

## Stay-at-home mothers with a creative urge are the latest blogging sensation, says Hazel Gaynor

**M**UMS are extremely busy. They multi-task, burning the candle at both ends and in the middle. As if they weren't busy enough, mums have added one more thing to their daily schedule — blogging.

Mums have long interacted on parenting websites, such as [www.eu-mom.ie](http://www.eu-mom.ie), [www.rollercoaster.ie](http://www.rollercoaster.ie) and [www.mumsnet.com](http://www.mumsnet.com), using online forums to talk about motherhood. They have their own 'mum-speak', which requires translation if you're out of the loop.

Mummy blogs differ from the usual, quick-fire forum banter in the quality and detail of the writing. Far from being simple diary entries, the blogs are written as columns, with new content added three to four times a week. "They provide story lines that supersede soap operas, comment and opinion that surpass most newspapers and magazines, and comic writing that wouldn't be out of place on Friends or Black Books," says Tasha Goddard, who blogs at WAHM-BAM.

The rise of the mummy blogger may be a consequence of the shift in women's roles. Mothers are relinquishing their once-coveted and hard-fought-for careers, bravely stepping off their corporate ladders to find a better balance for themselves and their family. Others have had little choice, finding themselves out of work.

Don't be mistaken. These modern-day housewives, or, as they prefer to be called, 'stay at home mums' (SAHMs) and 'work at home mums' (WAHMs), are a far cry from the apron-wearing, Fairy Liquid ladies of ages past. Not content to resign themselves to domestic drudgery, they are busily writing about their experiences.

There is such a proliferation of mummy bloggers (and the dads are catching up fast), that it feels like you're missing out if you don't join in. For this generation of mothers, logging in is the new going out.

Some have landed lucrative book deals from their online ramblings, like Mum in the North author, Judith O'Reilly. In early 2007, just eight weeks into blogging about her family's move from London to the north of England, she was offered a £70,000 publishing deal. Similarly, Catherine Sanderson's blog, charting "a Brit's-eye view of life in Paris", resulted in her book, *Petit Anglaise*. Many bloggers are being courted



# DOTCOM MOMS



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**MUM'S THE WORD:** Alana Kirk-Gillham with her children, Poppy, aged 2½, and Daisy, 4½ (main pic), and, above left, Hazel Gaynor in her home office in Kilkullen, Co Kildare. Above right, author Sarah Traynor who writes the *Freelance Mam* blog.

Pictures: Maura Hickey and Michael O'Rourke.

by PR executives who have identified an avenue to promote their products. "Blogs are an increasingly important media segment for PR companies to understand," says journalist, Sally Whittle, who blogs at *Who's The Mummy?* and produces the monthly *Tots 100* Index of the top 100 British parent bloggers. Getting listed here is a blogging milestone and may lead the PR execs to your virtual door.

Mummy blogging has been big business in the US for a few years, with mothers writing in their thousands. In the UK, the popularity of blogging among mums was noticed by Susanna Scott, who blogs at *A Modern Mother*, and who established the British Mummy Bloggers social network-

ing group in 2008. This has 700 members, with more signing up every day. Scott attributes blogging's popularity to the fact that "you can have the support of a coffee morning whenever you need it. Even if that is a few minutes between making dinner or after the little ones are asleep. It's addictive, too."

In Ireland, mummy blogging is new. Nevertheless, a handful of mummies are blazing the trail. There's the excellent *Hot Cross Mum* (OK, I'm biased, this is my blog), Alana Kirk-Gillham's wonderful *Mummy Mania*, *Yummy Mammy*, *Manic Mammy*, *Irish Mammy On The Run* and published author, Sarah Traynor's *Freelance Mam*.

So why do they do it? Is it the lure of that lucrative book deal? Is it a new form of literary therapy? Is it escapism? It is a little of all these things. Blogging is a community. It replaces the office banter and is a way to share, laugh, cry and nod in agreement. A blogging etiquette has emerged: bloggers leave each other supportive comments, promote each other's blogs and give each other virtual 'awards'. You'd be hard pressed to find this performance feedback in most offices.

Mums who are no longer part of a large office network have found it easier to make friends through their blog than at the school gates. "Mummy (and daddy) bloggers are such friendly, ac-

cepting, interesting and helpful people," says Sandy Calico, who blogs at *Baby Baby*.

Many started blogging to provide distant family members with a record of their children's lives; some use it to create a permanent record of their child's development; while others blog as part of a wider writing career. As is often the case with social media trends, blogging has been around for a while, but is only now being taken seriously. The community is an eclectic mixture of 'new kids on the block' and experienced 'old timers'.

Ali Hudson, blogger at 'Domestically', says, "I am still blogging some three and a half years later — it has brought me many good

things. A part-time job, some excellent friends and an irreplaceable record of family life."

Interestingly, a recent article in a Sunday newspaper highlighting mummy blogging sparked significant comment and debate within the community; yet another indication of the determination of these individuals to have their voices heard and declare their own perspective on this growing phenomenon.

Whatever their individual reasons for getting involved, mummy bloggers are undeniably on the ascent. For these cyber-mummies, it would certainly seem to be a case of 'to infinity and beyond'.

Hazel Gaynor is online at [hotcrossmum.blogspot.com](http://hotcrossmum.blogspot.com).

# I admit it, I am a Twilight addict

**I**HAVE a guilty pleasure — and it's not those X Factor twins, although it does involve someone called Edward. I have to hide my secret to avoid social stigma, like many others who indulge in this activity, and if we discover another person infected, we pounce on each other like creatures starved of an outlet, and try to ascertain how deeply we have been 'sucked into' our other world.

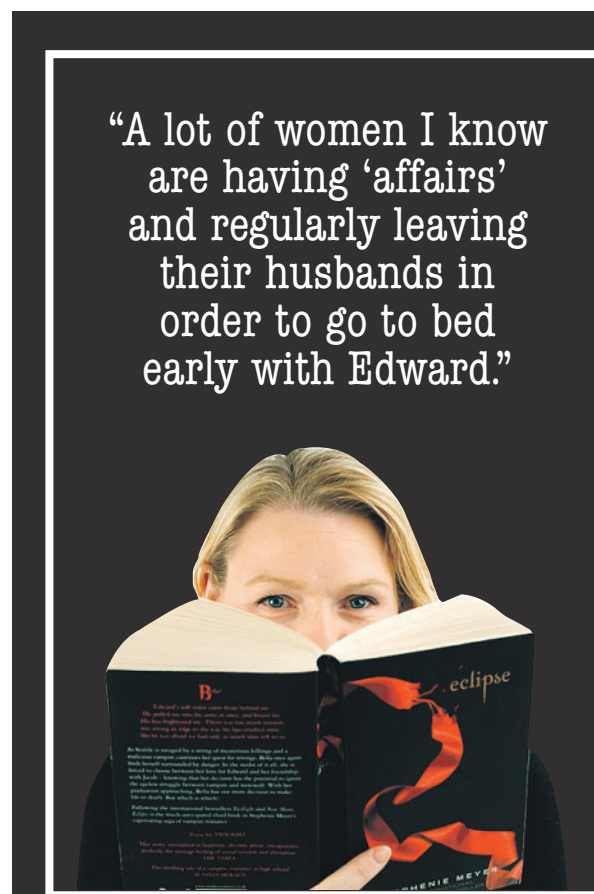
The other world is the *Twilight* series. *Twilight* is a publishing phenomenon, and, like the *Harry Potter* series, it gets young people reading something other than their Facebook page. It has racked up sales of 70m copies in 37 languages, and it broke box-office records when the first in the four-part series made it to the silver screen last year. At least three of the books have been in the top 10 Irish bestsellers for more than a year. The books have won legions of female fans of all ages. People keep their addiction to themselves because the books are aimed at the teen market, are a love story, and yet another series about vampires. The vampire stuff is incidental. The books are not popular because we all love vampires, they are popular because of how beautifully they are written, and, of course, the central characters. Namely, one Edward Cullen.

Edward Cullen is the Mr D'Arcy for a new generation. He is a bad boy trying to be good. He wrestles with his conscience and struggles with the notion of his soul being lost to damnation. He is dangerous, yet incredibly gentle. He is a vampire who resists the taste of human blood, and, instead, goes for the 'vegetarian' option, ie animals. He is a monster who plays Debussy. His

My secret addiction is the cult vampire series. But, thankfully, I am not alone in my guilty pleasure, says **Colette Keane**

devastating charm and chiselled good looks means he can have any girl he wants, but he falls for the girl who doesn't fit in, Bella, the clumsy girl, leaving us all with some hope that those of us not part of the perfect crowd can some day land That Guy. He even wants to wait to have sex until he is married, to keep her soul intact. Even if she does tempt him, repeatedly.

Admittedly, there is a touch of a stalker about him, as he breaks into Bella's house in the dead of night and watches over her while she sleeps, which would surely land him in a jail cell, but we can forgive him his over-zealous protection of her. Edward lives with a



Colette Keane, above, is a *Twilight* addict. Kristin Stewart as Bella, right, and Robert Pattinson as Edward, in the movie version of the cult series.

pseudo mum-and-dad figure, and two brothers and sisters. All are vampires who have paired up, and pose as brothers and sisters or husbands and wives, as they remain forever young. He is the only one of his group who is alone. He has searched for his one true love for

almost 100 years, and when he finds her he does not want to give into his love, for fear of ripping her from her soul as well. At the heart of the *Twilight* series is this love story. It is a love story that sees Bella and Edward struggle with many obstacles: blood-thirsty

vampires determined to kill Bella; a group of shape-shifting Native Americans who turn into giant wolves to protect their village when vampires are near; and a whole royal court of vampires who descend on Edward and Bella's life in a bid to separate the

two forever. Again, you can see why a married mother of two is reluctant to admit to loving the series.

Then, there's the 'will she, won't she' fall for her best friend, who happens to moonlight as a giant wolf. Forgive the pun. He is the good guy, a protector of Bella when Edward goes missing. Will she go for the warm-blooded good guy, or the stone-cold bloodless one who has searched many lifetimes to find her? Oh, I'm all-a-quiver again just thinking about it. It all sounds so corny when it's laid out like that, and I know some of you are rolling your eyes; but others of my kind are devouring every sentence, hoping to recapture some of the books' allure.

The opening paragraph is enough to hook you. Before you know it, you are four chapters in, eight, 12, have to turn the next page, can't put it down. Must get the next book, and the next and the next. You become a *Twilight* junkie.

After I had hungrily devoured the books for the first time, I realised I still had not had enough of the Cullens and had to reread the entire series. And I am not alone. I know one woman who turned into a bookpusher: delivering packages first thing in the morning to similarly addicted women, and then sourcing more copies to try and meet the growing demand.

A lot of women I know are having 'affairs' and regularly leaving their husbands in order to go to bed early with Edward.

With the movie of the second book, *New Moon*, opening on Friday, perhaps it is just the excuse I need to delve back into the world of Bella and Edward.

Ok, deep breath. I can do it. I can out myself. My name is Colette and I am a *Twilight* fan.

The *Twilight* Saga: *New Moon* opens in cinemas nationwide on Friday.

