

the **IRISH** centre

CEAD MILE
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Christmas
Number

52 Camden Square · London N.W. 1

TELEPHONE: 485 0051/2

NEWSLETTER

Quite a lot has happened here in the past month. Fr. Paddy Mee has joined The Irish Centre staff as Director: Fr. Fanning has returned to Coleford as Parish Priest: Cardinal Heenan has paid an official visit to The Irish Centre: Bishop Harty of Killaloe has been here with many of his Priests to meet his people: the air conditioning has been completed. All these happenings, plus the other ordinary events made November an active month. The Centre is like that. Things happen here as though it was just part of everyday life. No sooner is one thing over and done with than preparations are going ahead for the next event.

Fr. Fanning is back now in Coleford (Gloucestershire) enjoying the quiet of country life once again. Being head Chaplain of The Irish Centre is about as complicated a job as any Priest could have. It has its pleasant moments but it has its frustrations. One great characteristic which Fr. Fanning had was his kindness to his fellow Chaplains. We thank him for his service to the Irish and The Irish Centre. We wish him many happy years in Coleford.

While we say goodbye to Fr. Fanning, we welcome Fr. Mee. Fr. Mee comes from Monaghan. Many of you will have met him already. You will find him practical, sincere, priestly and Irish to the core. I know we have a great man as head Chaplain. We wish him every happiness. We, the Chaplains, have pledged our loyalty and energy. We hope for your continued support also.

We have a lot of work to do here at the Centre. Even to think of the work to be done is frightening. We just have to attack the problem of fund-raising, which is not the nicest of tasks, but we simply have to get on with the job. We cannot do it without you. If you have any effective way of fund-raising, we will be only too happy to hear from you.

The Administrative Committee have appointed Martin Moroney as Chairman of our Fund Raising Committee. We will have a meeting next Wednesday. Perhaps we could set up a weekly draw in the form of a Tote. In order to do this, we need agents. The more agents we get the better we can do. If you think you could act as an agent, then I would advise you to write in and say so. You could get five of your friends to give you 5p. per week. You might even be able to get more than 5 people.

There are a few other things we want to do. We are running a Christmas Fair at the Centre on Saturday, 18th December. We will provide all sorts of Christmas bargains. There will be new items, and more, as good as new. You may have loads of toys and such things which would help us to set up a toy stall. Have a look around the house and you may well discover articles which are no longer of use to you but could bring great joy to someone else.

Cardinal Heenan paid an official visit to the Centre on Tuesday, 23rd November. Many of you were here and will know it was a wonderful evening. The atmosphere was exactly what one would like it to be. I feel sure the Cardinal was impressed with you all. The concelebrated Mass was for Peace & Justice in Northern Ireland. The bidding prayers were read by Charlie Gallagher, Dr. Morton and Michael Casey.

Afterwards the Boys' Band and Tommy Maguire's Ceili Band entertained us with a few tunes. Our weekend band played for the dance. We thank everyone who helped to make the occasion a memorable one. We thank, too, the Mayor of Camden and the Deputy Mayor (Mr. Brian Duggan) for their attendance.

That great Irish composer and Irishman, Sean O'Riada, has gone to his reward. His passing away is a great loss to Ireland. In his memory, Mr. Noel O'Connell and Mr. John Boland arranged a Memorial Mass in the French Church, Leicester Square. There was a concelebrated Mass in Gaelic: the members of Comhaltas played some of Sean's airs, and the Gaelic League choir sang the Mass. It was all very beautifully done. We congratulate the people who organized it and those who played and sang at the Mass.

During the month also, we had a day's congress under the auspices of the Federation of Irish Societies. About twenty different Irish clubs from all over Britain were represented. Also present were about twenty Irish chaplains from up and down the country. The subject was Welfare and what the different clubs could do to help in this type of work. Everyone, without exception, agreed that it was a well worth while effort. We all learned from the experiences of one another.

Opening the congress Mr. Tommie Walsh from Liverpool gave an excellent talk on preparation of emigrants. He agreed that Irish people should not be educated for emigration, but instead educated for life. He also put forward the idea that we as a nation suffer a lot from inferiority complex and that as a result we were inclined to integrate less into our new community. He also said that the Irish had more to offer than to receive. All these ideas supplied wonderful fodder for the discussion groups.

Fr. Paul Byrne from S.H.A.C. gave a most informative talk on the housing problem. From the facts given, one was left with the opinion that anyone who had a house of their own was very lucky indeed. It was interesting to hear the people from Liverpool and Birmingham bemoan the shortage of houses in those two cities. We all agreed that it was very important to inform the Irish back home that flats were impossible to find for families.

The three Welfare Officers from Liverpool, Birmingham and London all gave talks on their work in their own centres. Miss Maura Dorgan, from the Centre gave a most wonderful outline on the work here. All in all, it was a most fruitful day.

Many of you will have seen from the Irish Post that we have reopened the Northern Ireland Fund. There seems to be a good response to our appeal. This money will be used for needy families who are suffering from the effects of horrible conditions prevailing in certain parts of N. Ireland. We will distribute the fund where we consider there is a genuine need. Please send your donations to Fr. Mee of this address.

On the 19th December, we are holding a dance in the Gresham Ballroom, Holloway Road. We are hoping for a big turn out that night. You will see a lot of scaffolding around the front of the Centre and we hope to make enough to pay for the painting job going on presently. Speaking of painting, we thank those wonderful people who dug into the job of painting our kitchen and papering our dining room.

On Wednesday, 22nd December, we hold our Draw for car and trip to Lourdes. Last month I sent out a book of tickets to each member. Many of you have already returned the counterfoils and money. I thank you most sincerely. If you have counterfoils, please send them in before the 20th December. Don't forget to come for the Draw on the 22nd.

Finally, a hundred thousand thanks to the ladies who organised one of the most convivial social evenings of the year. We also thank the Irish Club and its Chairman, Mr. T. Dunne who donated their premises for our Wine and Cheese Party. It raised £150 for the Welfare Fund, and amongst the many people who attended, we thank the popular TV star of "On the Buses", Michael Robbins, who came along with his actress wife Hal Dyer, and his sister.

These same ladies are organising our Christmas Bazaar, (also in aid of the Welfare Fund), so it promises to be a good event. Give us your good support, and may you all have a very Happy Christmas.

God bless.

Fr. P. Sheridan OMI.