,

A road Jesus, Moses and even St Patrick chose to travel

ranging from housewives to teachers to a financial consultant, was told that members would notice weight loss immediately and that what was more, they could experience "remarkable" weight loss afterwards.

What fasting does, Martin explained, was burn fat and conserve protein. One to two pounds of fat were lost per day. Fasting left one feeling better, with more energy. The energy normally used to burn up food was used to cleanse the body. Fasting was better than other diets because of the "unique metabolic and hormonal balance" set up during fasting.

No crash diet could attain the same effect, he claimed. The weight did not go back on in the same way as in calorie controlled diets and the fast would result in the body having raised levels of growth hormones.

The energy levels would be raised and the capacity to hold protein was enhanced while the likelihood of holding fat was lessened.

"The ultimate reason why people embark on a fast is to become healthier," he added. "Some do it to realise their spiritual potential. There was a lot of fasting in early Christianity and the Yogis also recommend fasting."

Clinics throughout Europe offer fasting, while major research is being carried out in UCLA involving animals and humans. Prof Roy Walford of UCLA is a specialist on longevity and his work is being funded by the US Government, according to Martin, who says that it is believed in

Big drinkers of tea and coffee may go through 'cold turkey'

some circles that fasting retards the ageing process.

Members of the class were told that fasting leaves one in no doubt of what state of health the faster is in. Those who drink lots of tea or coffee would not feel very well as the residue of such drugs left the system, causing symptoms including headaches, neckaches, stomach pains and nausea: in other words "cold turkey".

The fasters could take Chamomile tea, peppermint oil in distilled water or a pinch of ginger in warm water to remedy this. However, if symptoms persisted the faster would be advised to come off the fast.

The faster had to drink two and a half litres of distilled water every day.

They could buy the water from the Tony Quinn centre. All were urged to partake in some form of exercise and to return to the centre for classes on four more occasions when they would be monitored, including the taking of their blood pressure, checking their pulse, urine and temperature; and do relaxation exercises.

The fasters perked up somewhat when they heard that the lifespan of animals was increased by regular fasting. Martin mentioned that starvation would be "easy spotted" when the body started to burn protein. The faster would "feel terrible."

Not everyone is a candidate for fasting, he said, adding: "We don't want people running off on fasts." Any fast lasting longer than two or three days should be supervised. In addition, applicants were screened for contra-indications including eating disorders like anorexia nervosa or bulimia; and conditions like asthma, heart defects and epilepsy.

Prolonged fasting is not the approach to take to resolve a weight problem: of that, Philomena Flood, Principal Clinical Nutritionist at St James's Hospital in Dublin, is adamant.

Furthermore, she stresses, it puts the body at risk of possible serious damage, including heart problems, goitre and hair loss. However, the complications might not be immediately apparent.

"It should never be recommended that people starve themselves," Philomena Flood added. "No medically qualified doctor should recommend this course; a weight problem can be resolved in other ways while protecting the patient's health."

One or two days without food is not necessarily damaging but excess fat is not a problem that can be resolved overnight, she pointed out.

It was a misnomer to say that this exercise was fasting as opposed to starvation. Once you prevent the body of the food it needs it — that is starvation," stated Ms Flood.

"People are dying in Africa from starvation. It is incredible that in the civilised western world this is being promoted."

"It is dangerous and if things go wrong the bits may have to be picked up by the health service later on," Ms Flood added.

Some level of protection was needed, she felt. People with eating disorders like anorexia nervosa could see the promotion of fasting as support for their perceived problems. "Such people are just looking for justification for depriving themselves of food."

A lot of metabolic changes take

The heart muscles are among those which could waste in the process

place in the body during fasting, Philomena Flood said. There are three stages involved: the first occurs between one meal and the next and is something we all experience. The second stage, called early starvation, occurs up to 24 hours after the last meal and the third stage, known as intermediate starvation, occurs between 24 hours after the last meal and 24 days. During this time there are very complex changes in the fuel supply in the body.

The brain relies on glucose in the blood and there is no way of storing glucose in the brain, Ms Flood pointed out. "Blood glucose is on call from the brain."

If the body is deprived of food, its fuel, for a prolonged period it has to break down body protein to maintain the blood-glucose level. In the intermediate stage of starvation



Two views

'It puts you in touch with yourself and gives you drive'

'There was a lot of fasting in early christianity and the yogis' recommend it'

— Martin Forde fast organiser

'Eating with people with eating disorders like anorexia nervosa could see the promotion of fasting as support for their perceived problems'

— Dietician Philomena Flood

the body utilises the protein from the muscles. At the outset, it is breaking further down the line but then abandoned the exercise. Two of the four were advised not to continue because of symptoms like migraine. The fifth person who failed to complete the fast did not turn up so there was no explanation forthcoming.

The candidates had an introductory class on the night they started the fast and returned four more times during the 10 days. Some of the seven I interviewed at the end of the fast said they felt well and were in good spirits after 10 days without food.

However, during a class half-way through the fast, a middle-aged

teacher, Maura (not her real name) complained of dizziness and weakness. She was menstruating at the time and was advised by Martin Forde to drink orange juice and red grape juice for iron.

On the Sunday after the fast she suffered a slight headache at the beginning of the fast. But she felt better than she normally felt during her period on the fast.

On the Sunday after she embarked on the programme she sipped a glass of distilled water and read the papers while her husband and daughter ate lamb.

Maura turned to alternate therapies after traditional treatment did not cure a particularly severe bout of bronchitis. She claims the condition cleared up after she went on a three-day fast.

Two people stopped the fast after

the problem of excess body weight should be resolved by correcting the balance between energy intake and output, she stresses. This is achieved by controlling food intake and taking exercise and achieving a healthier weight.

Other possible complications include hypotension, constipation, diarrhoea, headaches and hair loss.

Staring for 10 days could lead to the loss of electrolytes and potassium; an increase in the uric acid level in the blood which could precipitate an episode of gout; a high concentration of free fatty acids in the blood which could interfere with the electrical activity of the heart — leading to a risk of arrhythmia and possible heart attack. In addition, the function of the digestive tract can be affected because it is being deprived of nutrients, according to the nutritionist.

Starving for 10 days could lead to the loss of electrolytes and potassium; an increase in the uric acid level in the blood which could precipitate an episode of gout; a high concentration of free fatty acids in the blood which could interfere with the electrical activity of the heart — leading to a risk of arrhythmia and possible heart attack. In addition, the function of the digestive tract can be affected because it is being deprived of nutrients, according to the nutritionist.

Other possible complications include hypotension, constipation, diarrhoea, headaches and hair loss.

Staring for 10 days could lead to the loss of electrolytes and potassium; an increase in the uric acid level in the blood which could precipitate an episode of gout; a high concentration of free fatty acids in the blood which could interfere with the electrical activity of the heart — leading to a risk of arrhythmia and possible heart attack. In addition, the function of the digestive tract can be affected because it is being deprived of nutrients, according to the nutritionist.

Other possible complications include hypotension, constipation, diarrhoea, headaches and hair loss.

Staring for 10 days could lead to the loss of electrolytes and potassium; an increase in the uric acid level in the blood which could precipitate an episode of gout; a high concentration of free fatty acids in the blood which could interfere with the electrical activity of the heart — leading to a risk of arrhythmia and possible heart attack. In addition, the function of the digestive tract can be affected because it is being deprived of nutrients, according to the nutritionist.

Other possible complications include hypotension, constipation, diarrhoea, headaches and hair loss.

She lost 15 lbs at the end of her recent 10 days without food and said she felt "grand". She feels that fasting cleanses the body of toxins like tea and coffee.

Maura's friend, a financial consultant with a major insurance company, had to abandon the fast after developing migraine on the second day.

The only man to finish the fast lost the most weight — 20 lbs. John, a Bord Telecom employee, embarked on the fast because he felt he had got into "bad habits" like eating chips and watching TV after working late. He felt he had become a bit of a slob and knew of a few other people who had done this.

On the Sunday after the fast began he felt bad and suffered from headaches but he experienced no further ill-effects. He never felt that he would not make it to the end and he felt very well after the 10-day experience, he said.

Another Dublin woman, who lost over 14 lbs, wanted to lose two stone at the beginning of the fast. She had tried numerous diets over the years and decided to try the fast after hearing it criticised by Philomena Flood on the Gay Byrne Show.

"When I heard that I thought the opposite," she said.

The Dublin woman was into the spiritual end of things. "The Indians went up the mountains and fasted when they wanted to think," she mused. "Remember Gandhi and all that... some very high spiritual people were into fasting, weren't they?" The fast was broken by eating pears and those who completed it were told to eat a lot of sweet pears for the first 24 hours after the fast.

Another Dublin woman, who lost over 14 lbs, wanted to lose two stone at the beginning of the fast. She had tried numerous diets over the years and decided to try the fast after hearing it criticised by Philomena Flood on the Gay Byrne Show.

"When I heard that I thought the opposite," she said.

The Dublin woman was into the spiritual end of things. "The Indians went up the mountains and fasted when they wanted to think," she mused. "Remember Gandhi and all that... some very high spiritual people were into fasting, weren't they?" The fast was broken by eating pears and those who completed it were told to eat a lot of sweet pears for the first 24 hours after the fast.

Another Dublin woman, who lost over 14 lbs, wanted to lose two stone at the beginning of the fast. She had tried numerous diets over the years and decided to try the fast after hearing it criticised by Philomena Flood on the Gay Byrne Show.

"When I heard that I thought the opposite," she said.

The Dublin woman was into the spiritual end of things. "The Indians went up the mountains and fasted when they wanted to think," she mused. "Remember Gandhi and all that... some very high spiritual people were into fasting, weren't they?" The fast was broken by eating pears and those who completed it were told to eat a lot of sweet pears for the first 24 hours after the fast.

The woman Nick Faldo calls 'My Fairway Lady'

JANE KELLY looks at the caddy who can earn more money carrying Faldo's golf clubs than using them

ON THE 18th green the spectators at Muirfield were silent and still as a curling stone. They had to be because the caddy had told them in ringing tones to shut up and stand still. The bag carrier had two piercing blue eyes on Nick Faldo, billing him previous caddy to win.

For the first time since Henry Cotton completed his hat-trick in 1948, a Briton stood on the verge of winning a third Open golf championship. The ball went into the hole, tears flowed, wife and crowd were ecstatic. Faldo had won — and so had his caddy.

that; everyone knows that golfers and their carriers have a very close, interdependent relationship. But in this case the golfer is — the most exciting and hardworking in the business, and his caddy is a tubby little Swedish girl with only limited experience.

Yet this year alone, 25-year-old Fanny Sussesson, from Karlshamn in Sweden, has picked up £20,000 in endorsements — she carries as many sponsorship labels as Faldo — plus ten per cent of Faldo's winnings: £9,500 for the Open alone. Ironically, she would earn far less as the leading player on the women's golf circuit.

It is less than three years since Faldo woned her away from Ryder Cup star Howard Clark, sacking his previous caddy Andy Procter. "I couldn't believe it," Fanny says. "I was shocked, very shocked. I thought about it for a minute, even less, then I said 'Yes'." She went to his second Open victory the next year, 1990 — he had first won the championship in 1987.



A rare smile from the winning team: 'Fanny knows I can be difficult and controls my yards,' says Faldo

She describes her job matter-of-factly: "I'm up on time, always — and give the right yardage." As a caddy she has to measure the course by walking round it, assessing the distances from various vantage points so that when the player reaches the ball, she can say how

on the relationship between them, will say so, or not.

It is a power structure. They both need to win, and they need great trust and respect for each other — a bit like a good marriage.

Faldo describes it thus: "We have a great understanding. She knows me and my moods and can control them. I know I can be difficult at times, when things aren't going right, but Fanny has such a positive attitude."

Fanny, just 5ft. 4ins., is also famous for the meticulous way she packs the 40lb. bag. She knows where everything is inside it: apart from the armory of clubs, it contains waterproof clothing, gloves, sandwiches, drinks, plasters and bottle openers.

Yet, strangely, in private life she is completely untidy. "Wherever I am in the world my rooms are always an absolute tip," she says. "I never know where my hairbrush is, although I find it eventually." Faldo is designing a lighter bag for

her, as it is beginning to damage her shoulder.

In its own way, Fanny working for Faldo is the equivalent of a woman becoming grand master of a masonic lodge. It is not for nothing that she would be difficult at times, when things aren't going right, but Fanny has such a positive attitude."

The world of caddies is as male and appealing as Old Spice and sweaty socks. According to one golf expert, they are often on the run from the taxman, rarely give addresses and, if you ask their names, will say: "Call me Mick" or "Laughing Boy".

They are known to drink and sleep rough. Many of them are Scots or Irish, deeply conservative. They mock women's golf and believe, as Tony Jacklin used to say, that a woman's place is in the home.

How galling it must be for them to know that Fanny is making more money than they, by carrying the bag of

the world's top golfer. But the real irony is that she also makes more money working for Faldo than she would be playing — even though she has a handicap of just five.

On the Women's Professional European Golf Tour last year, the biggest-earning player, the professional scene: the other being Sandy Lyle's Dutch wife Jolande, a former masseuse who, at 6ft., is well able to shunt the bag about.

Because she is in the camera's eye almost as much as Faldo himself, Fanny earns by far the biggest slice of her money from sponsorship. Her endorsements include wearing a white visor for the Bridgestone company (tyres and golf balls) and, in America wearing an insect repellent.

So how has this little Swedish girl succeeded in this masculine world? Fanny says, somewhat coyly: "No, it's not that easy. I've had nothing but help. A man showed me how to measure the course — but when I started six years ago I was

always the last to be given a bag."

"Now she's had the last bag in the world. If she had caddies would kill for it. They gossip fiercely about Fanny, her abilities and her money."

And why would a woman want to do it? Fanny walks round courses in different parts of the world, from 7 a.m. until dusk, with only one afternoon off a week during tournaments, and she pays for her own food and accommodation. And although she is always surrounded by men, there is no one special in her life.

"It was a chance to be involved with golf, which is my first love. This was a chance to see the world." She once worked as a chambermaid to pay for her international games, but has now given up playing more than one tournament a year, to meet the needs of the triple Open champion.