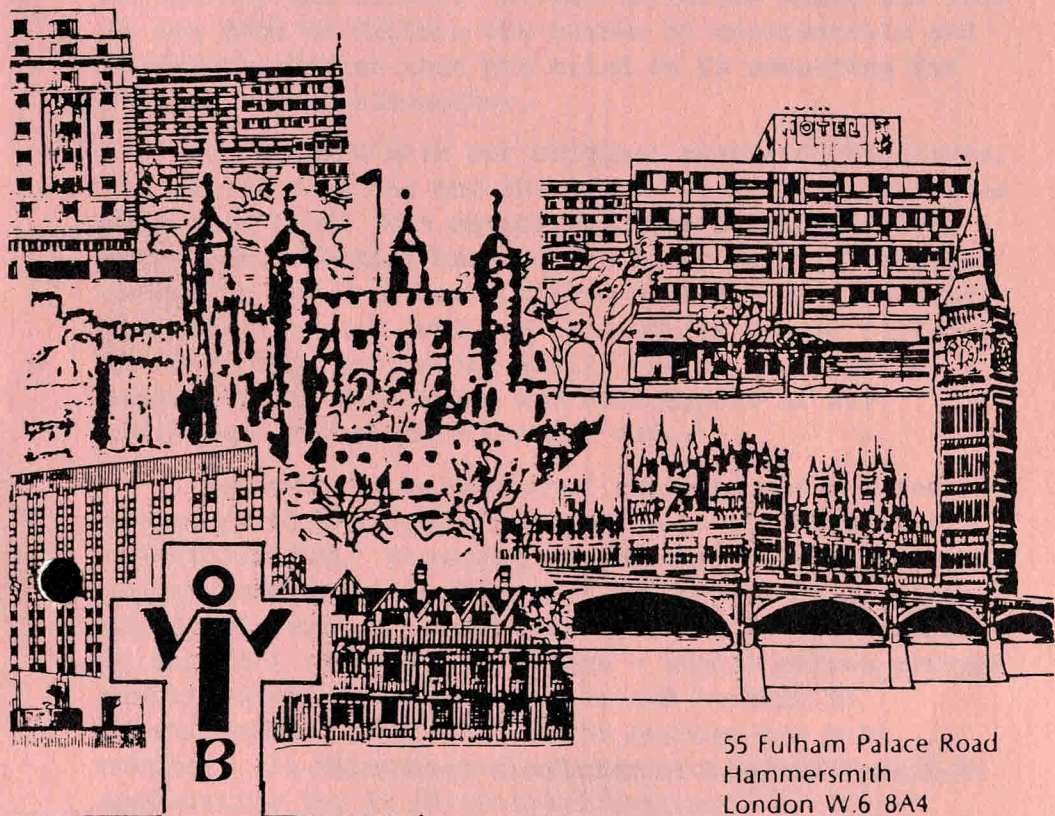


**IRISH WELFARE BUREAU**  
**HAMMERSMITH, LONDON.**

*13th annual report*  
**1983**



**Hammersmith**

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BUREAU and HOSTEL STAFF

Brian Lawlor OSA

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*Cover Design & Layout: Denis Condon OSA*

## INTRODUCTION

Presenting an Annual Report concerning matters as delicate and personal as the Bureau's day-to-day operation is not the easiest of tasks. However, I hope it will convey some idea or reflection of the concern and interest that we showed on the 6,263 occasions that the door was opened in response to a request of one kind or another. Not all demanded a great amount of time or support; in fact, on many occasions little was needed to satisfy the caller. We had to refuse some, but then in the name of Welfare the number of unreasonable and hard-luck stories that are tried on is something for another report altogether.

In keeping with our original aims and objectives, the report mentions the increasing workload on the same number of staff that established the Bureau thirteen years ago. Looking back on the first report, when 511 knocks on the door are compared with the six thousand plus of last year, one can only wonder how we filled in the day then; or, better still, one is continually amazed by the dedication and willingness of all concerned down to this present day.

Because of the number of requests made, I feel it necessary to pay special attention to the matter of IDENTIFICATION. It cannot be stressed often enough that anybody coming to England must be in possession of an acceptable form of identification. It is bad enough - or should I say not good enough - when a person arrives penniless and destitute; but to add to this NO identification papers makes the problem far more complex. In emergency circumstances last year we made application for 42 Birth Certificates: these were essential before any benefit could be claimed. We don't



expect or wish people to be dependent on Welfare Benefits, but we do want to make clear the need for such documents. My thanks to the many Superintendent Registrars around Ireland for their prompt action on our requests. You were not aware of it, but your swift action brought a smile to many a sad face.

We were in the happy position of being able to match the increased demands by another successful fund-raising campaign. All the functions were well supported and gave our hard-working team of volunteers the satisfaction of raising in excess of £20,000. One of these workers for over ten years died suddenly in our midst in Christmas week. On behalf of all his friends I would like to pay a special tribute to DAVE CROWLEY. We will miss you, Dave, for your ticket-selling, but much more as a friend. May he rest in peace.

Our finances were augmented by grants from the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, and the Irish Government. We are indebted to both authorities for their continued interest and support. Because of the increased demand for men's clothing and our ability to meet these needs, a very special word of gratitude is due to the many people who organised collections for clothes. You have taken to heart the words written sixteen hundred years ago by St. Basil the Great:-

"The bread that you do not use is the  
bread of the hungry,  
The garment hanging in your wardrobe  
is the garment of him who is naked.  
The shoes that you do not wear are the  
shoes of the one who is barefoot;  
The money that you keep locked away  
is the money of the poor."

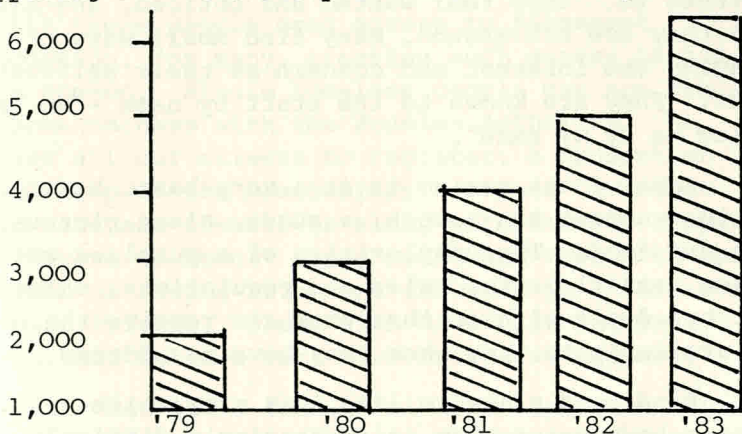
With so much goodwill and support available to the Bureau one can look forward to another year with great hope. To my colleagues on the team it is a case

of 'welcome aboard' for another year and a big thank-you for your loyalty during 1983.

Brian Lawlor OSA.

## Social Worker's Report

Very often the sheer statistics of a helping agency will give an insight, not only into the work of that agency, but will serve as a commentary on what is happening in the society in which it works.



The inexorable upward spiral shows graphically, in every sense of the word, the increasing pressure on a staff that has not increased in number since 1979. That pressure is not just from an increased volume of people who need our help but from the "bottleneck" effect of trying to find solutions in a depression - no jobs, public spending cuts and increasing housing shortage.

Yet again as this report is written the mainland

bombing campaign of the IRA has meant that the plight of the most vulnerable of their fellow countrymen and women - the unemployed, the down-and-out, the psychiatrically ill are made even more vulnerable in a Country which, although for the most part unbelievably tolerant has pockets of post-bombing prejudice.

The Bureau in 1983 dealt with 6,263 callers, an average of 25 callers every day. Each of these had to be interviewed and that interview written up. But of course that diagnostic process is often only the beginning of the work. Very often the presenting problem is an excuse to alleviate the terrible loneliness of the exile who has nobody in the world interested in him as a person. Many just need to be listened to. They feel wanted and noticed, and missed when they are not around. Many find small ways of repaying the interest and concern as their self-esteem grows. They are known to the staff by name - "He has called me by my name".

Some of the caring is at a very basic human level. For the vagrant man a wash, a shave, clean clothes, heat and food. The complexities of a puzzling welfare system, entitlements, rules and regulations, safeguards etc. are dealt with so that they can receive the money not available to them when they have no address.

Finding a place to live in a city which has an ongoing housing problem is increasingly difficult, frustrating and time-consuming. Many are pushed into crisis accommodation. It is common to pay £42 - £70 a week for Bed and Breakfast. For 'Bed' read just a bed with perhaps a small locker, sharing with five others in a room; for 'Breakfast' read a cup of tea and a slice of bread. The rest of the day you walk - and walk. Incidentally, the Bureau buys a lot of shoes for those who wear them out walking the streets of London.



These people are the most vulnerable group in our Society today especially when they meet with illness, which is inevitable given their life-style and advancing years. In London alone there are still 1,900 cases of TB diagnosed each year. Significant numbers of these are single homeless people. T.B. is by no means their only ailment: many suffer from diabetes, lung cancer, arthritis, as well as alcoholism and mental illness.

Accommodation at our expense was provided for 533 clients. They were either newly arrived to the City or those who wished to reorganise themselves on Social Security Benefit. The cost of this service for 1983: £2,614. Take-away meals were provided for 3,156 clients. Cost: £2,364.

All these people need access to permanent accommodation. For many, creating such access is all that is needed. Single homeless people can now register their homelessness with the Housing Authority. We encourage all our clients to register. A proportion need the help of the Domiciliary services to enable them to maintain themselves along with low-key support as they learn to budget - pay bills and cope with the transition of living alone and isolated in a flat away from their friends. Those with alcoholic and mental problems need schemes with more intensive support.

Even what looks like a 'miracle' solution can cause problems. A flat of one's own, a dream for some, is a nightmare for a man who has never been on his own. We have had clients coming in on the edge of nervous breakdowns. Living as they are on a financial knife edge one giro lost in the system, one payment not made starts a relentless slide into personal bankruptcy. It is difficult for those of us lucky enough to have any capital to appreciate the terrible pressure of this existence. (Do you know how much D.H.S.S. gives as a living allowance?). One sometimes wonders if the present tendency to provide flats without support to

single homeless people is only creating more problems for the future. However, much is being learned about the kind of support that is necessary to offer through the unfamiliar and sometimes disturbing transition from Hostel to Home.

Our statistics have a category labelled "new arrivals". In our terminology this means those who have just arrived from Ireland. However many others arrive after they have been in London for say six months and they find themselves unable to cope. In a sense, they too are new arrivals.

There has been a significant increase in the number of new arrivals: an increase of nearly 130%. Of the new referrals to the Bureau this year, the biggest increase has been among the young 15 - 24 age group and the old (60+). The very young, say 16, were nearly certainly straight from Ireland.

It is natural that young people should want to leave home and become independent; that has happened for generations. Young people should have a choice and a right to leave Home. But parents, and young people in their own interest, should be aware of the terrible shortage of accommodation and the kind of dangerous places they may find themselves in. The reality of the situation is that more and more people are coming to London and there are less places to go to. Even if they come prepared with savings, it only covers them for a few days in Bed and Breakfast, and eventually they find themselves on the street. On low wages there is no way that they can easily afford B & B costs, or even sometimes the rent of a room if they are lucky enough to find one.

The Bureau does a lot of work for the Irish in Prison in London. Visits, letters, rehabilitation on release are all very necessary. The C.S.S.P., because of the volume of work they have, have made



a policy decision to concentrate on family casework so that our workload with the single prisoner has increased.

The case-load of the Bureau is of course not confined to the problems of the single homeless. We have a lot of family case-work: battered wives, deserted wives, unmarried mothers, mental breakdown, depression, homelessness. This has necessitated 460 Home Visits and 130 Hospital Visits. Communicating with social workers, social security officers, solicitors, home help organizers. Attending "Case Conferences" on certain problem families. Working in close collaboration with social work agencies in Ireland and England, Housing Departments, Electricity and Gas Boards, Police, Hospitals, Schools and Womens Refuges. We provide transport to Hospitals, to Childrens Homes, to Emergency Accommodation. We help with furniture and bedding.

Effective social work help to such families requires a considerable committment in terms of time and availability. This availability is vitally important when for many reasons local authority social workers cannot be contacted outside office hours. A little division will show the length of our working day. When one considers that these are often evening visits after a day in the Bureau itself.

Of course, all of this is not done on our own and our gratitude goes to the many people who support us in our work. I would like to say a special word of appreciation to the social workers in the Local Authority agencies and Irish Welfare agencies, the staff of Charles House, Riverpoint, S.V.P., the Salvation Army and the County Associations who give us support.

Any self-respecting caring agency never goes in for a policy of 'Hand-outs' ! But it will be obvious from this report that a great deal of money and material things are given out, given the nature of our work. Most of that comes from fund-raising and the cajoling

brilliance of our Director - too little from statutory authorities either in England or Ireland.

We take credit for setting up a structure which receives People in need and continues to support them whatever their inadequacies. Any process of helping takes place within a human relationship. Material help in itself is not sufficient. It is the emotional help, the being related to somebody who accepts a man for what he is. A friendly, respectful relationship exists between the bureau staff and all clients. We visit them in Prison, in Hospital, and, finally, many of them we bury. In a way, we are their family.

The volume of work, its intensity, exposure to a great deal of human suffering, the lack of solutions - all of this is made bearable by the spirit within the Bureau; and I want to say a sincere thank you to Fr. Lawlor, Kay and Chris for the creation of that spirit: a spirit of Christ with a human face - and a sense of humour!

Sr. Carmel McGowan I.S.C.  
Social Worker.

## ANALYSIS OF REFERRALS

Total number of callers dealt with in 1983: 6,263

This figure includes:

A. Cases carried forward from previous years	768
B. New Cases referred in 1983.	679
C. Repeat callers	4,816
	6,263

This case load entailed:

	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
Domiciliary Visits	232	225	460
Hospital Visits	134	115	130
Prison Visits	25	20	21
Supportive Appearance in Court	1	1	3
Escorts to Trains etc.	12	4	14
Ongoing Supportive work	469	484	470
Number repatriated	8	7	9
Number of Burials	2	4	6
Telephone Enquiries	2,105	2,025	2,495
Interviews in Bureau	4,436	5,488	6,263

Types of Problems:

	<u>1983</u>
Accommodation	533
Material	3,025
Meal Vouchers	2,735
Financial	532
Advice & Information	526
Psychiatric	54
Birth Certificates from Ireland	42
Bus Tickets	124
Groceries	81
Application for Repatriation	14
General Welfare	48



## NEW REFERRALS

### AGE GROUPS:

15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
16	36	95	90	151	152	97	63

	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
Males	651	669	597
Females	139	123	103
Families	47	24	35

<u>Types of Problems of New Referrals:</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
New Arrivals from Ireland	57	60	150
Financial	505	530	421
Accommodation	306	269	222
Employment	54	52	64
Information & Advice	78	48	56
Personal	25	19	20
Material Aid	237	243	249
General Welfare	21	10	19
Marital	14	21	18
Mental	27	15	21
Ex-Offenders	15	30	22
Alcoholics, Drug Addiction	45	27	32
Pregnant & Unsupported Mothers	15	2	6
Application for Repatriation	11	7	9

SOURCES OF REFERRALS OF FIRST USERS

	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
Alternatives	-	30	14
C.A.B.	2	3	4
Centre Point	15	8	9
Clergy	105	120	140
CSS Prisoners	1	3	12
Crusade of Rescue	-	-	4
DHSS	1	1	13
Friends/Clients	324	345	285
Good Neighbour Centre	-	3	4
Irish Organisations	1	12	9
Job Centre	1	4	4
LBH Housing Aid Centre	1	2	7
Medical Social Workers	2	3	4
Nazareth House	5	9	10
Personal Application	235	155	76
Police	-	3	6
Probation Service	5	6	11
Riverpoint	8	18	28
Samaritans	-	1	5
Threshold	-	3	4
Women's Refuge	-	-	5

BOROUGHES

Hammersmith & Fulham	15	21	15
Islington	1	3	2
Kensington & Chelsea	3	2	3
Lambeth	-	1	2
Wandsworth	-	1	3

PLACES OF ORIGIN OF NEW REFERRALS

<u>COUNTIES OF IRELAND:</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
Antrim	29	36	28
Armagh	7	6	6
Carlow	3	1	3
Cavan	11	3	11
Clare	15	11	10
Cork	61	76	77
Derry	14	14	5
Donegal	24	27	16
Down	18	12	5
Dublin	86	89	79
Fermanagh	8	2	-
Galway	33	37	38
Kerry	28	25	33
Kildare	10	12	4
Kilkenny	7	7	12
Leitrim	2	8	5
Limerick	40	33	51
Longford	8	8	7
Louth	4	5	5
Mayo	31	24	21
Meath	6	8	5
Monaghan	5	4	7
Offaly	5	3	5
Roscommon	9	12	3
Sligo	16	24	38
Tipperary	46	24	38
Tyrone	9	17	13
Waterford	26	19	19
Westmeath	18	12	6
Wexford	16	6	15
Wicklow	5	5	11
<u>OTHER NATIONALITIES:</u>			
England	109	130	99
Scotland	38	70	47
Wales	12	10	12
Other Countries of Origin	22	23	17



INCOME     Jan. 1983   -   Dec. 1983

December '82 Credit Balance £8806.73

Grant: London Borough

Hammersmith & Fulham 5000.00

Grant from Irish Government 3695.06

Donations 2237.22

Bazaar and Raffle '83 11000.00

Barbecue 1918.00

Prize Bingo in Dublin 1000.00

Dances organized by Friends of  
the Bureau 2981.00

St. Augustine's Church Poor Box 1237.50

Jumble & Furniture Sales 1873.00

Hammersmith Feis 553.60

Death Grants via Council of Irish  
County Associations & DHSS 420.00

Interest 307.58

Refunds 638.30

Exchange 84.47

£32945.73

£41752.46

December '83 Credit Balance £12888.06

Cheque not claimed 4.75

12892.81

Petty Cash in Hand 2.07

12890.74

Bank Statement 30.12.1983 12890.74

EXPENDITURE, Jan.1982 - Dec. 1983

Salaries	£10560.00
National Insurance	1035.93
Material Aid to Clients	3310.61
Meal Vouchers	2364.44
Grants to Families	648.77
Accommodation	2614.15
Burials	1491.00
Motors (Insurance, Tax, Petrol + Services)	998.91
Car for Social Worker	2400.00
Phone	681.96
Lighting & Heating	597.75
Welfare Travel	116.50
Office (Stationary, Stamps & Printing)	224.29
Painting & Carpeting of Bureau	1002.45
Repatriation	267.05
Pre-Paid Bus Tickets	100.00
Birth Certificates	69.64
Conferences	94.00
Insurance on Bureau	38.18
Exchange	84.47
Rent on Furniture Store	130.00
Renewal of Lotteries Registration	10.00
H.F.V.S.C. Subscription	5.00
G.L.C. Renewal of Building Consent	12.00
Sundries	7.30

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28,864.40