

THE IRISH IN BIRMINGHAM....

Birmingham Irish Community Forum Ltd Newsletter

Issue No. 5 - June 1999

BIRMINGHAM SAINT PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

After twelve months of careful planning, the big day had arrived - Sunday March 14th and the Saint Patrick's Day Parade. Not a cloud in the sky and the sun beaming down on St Catherine's Church as the congregation assembled for mass. The Lord Mayor, Mrs Susan Anderson and her husband arrived and were escorted to their seats by Pat O'Neill and his wife. While mass was being celebrated, the floats were assembling outside in Irving St. As the people came out of mass they joined the large crowds lining the streets, with over an hour to go before the start of the Parade. The Parade itself had encouraged tens of thousands of people to get up early to display their national pride in what turned out to be the third largest parade in the world after New York and Dublin.

By eleven o'clock, Digbeth was a sea of green and gold, with happy smiling faces eagerly awaiting the Parade. People of all nationalities, holding out the hands of friendship to one another. At eleven thirty the countdown started, the whistle blew and the Parade moved off from Irving St, led by the Kiltubrid Pipe Band who came all the way from County Leitrim. Following the Kiltubrid Pipe Band was the gaily decorated bus with the Lord Mayor and many VIP's, happily waving to the tens of thousands lining the streets. The newly formed Tir na nOg band followed the bus, having done themselves and Sylvia Murphy Brennan proud after having a mere six months to prepare for the Parade.

One by one the other floats followed, all very colourful and well decorated. Great credit is due to all who put many long hours into decorating the floats and preparing the dancers and costumes.

With the floats now on the move, the bands and county associations followed, led by the newly formed Birmingham Irish Pipes and Drums (see below) with two members of the Parade committee playing drums - Maurice Long from Kerry and Brendan Mulvey from Leitrim. It was a proud day for Bill Grigg who helped form the band and his son Joel, aged 6 who stole the show playing the drum in his kilt.

The Parade finally arrived in The Emerald Village in Bradford St, where the bands and dancers entertained everyone with their displays. The Parade had come to an end for another year but the singing and dancing went on late into the evening with people who had travelled from all over the U.K., meeting their friends, some of whom they hadn't seen since the previous year. All left with the wish to come back again next year to join in another great day for the Irish.

Great credit is due to Anthony Duffy and his wonderful dedicated committee for organising the third largest and friendliest St Patrick's Day Parade in the World. A huge Thank You is also due to everyone who took part or helped to organise the Parade 1999 and everyone who came along on the day to help make it the day that it was.

THE BIRMINGHAM IRISH PIPES AND DRUMS

The band was formed in October 1998 and to date have played at several County Association Dances and many charity functions.

The highlight for the band so far was taking part in the St Patrick's Day Parade this year. They also played at the Rep theatre in May at two shows to save the Town Hall organised by Dr Carl Chinn. Carl brought three of the bands members on stage to thank them for their support.

The band has also taken part in the Birmingham and Oxford Lord mayors Parades. In June they will be travelling to Leitrim for the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the Kiltubrid Pipe Band.



The band meets every Tuesday at 7.30pm at St Mary and St John's in Erdington. All new members welcome or call Bill Grigg on (0121) 686 3832.

THIS ISSUE IS SPONSORED BY SOUTH BIRMINGHAM COLLEGE • THANK YOU

IRISH BUSINESS GROUP

The Irish Business Group represents the needs of Irish Businesses throughout the Midlands and aims to increase its members profitability and success.

All Irish businesses, business people, sales reps, professionals or companies wishing to trade with Ireland or the Irish community are welcome to join:

Banks to Bricklayers
Pubs to Professionals
Solicitors to Sub-contractors

Benefits to members

All new members who join before August 1999 will benefit from:

- ☛ A **FREE** entry in our Irish Business Directory
- ☛ A **FREE** entry on our Website Directory
- ☛ **FREE** invitations to various business networking events and seminars

**All for an introductory cost of only £50
for one years membership**

For further details please call (0121) 622 3622
or

come along to our **Irish Business Networking Event**
at the **Celtic Court Hotel**, Golden Hillock Road,
Small Heath, Birmingham - **17th June at 7.30pm**

www.irish-business-group.com

FREE ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING

Do you want to be more assertive?

If you are a woman and you think that you would like to be more assertive, then the Employment Project at the Forum has just the thing for you. We are offering **FREE** training in assertiveness / confidence building for women. The classes will take place at **SS Mary & John Social Club, Gravelly Hill North, Erdington** on each Wednesday in July from 10am to 12pm. Priority for these classes will be given to either unemployed or low-waged women, but if you do not fit into either of these categories and are still interested then please get in touch. **FREE** childcare facilities will be available on site.

**For further information please contact
Caroline or Catherine at the Employment Project
on (0121) 622 1168.**

THE IRISH IN BIRMINGHAM

INVISIBLE PEOPLE

Imagine a community in Birmingham that includes tens of thousands of women and men, yet which was hardly recognised by the city, until a few years ago. A group of people that had very few places it could call its own - other than pubs - and which organised no community festival until the late 1990's, for fear of adverse public reaction. A community whose younger members often suffer from a crisis of identity, and many of whom have poor educational achievement and low self - esteem. Young people who face harassment at school, and few if any have positive images of their identity and who learn that it is more comfortable not to be recognised for who they are.

Imagine a community which is trendy and popular on television and in advertising, but whose real-life members are still often viewed as 'potential criminals', or 'psychiatrically disordered'.

Yes, the above description fits the experience of the Irish community in Birmingham. It also describes the recent experience of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community in the city. Both communities have much in common, and yet have not traditionally had much to do with each other. Cairde le Cheile was established in 1997, to bring together Irish people who are not heterosexual, and to promote a positive identity for our Irishness and our sexuality.

Some people might ask, 'Why do gay people have to be open about who they are?'. Of all communities, we Irish have already learned the price to be paid for remaining an invisible people. Nobody should feel pressured to be open about their sexuality, but everyone should have a choice, without fear of discrimination.

Irish gay people are working hard to support each other. There are helplines and social groups (such as Cairde le Cheile), and groups for gay Catholics and Christians and even Gaeilgeoiri. But we also seek inclusion, on an equal footing, within the wider Irish community. Getting there won't be easy - we have a lot of cultural baggage that can make dialogue about sexuality difficult. Community leaders - including the Irish Forum - have a special responsibility to lead the dialogue, as indeed Presidents McAleese and Robinson have done so admirably in Ireland.

CAIRDE LE CHEILE (FRIENDS TOGETHER)

More information from L&G Switchboard on (0121) 622 6589 (nightly 7-10pm), or write c/o The Irish Forum.

GENERATIONS WORKING TOGETHER

Are you over 50 and Irish?

Would you be interested in sharing skills and experiences with young Irish people?

Are you possibly interested in genealogy (researching family trees)?

Age concern have a **Millennium grant fund** for 'generations working together' - small projects led by over 50's, aimed at sharing skills with younger people (under 25), to benefit the community.

One idea is to set up a genealogy/family tree research group - but you may have other ideas.

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact **Caroline Carr** (Irish Forum) on (0121) 622 1168 or **Rory Murray** (Irish Welfare) on (0121) 604 6222

Closing date for applications is September 1st 1999

DR CARL CHINN

Dr Carl Chinn, the well known historian and broadcaster is a tremendous supporter of the Birmingham St Patrick's Day Parade. Indeed he has been a great defender of the Irish Community in the city - not least because his wife hails from Dublin. Dr Chinn broadcasts six days a week on Radio WM and also lectures at Birmingham University. He is currently researching the Irish in Birmingham going back over the years and would be very interested in hearing from Irish people who were immigrants to Birmingham in the 30's, 40's and 50's with their memories and experiences in those times. He can be contacted at BBC Pebble Studios, Pebble Mill Road, Birmingham, B5 7SD.

RESOURCE HERITAGE CENTRE

A Resource/Heritage Centre is currently being established at the Irish Centre in Digbeth. If anyone has any **books, magazines, memorabilia or any items of interest** eg: tickets, photos, old passports etc... that they would like to donate (we will collect items if necessary) or if anyone simply has any **ideas** on what could be added to the Resource/Heritage Centre could they please contact **Pauline** or **Katriona** at the Irish Forum on (0121) 622 4102

CUMHA

'Northfield Irish of Yesteryear Remembered'

Some of our older readers will surely remember with affection some of the personalities of the Irish Community in the Northfield of the thirties, forties and fifties.

Who could ever forget the jovial Brigid Millar? Then there were the MacEnroes who kept "The Bell" and later "The Black Horse".

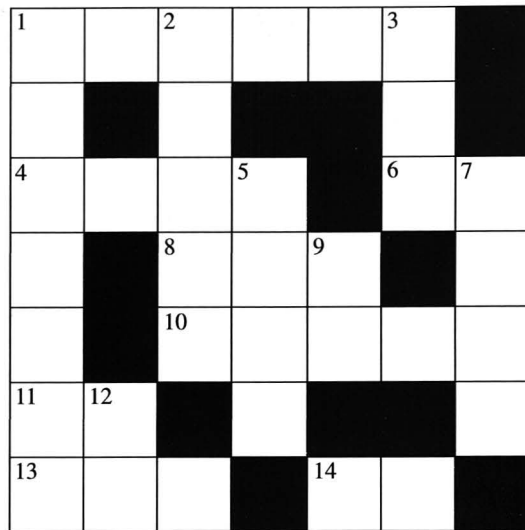
For the most part, things revolved around the parish church of Our Lady and St Brigid. The original church building was a large hut-like structure in Steel Road. This was to be replaced by a brick building in Frankley Beeches Road, which in turn was replaced by a beautiful new church in a style reminiscent of some regions in Italy. The new edifice was dominated by a campanile visible from some distance around. The earlier building became the church hall in which concerts, dances, bazaars and other social events were held and enthusiastically attended, prior to its incorporation into the then new primary school.

The parish priest during much of this time was Father P.J. Cassidy from Charlestown, Co. Mayo, later to become Canon Cassidy. At the launch of a new parish fund-raising scheme, Fr P. J. made a memorable exhortative appeal from the pulpit for recruits to join and organise the 'Men's Guarantee Fund' - ".....I want young men, middle-aged men, elderly men, single men, married men, Irish men, English men, men of any nationality, Northfield men, West Heath men, Longbridge men, Rubery men, Cofton men, Lickey men, Rednal men....."

The Cahill sisters prepared the children for First Holy Communion and for Confirmation. After the First Holy Communion mass, the children were served breakfast in the presbytery and on leaving were given sweets and oranges.

President of the St Vincent de Paul conference was the immensely likeable Jimmie Gillen, a native of Ardagh, Co. Longford.

But a couple of hundred yards along the road was the home and surgery of that quiet, unassuming and popular medical G.P., Dr Dominic John Browne from Co. Tyrone. Some years later he was joined by a junior partner, the equally popular Co. Westmeath man, Dr Michael Whitelaw; he of the twinkling eyes and almost mischievous smile, merely to meet him was therapeutic. (Contd over)



CROSFHOCAL

(Solutions in Irish)

Clues:

Across:

1. Early in the day
4. Request
6. It flies
8. Eaten at midday
10. Say
11. On the bread,
it is hoped
13. Wrinkle
14. Jumped over the moon

Down:

1. Head of ship, harbour,
school, etc..
2. Degree of peer
3. Brother of niece
5. Garment worn formally
7. Frenzy
9. Plural "the"
12. Not yours, his, hers,
our or their!

(ANSWERS IN NEXT ISSUE)

North field Irish contd

The Macpherson family was from Co Kildare. Jack, Paddy, Peter and all the family were well known and respected active members of the Irish Community. Jack, a great hearted man, was a stalwart at the fundraising for Fr Hudson's Homes and other charities. On "flag days" in Birmingham, Jack would station himself in the Navigation St tram terminals for the whole day. With his laughing eyes, curly hair and soft pleasing blas, he would charm the birds from the trees. It was quite usual for Jack to have two dozen or more collecting tins, filled to capacity by the days end.

In the words of the late Donal Mac Amhalai ".....a great people surely."

THE SECRET

Face Powder may catch a man
But it's Baking Powder that will keep him

IRISH BLESSING

May the road rise to meet you
May the wind always be at your back
May the sun shine warm upon your face
And may God hold you in the palm of his hand

Longford Association are currently looking for new members. Interested - contact Tom Donohoe (0121) 384 4110. The Longford Association are also looking for **Bill Lucas** and **Tom Corrigan** who they met at this years St Patrick's Day Parade. Contact Tom Donohoe (0121) 384 4110.

Anybody interested in applying for Millennium Small Grants - contact Pauline on (0121) 622 4102.

Anybody who would like to provide **Irish Food** at the end of next years St Patrick's Day Parade will need a **Food Hygiene Certificate**. Training can be arranged at minimal cost by contacting Caroline Carr on (0121) 622 1168.

If anybody has any contacts with **Irish marching bands** and they would like them to attend the Parade next year then please contact Katriona Larkin on (0121) 622 4102.

Irish Language Classes are available at:

Monday - The Irish Centre - 622 2314

Wednesday - SS Mary & John - 373 0263

Thursday - Worcester College - (01905) 725543

Friday - Mount Carmel, Redditch - (01527) 591248

Mass is celebrated in Irish every second Sunday of the month at 5pm at SS Mary and Johns, Gravelly Hill North, Erdington.

If anyone has any articles, jokes, letters or details of forthcoming events that they would like to put into our **Autumn newsletter** could they please send them to the Forum Offices to be received no later than 31st July 1999.

Partyland "Where Fun Parties Begin" The new party superstore in Acock's Green **NOW OPEN** on the Warwick Road opposite Safeways. No matter what the occasion - Communion, Anniversaries, Parties, Weddings - We can provide balloons, hats, cups, banners, napkins etc.. Tel: (0121) 708 1616.

SOUTH BIRMINGHAM COLLEGE

The Irish Forum in conjunction with South Birmingham College are offering a range of courses (subject to demand).

Some suggestions are Basic I.T. skills, Irish Cooking, D.I.Y., Spreadsheets or Databases

All courses would be **recognised qualifications** and there will be no course fees but possibly just a small registration fee of £10 or £15. For more information or course suggestions please contact Katriona or Caroline on (0121) 622 4102.