

ICPO NEWS

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CALL TO IMPLEMENT FLOOD REPORT

number of practical recommendations which, if implemented, would go a long way towards addressing these concerns.

In his wide ranging St Patrick's Day message, Bishop Seamus Hegarty, chair of the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants, called on the Government to renew its commitment to prisoners abroad and their families by implementing, in full, the recommendations in the Report on Irish Prisoners Abroad (Flood Report) and doing all it can to alleviate the anxiety and hardship experienced by this most vulnerable group of emigrants and their families. The Flood Report, undertaken as a result of a promise in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Ireland 2000) to undertake research to identify the number of Irish prisoners abroad and their needs for services in prison was launched in August 2007. The Report, the first of its kind commissioned by the Government, is a timely reminder of the problems faced by Irish prisoners abroad and their families. As well as containing important statistical information, it provides a disturbing snapshot of the conditions, problems and issues faced by prisoners and their families. It also contains a

Bishop Hegarty's St Patrick's Day message received wide media coverage; his appeal in relation to the Flood Report was supported by Senator Mary White who raised this issue in the Senate on two occasions. In addition, a number of families of Irish people in prison abroad wrote to the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Michael Martin TD, calling on him to implement the recommendations in the report. A response was received from the Minister's office on May 19th. This letter endorsed the Reports forward-looking approach and very helpful template for future Government action in this area. Further, it stated ---

" While this Department already provides a number of the services recommended in the Report, the Minister has asked that officials examine how others might best be progressed. I am pleased to report that we are currently finalising the contract in respect to the provision of a Prisoner Case Management System - one of the key recommendations contained in the Report. The system will

include a register with detailed information for each prisoner such as sentence, health status, and last visit by a consular official. Once operational, this comprehensive database will enable the Department to assess the most effective way to implement the remaining recommendations".

The above statement indicates the Minister's commitment to implementing the recommendations in the Report. The Dept. of Foreign Affairs provides significant funds to ICPO which we are very grateful. These funds have been of great assistance in helping to alleviate some of the difficulties experienced by prisoners overseas and their families. We are optimistic that the recommendations of the report will be implemented without undue delay.

ICPO BIDS FAREWELL TO FR. GERRY



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The ICPO

It is estimated that at any one time, there are up to 1000 Irish people in prison overseas. The ICPO has contact with Irish people in prisons in more than twenty countries, the majority of whom are in the UK followed by the US, Australia and a range of countries in Europe, South and Central America, the Far East and Africa.

In 1985 the bishops saw that the problems of emigrants who get into trouble with the law required specialised attention. They decided to set up, as a sub-section of their Emigrants' Commission, the Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO).

The ICPO works for all Irish prisoners wherever they are: it makes no distinction in terms of religious faith, the nature of the prison conviction, or of a prisoner's status.

The objectives of the ICPO are to:

- Identify and respond to the needs of Irish prisoners abroad, and their families.
- Research and provide relevant information to prisoners on issues such as deportation, repatriation and transfer.
- Focus public attention on issues affecting Irish prisoners (ill-treatment, racist abuse, etc)
- Engage in practical work in aid of justice and human rights for Irish migrants, refugees and prisoners at an international level.

STAFF

Maynooth

Gráinne Prior, Catherine Jackson, Sr. Anne Sheehy

London

Fr Gerry McFlynn, Gabriel Payne, Liz Power & Breda Power

Volunteers

Maynooth: Sr Agnes Hunt, Eileen Boyle, Joan O'Cléirigh.

London: Sr Maureen McNally, Sr Cecelia Snape, Rev Stephen McKenna.

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How we may be contacted:

ICPO, Columba Centre

Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland

Tel: 01-505-3156 Fax: 01-601-6401

Email: icpo@iecon.ie

ICPO, 50-52 Camden Square

London NW1 9XB

Tel: 0207-482-4148 Fax: 0207-482-4815

Email: icpolondon@hotmail.com

In this issue.....

Tributes to Fr Gerry Mc Flynn, who headed up the ICPO office in London for 14 years, have been pouring in since word of his departure became known. A number are included in this edition of ICPO NEWS. His considerable work with and on behalf of Irish prisoners in the UK and their families was very much appreciated. He will be greatly missed. We look forward to his continued support when he joins the chaplaincy team at HMP Wormwood Scrubs. Another departure from IECE is that of Fr Alan Hilliard, who served as director for four years. His contribution to the leadership and management of the Irish Chaplaincy (IECE) of which ICPO is a part, has been widely acknowledged and praised. For both Fr. Gerry and Fr. Alan part of their ongoing legacy is in the consolidation and enhanced level of service of the chaplaincy in the UK, the US and other parts of the world. We take this opportunity to welcome the new director of the Chaplaincy in the UK, Philomena Cullen and to wish her success.

Our cover article gives an update on the **Report on Irish Prisoners Abroad**. We are pleased that there has been some progress and are thankful to all who have supported the recommendations in the Report. We will continue to monitor its implementation and keep our readers informed. Prisoners Abroad celebrate 30 years of service to British prisoners abroad and their families this year. They have won numerous awards for their outstanding

work. ICPO send them warmest congratulations.

"Storybook Dads" sounds like one of the positive news stories of prison life in the UK. Feedback we have received from a number of Irish families with young children who have used the scheme has been excellent. For UK readers and their families, perhaps this is something worth giving a try. Staying with the UK, given the problems that many members of the Travelling Community experience in UK prisons, Yvonne McNamara's article highlighting the lack of recognition of travellers and their culture and the need for roll out of appropriate services is very timely. ICPO is often asked for clarification about the Early Release Scheme, so the information in Breda Power's article will be helpful for those coming to the end of their sentences. Moving on to the US, Nigel C's further update charting his experience of starting a new life in this country following his deportation from the States makes compelling reading. A number of other articles give a good insight into prison life/the legal system both in the States and France

As always we are thankful to all of our regular contributors. Thanks also to those who sent in articles or wrote into the Poetry Corner or the Postbag. Finally, we have included some figures from our annual report just published which give a snapshot of the numbers of people in prison overseas at the end of April 2008 who are in contact with ICPO. A proportion of prisoner's families are also in contact.

Gráinne Prior

Current Caseload 30 th April 2008		
Total No. of Prisoners	426	Male: 414 Female: 12
United Kingdom	357	Rest of World 69

1 st May 2007 to 30 th April 2008		
New Cases	134	United Kingdom: 105 Rest of World: 29
Cases closed	158	United Kingdom: 133 Rest of World: 26
Prisoners Moved	95	United Kingdom: 82 Rest of World: 13

Fr. Gerry leaves ICPO

The response of the Irish Church to the needs of our emigrants is beginning to be researched and written about. One of the chapters in that history which has not yet received the attention or the accolades it deserves is the story of the work of the Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas. Its combination of practical help and vigorous campaigning for justice under the leadership of Nuala Kelly and a very able board was admirable.

Because "overseas" for the vast majority of prisoners meant the UK, then the importance of the London office cannot, in the general scheme of things, be underestimated. It was vital that the person heading up that office have dedication and ability. Fr. Gerry McFlynn fitted the bill. His pastoral role was, to say the least of it, difficult. His parishioners were scattered over the network of prisons throughout England and Wales.

I remember being amazed on seeing for the first time the map of the prisons - how many there were, how far flung they were. Yet Gerry got to most of them on

a regular basis. I once sat on a homeward plane to Ireland, beside a TD who had been to see an Irish prisoner in a high security jail. He was grey faced with fatigue, brought on by the sheer cussedness of the journey, and I suspect by the emotional fatigue of a tough prison visit. Prisons are not nice places, even when you are only visiting.

Yet Gerry McFlynn never flinched from that endless round of visits. He would come away too with more work - a whole string of requests from lonely men and women with little access to those they loved. It wasn't as if he had huge staff back in London to deliver on the prisoners needs. For many years there was just Gerry and one secretary, Carmel Murphy.

As if that workload was not enough his sense of justice, his ability to see patterns behind what looked like isolated incidents pushed him into a campaigning role on such issues as the high incidence of deaths of Irish prisoners in prison. That too brought more and more work and his media savvy and his



conviction made him a telling voice for justice.

Something else which Gerry used well was the unique position he held in the prison system. He had access to prisons but did not carry that symbolic bunch of keys which would have stifled his style by his being an employee of the Home Office. He commanded the respect of governors and of staff. More importantly, he earned not only the respect but the gratitude and even the love of prisoners.

Wormwood Scrubs, which he knows so well from countless visits, is going to have a great chaplain.

Fr. Paul Byrne
Board Member IECE.

Early Removal Scheme (ERS)

ICPO have been corresponding with Parole and Public Protection Policy Section of NOMS on the issue of the Early Removal Scheme (ERS), and have been informed that although, Border & Immigration (BIA) are now treating those EEA nationals who are not deportable but want early removal as being liable to administrative removal under the EEA Regulation, at present this does not include Irish Nationals, due to the changes in the way that Irish Nationals are dealt with in relation to deportation.

Irish citizens will only be considered for deportation where a court has

recommended deportation in sentencing or where the Secretary of State concludes, due to the exceptional circumstances of the case, the public interest requires deportation. (Home Secretary, 19 February 2007)

ICPO was, however, informed that 'a gap' has been recognised in relation to Irish Nationals who have little or no ties with the UK and who want to resettle in Ireland upon release; who would not have objected to deportation/ERS prior to the changes. As a result a Bill has been drawn up with proposals for Irish Nationals who are not

deportable, with strong ties in the Republic of Ireland, to be removed early to resettle in their country of origin. It is hopeful that the Bill will be passed and implemented at the earliest convenience. When NOMS were pushed for a time limit on the Bill, ICPO were informed that the earliest it could be implemented would be the summer of 2008 with a more realistic time period of early 2009.

ICPO recognise that this may not be helpful to those whose sentences are likely to expire before a Bill gets passed in Parliament (assuming that it does get passed). However, ICPO will endeavour to advocate on behalf of all Irish Nationals wishing to pursue Early Removal and will continue to keep you informed.

Breda Power

Update from London ICPO Office

The prison situation in England and Wales continues to cause concern. Scarcely a week passes now without it making the news for one reason or another. On 27th April the prison population reached 82,319 and the **Prison Officers Association** warned that some sections of the jails had become "no-go areas". The government had been hoping the prison population would have fallen over the Easter school holidays, when fewer courts were sitting. Instead, Michael Spurr, head of the **National Offender Management Service (NOMS)**, part of the new Ministry of Justice, has been forced to declare a clear operational emergency and instruct two prisons, Cardiff and Bullingdon in Oxfordshire, to accept more inmates even though they are full.

The week before, the assistant general secretary of the prison officers' association, Glyn Travis, caused something of a stir when he stated that "prison is no longer a deterrent – it is merely an occupational hazard". His comments came just before the launch of a summer series on prison life entitled "**Banged Up**" commissioned by Channel Five. The theme of the series is to take young men on the cusp of a life of crime and subject them to the full rigour of the criminal justice system in all its forms. Former Home Secretary, David Blunkett, heads the "parole board" of a "prison" – a former jail in Scarborough – where the young inmates find themselves alongside old lags who give them an impression of what life is really like behind bars. Speaking about the project, David Blunkett said "The prime task of any criminal justice system is to prevent people from committing a crime in the first place, and them to avoid reoffending. Getting across a clear message, forewarning young people what prison is like, and encouraging them to take an

alternative path in life has to make sense".

A former prison officer who worked for seven years in Belmarsh, Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs also took part in the project and said: "By the end of filming, I was emotionally and physically exhausted but had thoroughly enjoyed the experience and was amazed at how well everyone came together to give the kids as real an experience as possible". The series is due for transmission during the summer and should be well worth watching.

Another important development last month was the call for systematic innovation within the criminal justice system by the **Young Foundation** think tank. This body argued that the number of young people sent to prison could be dramatically reduced if alternative strategies were implemented. In particular, a new strategy could involve the community taking responsibility for crime and dealing with offenders. Building more prisons is neither sustainable nor affordable, said Geoff Mulgan, the foundation's director. "Nor is an endless stream of new national legislation. What we need now is much more systematic innovation in alternatives which address the causes of crime – from poor skills to mental health – and bring down the reconviction rates. We need to mobilise local communities and families to become a much larger part of the solution".

So much for the national picture. Back here at base camp the office team - **Breda Power**, our full-time caseworker, **Elizabeth Power**, our admin assistant, and **Gabriel Payne**, our full-time London outreach worker, and not forgetting the volunteer prison visiting team of **Sr Maureen McNally, Sr Cecilia Snape, and deacon Stephen McKenna** - continue to serve the prisoners and their families. The

Chaplaincy is very fortunate in now having **Philomena Cullen** as its new Director. Philomena took over from Sr Lucy Troy at the beginning of the year and has already won the admiration of the Chaplaincy staff and Irish Centre team for her commitment, work rate and engaging personality.

It is hoped that over the next year the ICPO will be able to extend its volunteer prison visiting scheme to those areas not already covered such as the north-east, the east midlands, and East Anglia. We also hope to employ a part-time visitor and caseworker to serve the three London women's prisons. All this will mean that more inmates and their families will be accessed and the quality of our service improved.

Finally, I should point out that this is my last London Letter as project co-ordinator of the London office of the ICPO. After more than 14 years with the ICPO, I have decided to take up the post of chaplain at Wormwood Scrubs. It has not been an easy decision to make as ICPO had been such a large part of my working life. But I leave with many happy memories of the experiences I have had and the wonderful people I have met and worked with.

I'm not much good at saying "goodbye", but hopefully I'll be able to keep in touch with the work of the ICPO and maybe, from time to time, even contribute to the newsletter. So, maybe it's really a case of "slán go fóill" rather than a final "goodbye". Anyway, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to the staff workers here and in Maynooth, the volunteer prison visitors, the trustees, inmates and their families, and indeed all who have made my work with the ICPO a privilege and a joy these past fourteen years. May God bless and keep you all in His care.

Fr Gerry McFlynn



The Linkage Programme is a guidance and placement service for ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. We provide advice around career choices for people leaving prison. Many people coming out of prison decide to start afresh. Some are tired of their old way of life and want to do something really positive. Maybe you missed out on an education? Maybe you believe you can get a better job? We can help you apply for further training, college courses, find out about funding, help you do a CV. Other people want to look for a job straightaway. The most important thing is to look at what your skills are and what area of work you are best suited to. Many people fall into the trap of believing they will

always find low skilled, low paid work because employers in these areas won't ask about a record. Not true. Your best chance for work is if you have good skills, recent experience and a good CV with references. If you don't have these things, then that's where we start. We can do career interest tests with you and personality assessments. All these things can help someone who really doesn't know what they want to do. It is also really important to have somewhere to live. This needs to be sorted out first before you come to our service. You can apply to Transitional Housing providers while you are still in prison.

We also provide practical help like doing CVs, interview skills, job seeking tips and hints. But the first thing **you** can do is engage with any prison training that is available to you. Start thinking about what work you might like to do. Find out all you can about it,

for example, what training you might need, qualifications, demand for this type of work, experience and so on. Most prisons have schools and counsellors that can help you with this. All this can be done while you are still inside. By the time you come out, you will have a much better idea of what you would like to do. We cover all areas of the Republic of Ireland and will be glad to help you. We work with the Probation Service but you don't have to be on probation, you just need to voluntarily see us there. Many people come to us who have never worked before, some engage in retraining/upskilling, some succeed in finding a job straight away, jobs, some leave with degrees from university; whatever path they choose, all leave with increased confidence to do well in life. At the end of the day, it is up to you what you choose to do. We just make sure that you know what your options might be.

Seona Hyland
Linkage Programme

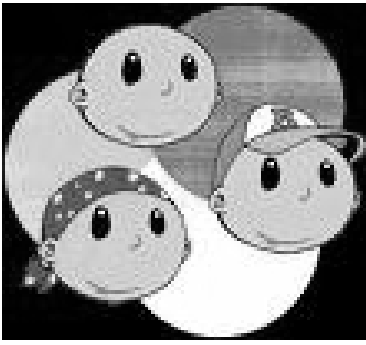
Referral forms for the Linkage Programme are available from ICPO.

EGPA Update

On behalf of ICPO, a member of the Maynooth team attended the annual meeting of the European Group of Prisoners Abroad (EGPA) held in Utrecht. Conférence Permanente Européenne de la Probation (CEP) is the advisory body within the Council of Europe that deals with probation issues. A decision was made that EGPA will be integrated into the CEP as a special interest group. The secretariat will remain at Prisoners Abroad for the coming year.

Radio Programme

ICPO Maynooth provided assistance towards the making of a programme by Newstalk 106 entitled "Outside the Prison Walls", broadcast late 2007 and repeated after Christmas. The programme looked at the impact of imprisonment overseas on prisoners' families and also featured a number of interviews with ex prisoners. The programme received good reviews and all who heard it felt it made a good contribution to public understanding. We are grateful to the families and ex prisoners who took part.



Storybook Dads



About 150,000 children are affected by the imprisonment of a parent each year and current studies show that half of all prisoners lose contact with their families while they are in custody.

Storybook Dad is a registered charity based in Dartmoor prison whose aim is to help to maintain family ties between prisoners and their children. Through the production of story CDs, imprisoned parents engage in the natural parental activity of reading to their children thereby maintaining meaningful contact in difficult circumstances. A prisoner is recorded reading a story using a small portable digital recorder. The story is downloaded onto a computer and the beauty of the scheme is that poor readers and non readers are not excluded because mistakes can be eliminated. Music and sound effects are added and the final story is put onto a CD and sent to the children.

Audio editing is time consuming and a ten minute story can take three or four hours to edit. The result is very professional and the children love these CDs. As well as playing them at home, at relatives' houses and in the car, some take them to school to show the class. The children are happier and

empowered because they can listen to the CD whenever they feel the need to.

Many prisoners, who had not been read to as a child, have understood the importance of reading and are committed to do so with their children on release. Participants may explore other learning opportunities on offer in the prison, for example parenting or literacy courses. Some prisoners participate in bookmaking workshops in which they write their own story and create an illustrated book to accompany the CD. In this way they are helping with their children's literacy skills. At the heart of the experience is the shared time between parent and child and the engagement with storytelling and imagination.

Storybook Dads has only been going for four years but in that has spread to over 50 prisons across the prison estate (including women's and young offenders) and over 4,000 prisoners have participated. All the member prisons need to do is send their recordings to the headquarters in Dartmoor Prison which consists of three fully equipped editing suites with fourteen computer work stations. The Storybook Dad team has one full time staff member, six part time staff, four volunteers and at any one time eight selected prisoners who are trained in digital audio editing. These prisoners can also gain an OCN qualification in audio production further helping with their resettlement upon release. The new recently launched DVD

scheme means that children can see dad as well as hear him.

Since 2005 Storybook Dads has won seven national awards including, National Justice Award, Public Servant of the Year Award, Health and Social Care Award, Adults Continuing Education Award and they won their category in the Annual Charity Awards 2007 (Children & Youth) as well as being the overall winner of the night. Their work has been recognised by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, both of whom have sent letters of commendation to us. In November Princess Anne came to Dartmoor prison to open the project's new premises.

Storybook Dads has recently delivered training to the Army and Air force so that soldiers and airmen being deployed can send a story CD to their child. In 2008 the navy will also be trained.

This scheme has proved to be invaluable to prisoners serving a sentence and servicemen serving their country and provides comfort to countless children who are separated from their parents.

Sharon Berry

www.storybookdads.co.uk
storybookdads@blueyonder.co.uk

Thoughts of Storybook Dads.....

When my father was given a life sentence I was eight years old. As my mother was extremely distressed at the time, I quickly became a surrogate mother to my brother and sisters aged 7, 5 and 3. Reading stories to them was one way I was able at such a young age to distract them from what was happening to us. Unfortunately I was little more than a baby myself and had no one to comfort me. That was more than thirty years ago now. When I first learned of 'Storybook Dads', my first feeling was devastation. We as children had missed out. 'Storybook Dads' could have changed so much in our young lives such as feelings of abandonment, isolation, detachment and ultimately fear. In my view every child should have the right to maintain contact with an absent parent whatever the circumstances; 'Storybook Dads' is an excellent tool for doing so. My only regret is that it was not a resource when I was a child.

Daughter of ex lifer



Controlling Anger

Anger broadcasts our own weakness. When we vent our anger, we are effectively shouting, "I'm scared! I'm frustrated! I'm hurt!" That's another way of saying, "I'm weak!" After all, we are only as big as the things that make us angry.

The following are examples of frustration: becoming angry when someone takes too long at the ATM machine, cuts you off in traffic or carelessly bumps into you. However, like it or not, people will always do these things. We have no control over the behaviour of others. To become angry because the world doesn't behave as we would like it to is childish, even infantile. When people act as I described above, they're not being mean; they're just being people. When we understand this, we can remain calm and peaceful.

When others do not follow our wishes or seemingly disrespect us, we become angry because of fear. We are afraid that we can no longer control them. But we were never intended to control others. Guide others by our example? Yes. Control others by power? No. Our desire for control is not wrong; it is just misdirected. It is ourselves that we need to control. When we give up our wish to control others and our environment, we will find that we have little to be angry about.

People say and do stupid things. They can hurt us. And when they do, the temptation is to get angry. But we don't have to. We can forgive them! It's not so hard to forgive others when you remember we are all the same. Nobody is perfect; we all have faults. How can we get angry with people for behaving like people? Besides, every time you give someone a piece of your mind, you make your head a little emptier. You don't want to do that, do you? Despite good reasons for not getting angry, it's a difficult habit to quit. That's because it's often more comfortable to feel angry than to feel the underlying fear, frustration, or pain.

Here's an important point to consider: the consequences of one's anger are often far worse than that which caused it.

As a simple example, in a heated moment you may blurt out something you later wish you had not said. But the harm is already done. You cannot take back the past. The moral? Don't get angry!

Not that all anger is bad. On the contrary, anger can be justifiable and may be necessary. Or, as Henry Ward Beecher wrote in 1887, "A man that does not know how to be angry does not know how

to be good." Outrage over injustice is a good example. Angry American and South African blacks brought about sweeping political reform and civil rights, strengthening their countries. Another example: if we have to fight to protect our family or flee from a threat, anger will provide us with the strength to act.

Nevertheless, more often than not, anger is harmful and can result in the following problems:

- 1) Alienates others. You feel nobody likes you and you are right! Nobody likes an angry person. How can you get your message across by getting cross?
- 2) Health problems. According to a study of more than 1,000 people at a Western Electric factory in Chicago, over a 25-year period, those with anger management problems were at a high risk of dying from coronary problems, as well as cancer. Chronic anger is also linked with weakening of the immune system, leading to life-threatening illnesses.
- 3) When not managed, it can lead to rage, hate, and violence.
- 4) If not carefully monitored, it can lead to chronic anger and spiral out of control.

Tips on anger management

a) "Anger will never disappear so long as thoughts of resentment are cherished in the mind. Anger will disappear just as soon as thoughts of resentment are forgotten." (Buddha)



b) "The greatest remedy for anger is delay." (Seneca) Counting from 50 backwards not only provides a delay, but shifts brain activity from the emotional part to the analytical part of the brain, decreasing the intensity of the unwanted emotion.

c) Study relaxation and meditation techniques to reduce stress.

d) Discuss the situation, not the person; discuss the unwanted behaviour without name-calling.

e) Remaining calm allows you to examine the options and seek solutions. Getting angry blocks clear thinking.

f) No one can make you angry. Whether you become angry or not depends on how you choose to react to circumstances.

**John Farrelly
Accord**

The French



The French justice system has a distinction from the Anglo Saxon system in that the accused is generally presumed to be guilty instead of innocent, which puts the onus of proof of innocence on the arrested

party, as opposed to the police having to find sufficient evidence for detention during an investigation. This point is particularly important in the early stages of a case, as when the accused is presented to the "**Juge de liberte**" (*the magistrate dealing with provisional detention*) they will tend to err on the side of caution in dealing with foreign prisoners, in particular drug offenders, and will not easily grant bail, and in fact will very rarely do so. The period of remand will be decided on the basis of whether the charges will be criminal (*risking a sentence of above 10 years in a trial before a jury*) or correctional (*risking a sentence up to 10 years in a trial before three magistrates*), in the former the accused can be remanded for periods of 6 months at a time up to and in some cases a bit beyond 3 years before going on trial, and in the latter the remand periods (*known as "mandate depot"*) are reviewed every 3 months up to, and again sometimes beyond 2 years before going in front of the court.

The first step after being arrested is to be questioned by the police, who have the power to hold a suspect for up to 72 hours without the intervention of a lawyer, after which the prosecutor will present the evidence to the "**Juge d'instruction**" (*examining magistrate*) who will decide if there is a case to answer. It is at this stage that you would be allowed to consult a lawyer, if you do not have the funds to pay for one yourself, one will be provided by the courts. The court appointed lawyers are generally known as office solicitors, as they tend not to make so many visits to the prisoner but as the name suggests do most of their work from their office. In some cases these lawyers can be just as effective as one that has been paid for, but as in all legal systems it is better to try and do a bit of research on the reputation of your chosen solicitor. It is always possible with the permission of the "**Juge d'instruction**" to change your lawyer at any stage in the investigation, but it would be advisable to do that as early as possible, as it takes time for a new lawyer to become familiar with your case.

Once it has been decided that you have a case to answer and that bail has been refused, you will be sent to a "**Maison d'arrêt**" (*remand*

center), where you will remain until the outcome of your case is known, and all appeals have been exhausted. After which depending on how long the sentence received is, it is then possible to ask for a transfer to another prison, normally a "**Centre Detention**", where the conditions are generally better than in the remand centers, as there is usually more access to education, work, sporting facilities and other pastimes.

Remission or "**Grâce**" (*time off your sentence*) can be earned by working or taking courses or by not demonstrating anti-social behavior. This reduction is normally given each year on the anniversary of the day that you enter the prison; the maximum attainable is usually 3 months a year. Another reduction is given automatically once your sentence has been confirmed, this is known as "**Credit de reduction de peine**", and this is based on good behavior and can be withdrawn at the discretion of the prison director in the event of any transgressions. This remission is calculated on the amount of years given, with 3 months being awarded for the first year of the sentence and 2 months for each remaining year. For example a "**détenu**" (*prisoner*) sentenced to 5 years would receive 3 months for the first year and 2 months for the remaining years, thus receiving a total of 11 months remission.

In the majority of drug related cases in France, the "**Douane**" (*French customs*) will ask the court to impose a fine on the accused to the value of the drugs seized, and also for an interdiction for life from French territories and this will usually be granted. The fines can be exorbitant, often running into millions of Euros, and the failure to address them can lead to a delay in your release. It is often possible with the aid of your "**Assistante sociale**" (*social worker*) to come to an arrangement with the douane, for example by making a payment each month if you are working in prison or by negotiating the amount to be paid. Your financial situation will be taken into consideration in these negotiations.

When coming to the end of your sentence you will be given the chance to apply for "**Conditionelle expulsion**" (*this generally applies to people that have an interdiction from French territory*), you are normally allowed to apply when you reach a time in your sentence known as "**demi peine, demi grâce**" (*half of your sentence and half of your remission*) but this is only the case for first time offenders as recidivists (*people that have previously served a sentence in France*) have to wait longer. This

Justice System

can be calculated as follows; for someone with a 5 year sentence that has received 11 months "Credit de reduction de peine" and 3 months "Grâce" it would be possible to apply after serving 23 months of their time. It can take up to 4 months before you receive an audience with the "Juge d'application de peine" (the judge that deals with parole applications). If all the criteria for expulsion are met; for example,

1. Having a home to go to (for this you will need a letter from a member of your family or a friend confirming that you have a place to stay with them, accompanied with a utility bill to prove the address is authentic)

2. Having a job available on your release (A letter from a potential employer with a copy of their chamber of commerce registration should suffice, failing that try and make contact with the I.C.P.O who may be able to offer some advice)
3. That you have made an attempt to deal with your customs fine.



**Gary D
Ex-prisoner, France**

Fr. Alan Hilliard...moving on

A reception to mark the departure of Fr Alan Hilliard from his post as Director of IECE/ICPO was held in the Columba Centre Maynooth on November 30th 2007. On behalf of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference and his colleagues at the Centre, a very thoughtful tribute was paid to Fr Hilliard for all his work on behalf of the Irish overseas by Fr Aidan O Boyle, the Conference Executive Secretary. Fr O Boyle spoke about the long shadow of emigration which hung over Ireland for so many decades until recent times and which the Emigrant Council has been addressing over the past 50 years. Fr Alan built upon the work of his predecessors and worked tirelessly for the Irish emigrant abroad. Among the successful initiatives during Fr Hilliard's tenure was the securing of enhanced financial support from Government and the highly successful Supporting Irish Abroad (SIA) campaign. This raised awareness of the plight of our emigrants on a large scale and the very significant financial contribution made by the people of Ireland over the three years is a fitting testament to Fr. Alan's initiative. These funds have provided a valuable resource which now are being used to make real changes to the lives of the elderly Irish in Britain, linking them with local social services and, more importantly, providing them with the human contact and compassion that we all deserve.

Colleagues in the Irish Apostolate in the States and the Irish Chaplaincy in the UK have sent best wishes and paid tribute to the vision and direction which Fr Hilliard had provided to their work. They acknowledge his deep understanding of the

human, spiritual, emotional and practical needs of Irish emigrants and his tireless work to support the marginalised and vulnerable. His leadership, knowledge, and creative thinking in helping them to respond to the many needs of Irish immigrants in the United States and in the UK especially Irish prisoners, members of the Traveller community and the older members of the Irish community have been greatly appreciated. Under his tenure, the Irish Apostolate USA had become a more cohesive organisation whose members collaborated in many ways to better fulfil their mission of pastoral care outreach and services. In the UK, his work as a Trustee of the Irish Chaplaincy and his pivotal role in obtaining funding for the Irish Chaplaincy projects had greatly enhanced the Chaplaincy outreach work among the most needy Irish emigrants.

Perhaps the final word should be left to a former colleague who summed up so many people's impression of Fr Hilliard in the following way "An encounter with Fr Alan Hilliard is one of warmth, welcome, interest, inclusiveness and kindness".

We wish him well and God's blessing in his new work and commitments.





United States

PRISON VISITS

I visited prisoners in the Northeast (Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey) of the U.S. on December 20 and January 3- 7, 2008. The total mileage was approximately 1700 miles.

Six prisoners were visited. One prisoner was visited in company with Sister Marguerite Kelly of the Irish Pastoral Center in Boston. One prisoner at a Federal facility was visited on my own and the other four prisoners were visited in company with Sister Christine Hennessy of the Aisling Irish Community Center in Yonkers, New York. Both Sister Marguerite and Sister Christine visit the prisoners regularly throughout the year. The work of Sister Christine and Sister Marguerite is very much appreciated by the prisoners involved. In addition Father John McCarthy of the Irish Pastoral Center visits both a prisoner in Massachusetts and a prisoner in upstate New York on a regular basis. In the past the prisoner in the Federal facility has received visits from Father Michael Leonard of Chicago Irish Immigrant Support. This prisoner otherwise receives no visitors.

Four of the six prisoners visited are doing lengthy prison terms. Four of the six prisoners are not visited regularly by family members because of their family members do not live in the United States. These prisoners would seldom if ever receive visits if Sister Christine, Sister Marguerite, Father John and Father Michael did not visit.

Among the issues the prisoners discussed were depression and isolation, problems adjusting to prison as well as the need for

some financial assistance and reading material. Seeing the prisoners in person proved to be a good opportunity to assess their needs. All the prisoners expressed appreciation that they have not been forgotten by their country.

Prisoner 1 is doing a mandatory life sentence. He is an Irish citizen who has applied for repatriation but to date this has been denied by the state authorities. He is visited on a regular basis by Sister Marguerite Kelly and Father John McCarthy of the Irish Pastoral Centre. He receives advice/support from ICPO, occasional books and financial assistance.

Prisoner 2 is serving a lengthy prison term. He was incarcerated in 1976 and will complete his prison sentence in 2014. He is a Federal prisoner and over the years has been moved to various Federal facilities throughout the U.S. He maintains that he is an Irish citizen. He has been visited in the past by Father Michael Leonard of Chicago Irish Immigrant Support. He receives advice/support from ICPO, occasional books and financial assistance.

Prisoner 3 has been in prison since 1997 and is serving a 25 to life term. He is a dual Irish/American citizen. He has family in the U.S. and is visited by his family on a regular basis thus he is less isolated than some of the other prisoners He receives advice/support from the ICPO.

Prisoner 4 has been in prison since 2006 and is serving a 3 to 9 year term. He is an Irish/British citizen and will be deported when he is paroled or at the end of his sentence. He has no family in the U.S. and his own family have not been able to visit. He receives

visits on a regular basis from Sister Christine who also brings him food and books. He is also visited by Father John McCarthy. He receives advice/support, occasional books and money from ICPO.

Prisoner 5 has been in prison since 1988 and is serving a 25 year to life sentence. He is a dual national- Irish/American citizen. He has applied for repatriation to Ireland which has been denied on the basis that he is serving an indeterminate life sentence. He has a lot of family members in Ireland who are not able to travel to the U.S. to visit. He receives very occasional visits from elderly relatives in the U.S. and is dependent on Sister Christine for regular visits. Sister Christine also brings him food and books. He receives advice/support, occasional books and financial assistance from the ICPO.

Prisoner 6 has been in prison since 2006 and will be deported at the end of his sentence in 2009. He is an Irish/British citizen. His family in Northern Ireland have not been able to visit him during his imprisonment. He is visited weekly by an American man from a local parish and has been visited by Sister Christine. He is provided with support and occasional financial assistance from the ICPO.

All of the prisoners seemed to enjoy and appreciate the visits. Irish prisoners in the northeast may be less isolated than Irish prisoners elsewhere in the U.S. because they receive a high level of pastoral support which is less available in other parts of the U.S.

The visits were a good opportunity to assess ICPO interventions and to see what gaps exist in service delivery to our U.S. clients.

Catherine Jackson

St Patrick's Day message from Bishop Séamus Hegarty, Bishop of Derry and Chair of the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants

Today we celebrate the feast of our National Patron, Saint Patrick. He brought the message of Christianity to Ireland. When he came to this land he explored Celtic Ireland without cynicism or ridicule. His openness to our traditions did not diminish his own beliefs in the person of Christ present in all aspects of his life expressed so eloquently in his prayer entitled Patrick's Breastplate. In fact his openness created a desire among the Irish, to learn about the personal loving God that sustained Patrick's own life and his mission. This is the call to every person of faith today. Taking Patrick as our model, we need to be fully at home in our own faith tradition, being able to defend its value and purpose yet able to dialogue confidently with those of other faith traditions.

As Ireland evolves into a new phase of its growth and development we are more than ever called to identify our values and our traditions of belief that are foundational to human dignity and to a civilised, caring society. The call for a society that champions integration is first and foremost a call to every person that believes in a God of Love to integrate these beliefs into every aspect of life.

Faith and religious belief have too conveniently been ushered into the realm of the personal and private domains. Patrick's faith was a very public faith. Christ was part of his every waking moment, his every human interaction and inspired his every conversation. His faith and his ability to see Christ's love present in all things are the foundations of renewal and hope for a future which places security, peace and harmony as its goals.

Patrick shared one thing in common with many of the great

prophets in Sacred Scripture. Abraham, Elijah, Moses, and Saint Paul all experienced revelations of God's mysterious and unfathomable love while on journeys. Today, we pray for all who travel in search of hope and blessing. We think particularly of our own people who have found new lives in far flung shores and those who now come to our land. May they, like so many people in Scripture, and in the previous generations before them, discover the rich mystery of God's salvific purpose and know the peace and support that Saint Patrick found for his life. May they be sustained and nourished and may they enrich those they come in contact with as Saint Patrick blessed so many in his own time and in succeeding generations. We thank God for the blessings that are bestowed on our land by the presence of so many people from the many countries, backgrounds and traditions that we are privileged to witness in everyday life but more particularly when we worship together.

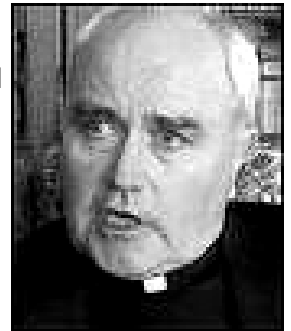
The migrant journey is one filled with hope and expectation. However there is a growing awareness of the implications of migration, both for the migrant, and, for sending and receiving societies. The migrant's journey cannot be made without some serious preparation and support. The role of Church and voluntary organisations are essential in this regard. The role of Government is critical in the development of policy and the provision of financial resources to those who provide outreach and care to our vulnerable migrants.

In this regard the Bishops' then Commission for Emigrants welcomed the *Report on Irish Prisoners Abroad* launched in August 2007. This Report, the first of its kind commissioned by

the Government and prepared by Chris Flood, is a timely reminder of the problems faced by Irish prisoners abroad and their families. The Report, as well as containing important statistical information, provides a disturbing snapshot of the conditions, problems and issues faced by prisoners and their families. It also contains a number of practical recommendations which, if implemented, would go a long way towards addressing these concerns.

The Bishops' Council for Emigrants now calls on the Government to renew its commitment to prisoners abroad and their families by implementing, in full, these recommendations and doing all it can to alleviate the anxiety and hardship experienced by this most vulnerable group of emigrants and their families. This work was undertaken as a result of a promise in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* to undertake research to identify the number of Irish prisoners abroad and their needs for services in prison (Ireland, 2000).

As more and more people migrate, the work of organizations - such as the Bishops' Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas - will serve as a template to nations as they face the multi-faceted challenges posed by migration. It is only right that Ireland establishes itself as an international leader with regard to services and supports for citizens abroad.





Smídín Gaeilge

Des Bishop came to Ireland from New York when he was 14 years of age. After becoming a successful comedian he decided to spend a year learning Irish in the Connemara Gaeltacht. He now does gigs ‘as Gaeilge’ and his rap ‘Léim Thart’ is very popular. This is a translation of ‘Jump Around’ by the rap group House of Pain. It doesn’t make much sense but the Irish is ‘togha’ (pronounced tow, rhyming with now) which means first-class.

Here is part of it.

Dún do chlab, dún do bhéal	Doon du klob, doon du vale	Close your gob, close your mouth
Éist le mo scéal	Aysh-t le mu sch-ale	Listen to my story
Má cheapann tú go dtuigeann tú	Maw kap-on too gu dig-on too	If you think you understand
Tá tú ag cur i gcéill	Taw too eg kur I gale	You’re pretending.
Tá mé ag dul go Nua Eabhrach	Taw may eg dul gu New Ow-rock	I’m going to New York,
Cheangail mé na slabhraí	Kang-il may na slough-ree	I tied the chains,
Goile, a mhac, ná bí ag caint anseo	Gil-a, a wac, naw bee eg kynt on-shu	Hey, son, don’t be talking here
I lár an tsamhraidh	I lawr on tow-ri	In the middle of summer
Níl mé ag iarraidh éisteacht	Neel may eg ear-I aysh-tockt	I don’t want to listen
Le do sheafóid	Le du haf-owed	To your nonsense
Damhsa damhsa gan aon stró	Dow-sa dow-sa gone ay-n stro	Dance, dance without any strain
Buachaillí gránna, cailíní boga dána	Boo-kal-ee graw-na kol-ee-nee buga daw-na	Plain boys, soft naughty girls
Ní thugann mise aird	Nee hug-on mish-a aw-rd	I take no notice
Ar na Gardaí Síochána	Er na Gawr-dee shee-kaw-na	Of the police
Ar an gCeathrú Rua	Er on ga-er-oo ruu	In Carraroe
Amuigh anseo faoin tuath	A-mu on-shu fwee-n too	Out here in the country
Léim anois, léim anois, léim anois go luath	Lame a-nish lame a-nish lame a-nish go loo	Jump now, jump now, jump now fast
Mar tá sé mícheart	Mor taw shay mee-kart	Because it’s wrong
Mar tá sé mícheart	Mor taw shay mee-kart	Because it’s wrong
Is cuma liom, is cuma liom	Iss kum-a lum, iss kum-a lum	I don’t care, I don’t care
Léimigí thart,	Lame-ig-ee hort	Jump around
Léim thart!	Lame hort	Jump around
Anois mo stór,	A-nish mu store	Now my love
Éist le mo ghlóir	Aysh-t le mu gloire	Listen to my voice
Amach as an urlár	A-mock er on ur-lawr	(Get) out on the floor
Ar nós Peigí Leitir Móir	Er no-ss peggy letter more	Like Peggy Lettermore

Slán tamall (slawn tom-ull)

Goodbye for now



Sports

By Eoin O'Mahony

Gaelic Games

Derry beat Kerry by a mere four points to take the National Football League division 1 title in late April. The final was a poorly attended game at Dublin's Parnell park with barely 10,000 attending but provided a foretaste of things to come in the Championship.

Dublin were Division 2 winners, although beaten in the final game by a strong Westmeath team in Navan. Fermanagh were crowned Division 3 champions although they were narrowly beaten by their divisional rivals on the last day. Offaly are Division 4 champions.

In the National Hurling League, Kilkenny topped division 1A by four points over their rivals Cork. Galway and Tipperary shared the spoils in Division 1B as did Westmeath and Kerry in Division 2A, all on 8 points. Carlow pipped Down for the Division 2B title while Donegal took the NHL title. South Down, Monaghan and Fermanagh shared the spoils in the league's Division 4. Attention now turns to the Championship and with the opening football fixtures hardly setting the calendar alight at this early stage, attention also turns to hurling. Cork and Kilkenny remain firm favourites.

Soccer

While the English and Scottish league seasons are over, the League of Ireland has only just started. Memories of the mid-season jitters suffered by St Patrick's Athletic last year are bound to provide plenty of encouragement to the chasing pack in the weeks, perhaps in the months, ahead. But after a fourth successive win moved them six points clear at the top of the table on May 3rd, the Dubliners ended what felt like the first day of summer with growing confidence. The home side were not vastly superior here but they just about deserved their win by the dramatic end of a good and open game. Meanwhile Shamrock Rovers' difficult season continues. Manager Pat Scully described his team's performance in their 3-2 defeat at

Sligo's Showgrounds on May 4th as "beyond pathetic", adding, "We were soft, weak, making the same mistakes, unprofessional and we are killing ourselves. Our two goals were decent efforts but their three goals were embarrassing . . . A lot of people are hiding, we are in a bad situation and continue to struggle," he said. Rovers are currently languishing mid-table with Bohemians, Drogheda and Derry City as the league's also-rans.

In Scotland, what seemed like Ranger's season handed Celtic with an opportunity to sneak the Premier League title. The 'Ger's title hopes took a dent after they dropped two points against Hibernian at Easter Road on May 4th. The Uefa Cup runners-up could not find a way past the Leith defence although striker Daniel Cousin had a second-half goal ruled out for offside. On the very last match of the season Celtic pipped Rangers by the narrowest of a four-goal difference margin over the season. With Tommy Burns' death, the poignancy of snatching victory from the jaws of defeat was all the sweeter.

Manchester United defeated Chelsea on penalties in Moscow to win the UEFA Champions League. It was a bitter end for the Blues who had trailed United in both domestic and European competitions across the season.

Rugby

With both the Magners League and European Rugby Cup competitions coming to a close, Irish teams are again at the forefront of European rugby. Leinster wrapped up the Magners League title on May 3rd by beating the Newport Gwent Dragons 41 - 8 in front of a 18,000 strong crowd at the RDS, Dublin. With their final two matches against the struggling Dragons, Michael Cheika's Leinster side only needed one bite of the cherry to claim the win that secured their second league title. There was no denying this was Leinster's night as they celebrated their first league success since 2001 and their first silverware under coach Cheika.

Munster beat Toulouse in Cardiff's Millennium Stadium by 16 points to 13 to take the European Cup. It was the second time in three years that Declan Kidney's men took the trophy and caps a wonderful few years for this particular team. Although they squeezed past Saracens with an agonisingly tense 18-16 win in Coventry, Munster have been of consistently high quality across this season and deservedly reached their fourth final. Munster's astute Aussie defensive/backs coach Tony McGahan admitted he had nightmares in the weeks building up to this match-up. But he and the rest of the Brains Trust learned from the video of Clermont's defeat of Toulouse, when the French league leaders unsettled Guy Noves' team by smashing into them at every tackle and ruck and flooded the offloading channels. This was Kidney's last game in charge of the Munster men as he is the new Ireland manager, replacing Eddie O'Sullivan after the national side's poor showing in the 6 Nations Championship.

Other sports

Ronnie O'Sullivan thrashed Ali Carter in an 18-8 demolition at the Crucible Theatre to give him his third world snooker championship.

Epsom's status as horseracing's "blue riband" took something of a knock when Jim Bolger indicated that his champion New Approach would bypass the Derby and instead contest the Irish 2,000 Guineas.

The Irish women's hockey team signed off with a win over Canada to capture the bronze medals at the Olympic hockey qualifier in Vancouver. With thoughts of Beijing consigned to the bin by the disastrous showing against Italy on Saturday, Ireland were playing for little more than a consolation prize and a couple of world ranking points.



RECENT EVENTS IN IRELAND

Ten years of peace in Northern Ireland

Exactly ten years ago the Northern Ireland peace process entered a new and definitive phase with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. The concord provided for a halt to all paramilitary activity in exchange for the early release of political prisoners, and for the creation of a Northern Ireland Assembly with devolved powers. The underlying principle of the agreement was that "the constitutional future of Northern Ireland should be

determined by the majority vote of its citizens". The Good Friday Agreement is often cited as an example of a successful peace process: both sides eventually gave up many of their original aspirations and the resulting agreement was put to referendum both in Northern Ireland, where 71% voted in favour, and in the Republic of Ireland, where 94% of voters gave their support. Since 1998 numerous steps have

been taken to consolidate peace in Northern Ireland and encourage harmonious relations between unionists and republicans. Practically all of the paramilitary organizations have now been disarmed and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission has been established to ensure respect for the human rights of all Northern Irish people. It will some more time, however, for the rival factions to have full confidence in one another.

Bertie Ahern has retired as Taoiseach...

On May 6th, Bertie Ahern resigned as Taoiseach.

In his last week he made the speech of his life in Washington. For any statesman, and for the country he represents, an invitation to address a joint session of the United States Houses of Congress is an enviable distinction. It was a great occasion, full of meaning. He rose to the occasion. For Mr Ahern, it was a time for emotion too: the culmination of his "lap of honour" before his retirement as Taoiseach and the celebration of a triumph in which the Americans had an important share. Bertie

Ahern told his American audience "I am so proud to be the first Irish leader to inform the United States Congress: Ireland is at peace!" He combined diplomatic language with plainer speaking when he made a plea for the "undocumented" Irish immigrants. He asked for "fair and rational choices". His speech, has set the seal on an extraordinary career.

In his last official function as Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and First Minister Ian Paisley officially opened the historic Battle of the Boyne site in Co Meath. The development of the site has been one of the outcomes of the peace process, which Mr Ahern regards as the main achievement of his political career. Speaking at the site, he said "In recent years, many of us from the nationalist tradition have come to a greater appreciation of the history,

traditions and identity of those of you from the unionist tradition with whom we share this island. We have come to understand the pride you take in your history and to recognise that your history is our history too." Mr Ahern said he hoped people will travel from all over the island to visit the Boyne centre and to "develop the greater mutual understanding that is essential to peace and reconciliation".

"We need - all of us - to understand our shared history if we are to build a shared future. The principles and ideals that we hold dear are the same - liberty and equality, democracy and peace. If we hold fast to those shared ideals, our children will have an inheritance to treasure." Dr Paisley said there could be no turning back to the dark days of violent dispute on the island of Ire-

...Brian Cowan is new Taoiseach

Mr Cowen, the Laois-Offaly TD, was selected unopposed as the new Fianna Fáil leader and went to Aras an Uachtarain on May 7th to pick up his seal of office having been voted in as Taoiseach.

Brian Cowen has appointed Mary Coughlan from Donegal as Tánaiste and Micheál Martin to head up the Department of Foreign Affairs in his new Cabinet.



Brian Cowen at Aras an Uachtarain when he received his seal of office from President Mary McAleese.