



# ICPO NEWS

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## Repatriation Figures 2008

**In April of this year, the Minister for Justice brought before the Dáil, a report detailing repatriation statistics for 2008. He did this in accordance with the Irish legislation which ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons. This is the legal basis for Irish citizens imprisoned in countries that are also signatories to the Convention, to be returned to Ireland to serve their sentences here.**

The Minister's report states that;

'the policy of the Convention, which is based on humanitarian considerations, is to overcome the difficulties posed for prisoners serving sentences in foreign jurisdictions, such an absence of contact with relatives and differences in language and culture. In this regard, it has long been established Government policy that, wherever possible, prisoners should be permitted to serve their sentences close to their families.'

Countries outside of the EU are eligible to become signatories' to the Convention. Currently, there are over sixty signatory countries.

Five prisoners transferred into this State in 2008. Since the Act came into operation in 1995, one hundred and thirty nine prisoners have transferred here from abroad.

The following table is taken from the Minister's report and shows the number of applications for repatriation received and how they have been progressed.

### Inward Transfers – Work Processed in 2008

Number of Applications Received in 2008	29
Number of Applications from Previous Years active at start of 2008	25
Number Transferred in 2008	5
Number Refused	17
Number Withdrawn	8
Number Released	2
Number of Applications active at end of 2008	22

It is interesting to note, that of the 29 applications received by the Department of Justice in 2008, twenty eight were from the United Kingdom and one was from Spain. Of the five prisoners who were transferred into the State in 2008, four were from the United Kingdom and one was from Northern Ireland.

Of course, some people applying for repatriation will do so from a country that is not a signatory to the Convention. In these instances a bi-lateral treaty is required. While similar criteria are used for assessing such applications, the process can be more time consuming and difficult to complete. Often the need for a bi-lateral treaty arises in situations where concerns for the prisoner's health and safety are present.

The Minister informs that of the twenty two submissions for transfer to Ireland that came to him for final decision, five were approved for transfer while seventeen were refused. The Minister wrote in his report that;

'these refusals were principally due to the applicants concerned having insufficient connections here to justify a transfer under the Convention.' While in other years there have been fewer successful applications – five represents less than half the average number that have been repatriated each year since 1996. The lengthy

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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 and the Far East.

The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO) was established by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference in 1985, in response to serious concerns regarding the number of Irish men and women in UK prisons. These deeply held concerns related to their trials and subsequent imprisonments.

In recent years the ICPO has been able to offer a more comprehensive service to prisoners and to expand our existing services to prisoners' families. Currently 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
- Visit Irish prisoners abroad where possible both in the UK and elsewhere.

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## Notes from the Editor ...

In our cover article we consider the recently published report by the Minister for Justice, Dermot Ahern, on repatriation applications in 2008. The facts and figures, the criteria for being successfully repatriated and other relevant issues are all discussed.

Sr. Anne Sheehy wrote a piece on the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of PACE. The article highlights the importance of high quality post release support for ex-offenders. It illustrates the good work being carried out by PACE and hopefully will inform some of our readers of the type of supports that exist for them. We intend following this up in our next edition with a detailed summary of our post release report. This report includes the responses of our prisoner clients, discussions with various post release support organisations and the experiences of ICPO staff and volunteers.

The results of the Listowel Writers Festival will be provided in our next newsletter. I know many of you are anxious to see how you fared. We will include a number of your entries in the next newsletter too. I can say that from the feedback I have received – the standard was very high this year.

We have a new manager of ICPO London. Conor McGinn has taken over from Fr. Gerry McFlynn. I know all of you will join with me in wishing Conor well in his new post. Conor will no doubt be meeting many of you on his prison visits.

We also mark the passing of Mr. Frank Johnson, who was released from prison having served 26 years. Aged sixty six when his conviction was declared unsafe, Mr Johnson maintained his innocence throughout.

Thanks to all our regular contributors and all who wrote letters to the Postbag and Poetry pages. Please remember to let us know how you would like your letter, article or poem signed. As always we welcome your thoughts and suggestions for the newsletter and indeed more generally on the services ICPO provide to prisoners and their families.

Owing to the huge success of Irish sporting teams and individuals, we have included a bumper sports section in this edition. Thanks are due to Eoin O'Mahony for compiling this information.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2009, the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse chaired by Mr Justice Seán Ryan, issued a five volume report describing in detail the neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse suffered by children while in Catholic-run industrial and reformatory schools. ICPO recognises that some of you reading this today will have been affected by this very sad chapter in our nation's history and we hope that you find the help and support you need.

**Brian Hanley  
ICPO Maynooth**

repatriation process is emotionally and financially draining for the families of prisoners too. Often in addition to the expense of visiting a family member in prison overseas, families have to provide them with basic necessities which they would be otherwise unable to acquire.

## REPATRIATION CRITERIA

It is important to reiterate for all those applying or thinking of applying for repatriation under the Convention, the following conditions must be met;

1. You must be regarded as an Irish national,
2. The judgement in your trial must be final; if you have an upcoming appeal, you must wait for the appeal to be heard before you can apply,
3. You must have at least six months of your sentence left to serve at the time you apply for transfer,
4. The crime for which you have been convicted must be a criminal offence, carrying a prison sentence in Ireland,
5. The prisoner must consent to the transfer,
6. The authorities in both States must consent to the transfer.

You must demonstrate strong ties to Ireland for a repatriation request to be successful. In 2008 the Minister refused nearly 70% of the applications that came to him for final decision - primarily for this reason.

The repatriation process requires the exchange of information between two States. Regrettably, this can take a considerable period of time. It is ICPO's experience that a repatriation request takes on average 18 months and unfortunately in some cases even longer.

## REMISSION & DEPORTATION

There are other considerations for people applying to be repatriated. With particular reference to those in British prisons – the fact that the British and Irish prison establishments offer differing rates of remission is something that families and prisoners need to be aware of. Ordinarily, the British Authorities offer a more generous rate of remission to that of their Irish counterparts. While a sentence calculation is provided to all those applying for repatriation, the difficult decision as to whether to return to Ireland to be close to one's family or to remain in Britain, albeit with a shorter sentence, remains.

ICPO would like the Minister to consider those situations where a prisoner has spent many years living abroad prior to his incarceration. Despite this fact, he will be deported to Ireland at the end of his or her prison sentence. In that case, refusing an application on the grounds of insufficient contact with Ireland is only a postponement of the prisoners' eventual return to Ireland. If such prisoners were repatriated during their sentence, steps could be taken to facilitate their transition back into Irish life at an earlier stage.

Another issue also requiring clarification is how the Irish State will view repatriation requests from those serving Indeterminate Sentences (IPP) in the U.K. In response to a letter from ICPO London, dated 16<sup>th</sup> October, the Department of Justice said that legal advice had been sought on this issue. ICPO will be writing again to the Minister of Justice to see where this matter now stands.

This report provides a picture of the number of prisoners applying for repatriation and the difficulties they encounter with their applications. The Minister rightly recognises and assures that he will; 'continue to permit prisoners both here and abroad to transfer to

their home jurisdiction in order to complete their sentences close to their families and friends.'

While we acknowledge the fact that the Minister recognises the importance of prisoner repatriation, it is regrettable that so many applications are unsuccessful and that many application take such an extended period of time to complete. While some of this delay rests with the foreign jurisdiction – it is important ICPO continues to engage with the Department of Justice on prisoners' behalf and keep the prisoner and their families as up-to-date as possible regarding their applications.

Indeed, the Minister acknowledged the role ICPO has to play in this regard and stated that the Department of Justice; 'continues to co-operate with the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas in providing information on the status of pending applications.' It is beneficial to all concerned that a report such as this is published. It allows all interested parties to look again at existing policies and procedures and see what, if any, changes may be required.

**Brian Hanley**  
**ICPO Maynooth**

## New Manager for ICPO London

ICPO London has appointed county Armagh native Conor McGinn to the position of Manager.

Conor moves to ICPO from the Federation of Irish Societies, where he was employed as Health Development Officer. The role was a national one, with a remit to work across England and Wales to help create awareness of key health issues for the Irish in Britain, and saw Conor liaising with Irish organisations and communities as well as Government organisations and health agencies. He has also worked as a Service Development Officer for the Irish mental health charity ICAP, and prior to that was employed as a Researcher to an MP and former Home Office Minister.



On taking up his role at ICPO, Conor said: "I'm delighted and very proud to be joining the ICPO team here in London. The ICPO are a fantastic organisation with a long record of providing support for prisoners and their families. I want to continue and develop that great work and ensure we provide the best possible service for prisoners and their families."

As well as managing the ICPO team in London and the volunteers who work in some of the English regions, Conor will be visiting prisons across the country, and plans to work closely with HM Prison Service, the Ministry of Justice, Foreign National

Co-ordinators and Prison Chaplains to ensure that he is able to see as many Irish prisoners as possible on his visits.

Conor takes over from Fr Gerry McFlynn, who has been appointed chaplain at HMP Wormwood Scrubs. The new Manager has paid tribute to his friend and predecessor, saying "Gerry has very big shoes to fill, so I'm really pleased he is on hand to give support and advice to the ICPO, and grateful for the personal friendship and encouragement he gives me in my role as Manager of the service."

## Co-founder of 'Irish Post' dies aged 73

**The death has taken place of Breandán Mac Lua, co-founder and long-serving editor of the Irish Post newspaper in London. He was aged 73.**

A native of east Co Clare, Mr Mac Lua moved to London in 1970 and established The Irish Post with a Co Waterford businessman, Tony Beatty.

Over time, however, he played an important role in encouraging the Irish government to engage more actively with the Irish in Britain. He campaigned consistently against the Prevention of Terrorism Act which led to numerous miscarriages of justice

against the Irish in Britain. Mac Lua was one of the first journalists to champion the cases of the Maguire Seven, Birmingham Six and Guildford Four. He was also an unambiguous critic of the IRA. In his column written in the immediate aftermath of the Birmingham pub bombings, he wrote: "When it reaches the point of disregarding human life and particularly the human life of the innocent, then it becomes evil."

Mac Lua remained as editor of the newspaper for 18 years. The *Irish Post's* mixture of national stories and community news was critical in giving the Irish in Britain a voice and also helped

to forge a sense of collective identity.

A great networker, whose vision was to link up the Irish in Britain from London to Lanarkshire, Mac Lua was instrumental in the setting up of the Federation of Irish Societies in 1973. He was a founder member of the Ireland Fund of Great Britain and a director of the Irish Youth Foundation.

Mac Lua took pride in the fact that many reporters who cut their teeth on the Post went on to work for the national press as well as the BBC and RTÉ.

## update from London ICPO office

It's been a very busy and productive time at ICPO London.

Conor McGinn visited prisoners in HMPs The Mount, Highpoint, Littlehey, Gartree, Dovegate, Birmingham, Frankland and Durham and our London prisons caseworker Gabriel Payne continues to visit all 8 of the London prisons on a regular basis.

Our caseworker Breda Power has been working hard for prisoners across the country from HMP Acklington near the Scottish border to HMP Parkhurst on the Isle of Wight. Liz Power, our administrator, has been managing all of the phone calls and correspondence between our office and prisoners, which has grown considerably in the last number of months.

In terms of the big issues for Irish prisoners in Britain, access to the Early Removal Scheme (ERS) remains unresolved. This is a scheme whereby foreign national prisoners are released 270 days before the halfway point of their sentence if they return to their country of origin i.e. Irish prisoners can be released up to 9 months before the midway point of their sentence if they return to Ireland. Unfortunately it's not that simple and there have been lots of problems around Irish prisoners trying to apply for it and getting refused. This is because of a complication that arose when Irish prisoners were given exemption from deportation. The UK Government has put legislation through Parliament to resolve the problem, but we are still waiting on the issuing of a commencement order to bring it into force.

We are lobbying extensively on this issue and working closely with the Irish Embassy in Britain to try and get the order in place as soon as possible. Please contact our office if you have any further queries about the ERS.

There have been lots of questions about what happens when you are released from prison in terms of serving your licence period. Our experience recently with a number of Irish prisoners has been that they need to stay in the UK for three-five months of their licence period before being allowed to go to Ireland. You need to talk very early on with your Offender Manager/Probation Officer about this and make sure you are only obliged to stay here for the minimum possible time before going home. Again, keep in touch with us and let us know if we can help you in this way.

Another big issue is repatriation to Ireland (or transfer if you want to go to a prison in Northern Ireland). The length of time it takes for applications to be processed is still a source of real concern for Irish prisoners and their families. ICPO will continue to engage with all relevant parties and highlight the need for prompt responses to repatriation applications. We will continue to assist anyone who wants to apply for repatriation and monitor their application as it progresses.

Everyone here at the London office wishes you all the very best, and wants you all to know you are in our thoughts and prayers. Keep in touch with us and we'll keep working for you as best we can!

**Conor McGinn**  
**ICPO London**

### **ICPO name change!**

There has been some confusion of late as to correct name of our organisation. Following a strategic review within our parent body, the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants (IECE), it was decided to change the name of ICPO from that of a Commission to a Council. Both the London and Maynooth offices will be called the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas.

We are still the same organisation and while our name may have changed slightly, our commitment to supporting Irish prisoners overseas and their families has not.



## Celebrates 40 Years

President Mary McAleese launched the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of PACE, on Friday, 22nd May at All Hallow's College, Dublin. Brian Hanley and Anne Sheehy represented ICPO at the celebration.

PACE is a community based voluntary agency that works with people with an offending background who have experienced periods of imprisonment. PACE currently consists of three projects; a transitional housing project, Priorswood House, a Long Term Accommodation Project and a Training for Employment Project. PACE projects provide the first steps towards integration for people leaving prison.

The focus of PACE projects is on developing the individuals' capacity to lead a stable, crime-free life. They do this by offering supported accommodation and providing education and training that is geared towards the labour market, tackling health and mental health problems and helping people to deal with drug/alcohol problems.

President Mary McAleese spoke of her admiration for the work of PACE and those who founded the organisation forty years ago. The President spoke about the possibility of second chances and that every day brings with it the possibility to do things differently. She paid tribute to all those who have developed new lives for themselves and have taken the opportunities afforded to them to make a fresh start.

A number of current and former residents spoke of their experience with PACE projects. It was wonderful to hear their stories. Somebody who had been referred to PACE by the ICPO also spoke. Prior to his deportation, he hadn't lived in, or even visited Ireland for decades. He was met at Dublin airport by an ICPO staff member, who went with him to PACE to meet the team. He was given accommodation, assisted in organising his benefits, helped to prepare his curriculum vitae and over the months that followed, training and employment options were

explored. He is now moving to PACE's longer term accommodation, has a job that he is interested in and high hopes for his future. While it was at times difficult for him – through perseverance, patience, a positive attitude and the support of PACE staff – he is making a really 'good-go' of things.

ICPO are very fortunate to have an organisation such as PACE, and indeed others like it, to assist returning ex-prisoners to re-integrate into society in such a supportive environment. We are conscious that for many of you reading this, returning to Ireland after a period of imprisonment brings with it many fears and concerns; how will I provide for myself when I get back? How can I make things different for myself so that I don't repeat the same mistakes again? I haven't lived in Ireland in years, what will I do?

In our next edition of ICPO News, we intend publishing the results of our ICPO Post-Release Report. This will include the results from a questionnaire which a number of our clients filled-out for us. There are very real issues of concern for Irish people imprisoned overseas and these will be highlighted in the upcoming report. It is important that awareness about these issues is raised and that change is effected where necessary.

Many clients wonder about the different post release services that exist for them. In our Summer 2008 newsletter, we included a piece from Seona Hyland of the Linkage Programme. The article, which most of you will have seen I hope, provided information on their services relating to career choices and training for ex-prisoners. We might look to include additional pieces on other post release support services in future editions of our newsletter.

Referral forms for PACE Priorswood House are available from ICPO.

Sr. Anne Sheehy  
ICPO Maynooth

# Finding Silence

We all have within us a centre of stillness surrounded by silence. Yet, for some, silence and stillness are elusive. Caught up in the hustle and bustle of daily life, whether in prison or at home we can find it difficult to drown out the clamour swirling about us. Even if we can retreat to a quiet spot, there is still the endless chatter in our minds to deal with. By chatter, I mean the swarm of thoughts that endlessly races through our minds. This incessant self-talk is like ripples on the surface of a pool, obscuring the stillness and serenity that lies deep within.

Stress can be a friend, for when it arrives, it gently tells us, "You need a break. You need to find solace in solitude. Dive deeply into the silence within. For it is in silence that we rejuvenate." Once we develop the habit of regularly visiting our inner oasis of silence, we will discover that there isn't any noise after all, just the sounds of life. Some find their inner stillness through the path of meditation. Yet, it isn't necessary to sit quietly with eyes closed to experience the tranquility of silence. It is just as accessible when enjoying nature, taking a walk or just observing the comings and goings around us.

Lao-Tzu a Chinese wise man stated, "Just remain in the centre, watching. And then forget that you are there." Meditation -helpful as it is- isn't necessary to discover the sanctuary of silence. A simple walk will do. In fact, even that is unnecessary, even when the last lock down

occurs it is possible to find silence and beauty, for as Franz Kafka (1883 ~ 1924) wrote, "You do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait. Do not even wait, be quite still and solitary."

There are some that busy themselves in all manner of rituals and repetitive behaviours to prepare themselves for another life. Instead of placing our hopes in a future life, why not make the most of what we already have? Stepping into the pool of silence helps us to experience joy now. Perhaps you have seen a ray of sunshine pierce a black sky and give birth to a rainbow. When faced with staggering beauty, what do you say? Usually nothing. We are rendered speechless. Awe, wonder, and joy are silent. They beckon you, but their call is silent. To be aware of their presence we have to be still and listen.



If you wish to experience life, rather than be swept away by it, be sure to set aside some time each day, no matter how brief, to find silence. For there you will be able to recharge your batteries, tap into your inner wisdom, experience the gifts of wonder and awe, and join hands with all that is. Your greatest power is within you, tune in and turn it on!

**John Farrelly**  
**Director of Counselling, Accord**

ICPO News is for you!

Please keep sending us your letters and poetry.

We love hearing from you.



## Family Day

This year's family day took place in The Sanctuary, Stanhope St, Dublin on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009. There was a good attendance again which was very encouraging and glorious sunshine added to the very pleasant surrounds in the garden. The objective for the day was to help families develop coping skills for themselves and to understand that they also need care, support and understanding.

A talk from **Fr Gerry McFlynn, prison chaplain, Wormwood Scrubs, UK** helped families understand the routine of prison life better and the role and support that the chaplain and other support services in the prison can give.

**John Farrelly, Director of Counselling, ACCORD** & frequent contributor to ICPO News spoke on: '*Supporting a Loved One in Prison.*' Many families said they found his talk very useful as it covered a wide variety of skills and relaxation techniques focused on stress relief and caring for oneself. This time was special as it allowed family members to re-discover themselves even if it was for a short period of time. They also learned skills which they could take with them and practice in their own space when they felt things were becoming too difficult.

After a very pleasant lunch there was an Open Forum where people could talk about matters that affected them. There was lively input from families who were willing to share their experiences and also help those present who found themselves in the situation for the first time. This helped to relieve some of their worries and concerns—especially around prison visits.

**Joan O'Cleirigh**  
**ICPO Volunteer**

## Discounted Travel within Great Britain

At the Family Day one family member told us about the Family & Friends Railcard which she found was great value when travelling with children on prison visits in the UK.

### What is a Family & Friends Railcard?

Where ever you're going, a Family & Friends Railcard will save on rail fares. As long as you have at least one child, aged between 5 and 15 years, travelling with you, you'll qualify for Family & Friends Railcard discounts.

A Family & Friends Railcard (formerly Family Railcard) costs **£26** and you save **1/3 off** adult fares, and **60% off** children's fares on travel throughout Great Britain.

Up to **four adults and four kids** can travel on one card, and they don't even need to be related. So, dramatic savings can be made over a year.

### How do I buy a Railcard?

Buy online - Your Railcard will be processed within one working day and sent by First Class post (free of charge). Please ensure that you allow enough time before your journey for your Railcard to reach you.

Tickets can also be bought at a staffed ticket office or National Rail licensed Travel Agent. There are some restrictions—for details of these and any further information check out this website. [www.familyandfriends-railcard.co.uk](http://www.familyandfriends-railcard.co.uk)





## ICPO Penfriend Scheme



The aim of the scheme is to enable Irish people in prison abroad to keep in touch with everyday life in Ireland. It can also help with any loneliness and isolation that you might be experiencing.

If you do not already have a penfriend and would like to maintain a friendly correspondence with one of our volunteers, please fill out the enclosed application form and return it to us in the post-paid envelope.

If you would like any further information, please contact us.



## BOOK REVIEW

### Water for Elephants

By Sara Gruen

This novel was very timely set as it is in the early 1930's during the time of the Great Depression in America. It was a time of sky high unemployment, hobo jungles and desperation about

money. **Water for Elephants** goes back and forth in time in the life of Jacob Jankowski, a young Polish - American who leaves veterinary college after the sudden death of his parents. He finds work in a circus tending to the circus animals where he meets the lovely Marlena and her husband August. August is a man capable of great charm but also of great anger although the author was better at conveying August's menace rather than his charisma.

The novel has another heroine, Rosie of the beautiful amber eyes. Rosie was easily my favourite character - charming, intelligent, mischievous but sadly abused. There are a wide range of other characters including the mercenary circus manager, Uncle Al, Kinko - a dwarf and Camel, an elderly roustabout on the circus.

The book works on many levels, as a love story, as the story of one man's progression

through life from youth to old age and as a story about exploitation. **Water for Elephants** makes us think about how we relate to others. Kinko for example is desperate to keep his job as a clown because his size would make it almost impossible to do anything else. Other workers are also mistreated but are too desperate to protest.

Gruen has a flair for describing animals. Animals play a key even pivotal part in the story. They are shown as being capable of love, deception even humour. Anyone who has ever had a favourite pet can relate to Gruen's descriptions of animals as personalities in their own right and she makes us care about what happens to them.

I always count a novel as a success if it brings you into the world it describes. As I read this book I felt that I could almost see the circus and smell the sawdust mixed with the tang of animals.

**Water for Elephants** is a book I can recommend as both diversion and as thought provoking.

**Catherine Jackson, ICPO Maynooth**

# ICPO Art Competition

**ICPO are delighted to announce the details of our Art competition.**

This time we've decided to divide the competition into three categories. We'd like you to send us entries under one of the following headings:

1. Prison life - your surroundings, your friends in prison, your experiences of being in prison... anything that relates to being in prison
2. Memories of home - your town or village, your family, a local monument, a special time or place that you had... anything that relates to your home life
3. Experiences of emigration - moving away from home, your parents' story of emigrating, settling in a new country... anything that relates to being Irish in another country.

**The winner of each category will receive £50  
Overall winner will receive £75 (or euro equivalent).**

Entries are welcome from all Irish prisoners and can take the form of drawings, paintings, crafts ... really anything that you want to use to show how the competition categories relate to you. Only one entry per person. Your entries may be used in an Art Exhibition to commemorate ICPO's 25th anniversary in 2010.

On a separate page, please include the following information:

- A) Your name, prison number and address
- B) Title of Work
- C) Category No.

**Competition closing date is Friday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2009.**

The competition is being judged by renowned Irish artist Bernard Canavan, leading garden designer Krista Grindley, and ICPO London Manager Conor McGinn.

**Please send entries to the  
ICPO London office:  
ICPO, 50-52 Camden Square, London NW1 9XB, England**

# IRISHMAN WRONGLY JAILED IN 1975 OVER LONDON MURDER, DIES

**Tipperary man Frank Johnson who was at the centre of one of Britain's longest running miscarriage of justice cases, died last October, aged 72. Frank was convicted in September 1976 of the murder of Mr Sheridan, his friend and employer, along with two co-accused. He always maintained his innocence.**



Following the release of the Birmingham Six from prison in 1991, Mr Johnson's case received a much higher profile when his cause was championed by Billy Power among others. He was represented by leading human rights solicitor Gareth Peirce.

Before Mr Sheridan died he made a statement to police exonerating Frank Johnson but that statement did not surface for 20 years. The statement, which said that Mr Johnson had come to his rescue and extinguished the flames, was only discovered by the Criminal Cases Review Commission when it was requested to re-examine the case by Ms Peirce.

Following a long campaign, the case was referred to the Court of Appeal in London, where the conviction was quashed by Lord Justice Longmore who said that it was impossible to say the conviction was safe. Mr Johnson would have been eligible for parole and released from prison years earlier if he had stated he was guilty but he insisted that clearing his name was more important than leaving jail with a wrongful conviction still staining his character.

When his conviction was abruptly quashed, he was left on the pavement outside Swaleside prison with nothing but three large sacks of evidence and a small bag of clothes. He stayed with Billy Power, one of the freed Birmingham Six and his family when he was first released.

When interviewed after his release Frank Johnson told a journalist 'I don't have anything, not even an identity. I don't have a birth certificate, National Insurance number or passport. I have no way of proving who I am. After 26 years of being a prison number, I am now not even that'

He continued 'I have plenty of time to think in here—I mean I had plenty of time when I was in prison', he corrected himself. The war in Afghanistan, the twin towers, the floods in Bangladesh that flushed away entire villages. Society is fundamentally unfair and I was just dealt a bum hand.'

'Now I have learnt not to worry about things I have no control over. If you are fighting to swim against the tide on your own, you are going to lose...I kept the papers and I knew somewhere in their depths was proof of my innocence so I was never hopeless. It was just a matter of getting the right person to read it.'

Fr Gerry McFlynn, formerly of ICPO London and currently Prison Chaplain at HMP Workwood Scrubs, wrote about Frank 'The fact that Frank Johnson endured such a sentence for so long while still keeping his dignity and personal integrity speaks volumes for his character and the man he was. On my visits to him at Swaleside I found him to be courteous, friendly and always pleased to see me. In short he was a real gentleman. May his soul now experience the peace and freedom he was so cruelly denied in this life'

A grand daughter of Billy Power spoke at Frank's funeral of what Frank meant to the children and young people of their family. She said that "Frank had a special way and always said 'to enjoy and get to know kids you have to get on their level' and this is exactly what he did. He was our friend. His love for us was truly unconditional. He had the fun factor and could be mischievous. He was always on our side. If ever we felt misunderstood we were guaranteed Frank's sympathy. He could relate to us. He took the time. Sadly, Frank is gone now but not his spirit. This will live on as long as we are here to remember him. We will not forget Frank."



# Sports

By Eoin O'Mahoney

## Gaelic Games

The men of Kerry are this year's Football National League 1 winners. They beat Derry in the final at Croke Park in late April, by a single goal. The final score was Kerry 1-15 to Derry's 15 points. They ran out easy winners in that league and topped out the group with 13 points in all, four ahead of their eventual finalists. Cork beat Monaghan in the League 2 final 1-14 to 12 points. In the Hurling National League, Kilkenny added the title to their All-Ireland haul last year by beating Tipperary in a fabulous display of open hurling at headquarters. The score on the day was 2-26 to Kilkenny to Tipp's 4-17. Offaly beat Wexford by a single goal to take the League 2 title in early May about three weeks before the throw in for the championship. There is great store put in Offaly's chances in this year's championships.

In the early games of this year's hurling championships, Wexford have reaped revenge on their League 2 finalists and beat Offaly by 2-17 to 16 points on the opening day. The following day Galway (playing in Leinster in this year's contest) trounced Laois by 5-29 to 17 points. A week later a resurgent Dublin hurling team beat Antrim by 2-16 to 12 points. This is still early days though. In Munster Tipperary beat old rivals Cork on their home ground in Thurles by

1-19 to 19 points. Finally in Ulster, Fermanagh, Donegal and Armagh won their games on the opening day while Armagh regained the upper hand against Donegal a week later beating them 3-24 to 2-12. London had beaten Fermanagh but went down to a sharp Derry team a

week later. Down meanwhile have put paid to any ambitions Armagh had by thrashing them 5-20 to 13 points in late May.

In the early games of the football championships, Mayo beat New York in the Big Apple, Galway beat London in London and the Roscommon team came close to ending their season but eventually beat Leitrim by just four points. In Leinster, Louth beat Carlow, Wicklow beat Longford and Kildare beat Offaly on the opening weekend. In what is seen as a traditional marker of quality for the Leinster championship, Dublin didn't impress although ran out eventual winners over their near rivals Meath. The score was a close run affair with Dublin chalking up just 14 points to Meath's 12. In Munster, Cork beat Waterford and Limerick just overcame Tipperary by two points on the opening weekend. On the following weekend, Kerry and Cork drew over 13 points to face another test in a few weeks. Meanwhile Limerick continued their march by beating Clare 1-13 to 1-9.

In Ulster's championship, Fermanagh have beaten Down and Derry Monaghan. Tyrone continued their relentless run to the province's title by beating the men of Armagh, 2-10 to 1-10. A week later and Cavan just pipped Fermanagh to end their championship run at an early stage.

## Soccer

The Republic of Ireland, managed by Giovanni Trapattoni and Liam Brady, continue their steady if unspectacular path to the FIFA World Cup 2010 in South Africa. After a lacklustre friendly performance in London and drawing against Nigeria one goal a piece, they held Bulgaria

to a similar scoreline to consolidate their 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the group. Bulgaria responded quickly to Dunne's powerful 26 minute header scoring 6 minutes later. In a tense second half, the Irish clung to a vital away draw and now stand in a good position to qualify for next summer's festival of soccer in South Africa. Were Ireland to qualify, it would be the first time since Japan and Korea in 2002, a World Cup full of off-the-pitch drama for the team. This is a newly-emergent team with Preston's Sean St Leger impressing early on and Stephen Hunt emerging as a formidable talent.

The qualifying group has Italy on top on 14 points after 6 games played. The Irish have one more game and have amassed 13 points. Bulgaria lie third on 8 points with 6 games now played. The Republic's remaining fixtures are away to Cyprus on September 5<sup>th</sup> and then two home games against Italy and Montenegro. These games will take place in Croke Park and are the final games to be played there before the return to the new Lansdowne Road, now called the Aviva stadium.

The new League of Ireland season is now in full swing with Dublin's Bohemians standing on 32 points after 16 games. The top three teams are all keeping a close eye on each other with Derry and Cork providing a stiff challenge to Bohs. Drogheda and Bray Wanderers prop up the table. The first division is headed by UCD and Shelbourne, now in their third season in the lower division. Crowds in both leagues have been good this year and there is some talk that the economic downturn may be boosting interest in domestic football.

In England, Manchester United

won the English Premier League title on the second to last day from a resurgent Liverpool. Although the teams shared the top two spots for many of the last weeks of the League campaign, it was Alex Ferguson's men who proved the best team again this year, equalling Liverpool's 11 League titles. Although United were beaten in the FA Cup at the semi final stage, their season was still a success with a Champions' League final appearance in Rome, late in May. Newcastle United were finally relegated to the Championship and it is unclear if their manager, Alan Shearer, will stay on following the teams; sale to a new owner.

United's opponents on the night were Barcelona FC. There was early pressure from United to settle the initial nerves but the much stronger Barcelona team, now guided by former star Pepe Guardiola, scored a goal either side of half time to beat them 2-0. The deserved winners, Barcelona put on a fine display of measured, attacking football and denied United becoming the first ever team to win back to back CL titles under the new format.

United's Ronaldo was a tamed player on the night and Iniesta and Lionel Messi were the real stars on a wonderful night for European football.

With the conclusion of the seasons, speculation turns to transfers. A new president at Real Madrid means that there'll be millions to spend, even in these straightened times. The Brazilian Kaka has been signed from Milan for a fee of two and half times his own weight in gold while there is also talk of Ronaldo finally moving to the Spanish capital to complete the building of a new team of Galacticos.

### **Rugby**

This has been a very special year for Irish Rugby. It began with the Irish senior team winning the Grand Slam, 6-Nations and Triple

Crown. This has been a long time coming, but was definitely worth the wait. The head-to-head with a strong Welsh team on the final day will live long in the memory, in a match that came right down to the wire. It was especially nice for players like Brian O'Driscoll, Gordon Darcy, Paul O'Connell and Ronan O'Gara – who have had to wait a very long time for this great achievement.

On Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May, Leinster won the Heineken Cup and in so doing joined both Munster and Ulster as winners of this prestigious trophy.

To cap it all off, 14 Irish players were selected to tour with the British and Irish Lions. This was a larger number than Wales, England or Scotland and is a reflection of the successes earlier in the year. Unfortunately a number of players have had to drop-out through injury and suspension; Jerry Flannery, Tomás O'Leary, Alan Quinlan and most recently Stephen Ferris suffered an injury to his knee. Munsterman Paul O'Connell was named captain of the 2009 Lions.

### **Golf**

BALTRAY - Irish amateur Shane Lowry rounded off a remarkable debut on the European Tour by winning the Irish Open. He is the first amateur to win on his debut appearance.

Lowry, 22, defeated British professional Robert Rock at the third extra hole of a sudden-death playoff after both men finished on 17-under-par 271, two strokes better than Swede Johan Edfors.

While Lowry can savour a two-year exemption when he decides to turn professional, Rock's consolation was to pocket the €500,000 first prize.

Shane Lowry became the third amateur to win a European Tour event.

### **Cricket**

The Irish cricket team continues to go from strength to strength and is on course to gain a spot in the upcoming Cricket World Cup in two years time. They are currently doing very well in the 20/20 series of games.