

THIRTY FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT
REPORT FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 1989.

INTRODUCTION

Mr Chairman, Rev Fathers, Ladies and Gentlemen it is my pleasure to welcome you to the thirty fifth Annual General Meeting of the Council of the Irish Centre.

1989 was another busy year for the Irish Centre. Sometimes I feel like the Disciples who said to the Lord "we have laboured all night and caught nothing" as the obvious results never seem to match the efforts put in by the Administrative Committee and all our dedicated staff.

Migrant Training

1) The Migrant Training Scheme started in June. We had been discussing such a scheme for a couple of years and thanks to Tom Connor, Camden Council, nine other London Boroughs, and funds from EMS, the computers arrived in June and ten students started their information technology course. Thanks to Toyota Ireland Ltd two rooms in the old flat were prepared and the first six month course went off very smoothly. The students have lunch at the Centre and facilities near the classroom for refreshments. The first group finished their course successfully at Christmas. Following the success of this course Tom Connor requested extra space for an even larger class starting in 1990. We therefore set about transforming the beautiful oratory into what is now an excellent classroom.

Day Care Centre

2) To facilitate the "old folk" who attend the Day Care Centre, including myself, for whom two flights of stairs were taking their toll, we converted the old downstairs offices into a new oratory where we have Mass every day at 12.00 noon. After Mass the members adjourn to a very comfortable Day Care Centre to enjoy a nice lunch in the cordial, social atmosphere of their friends.

Developments

3) Four old rooms on the first floor were refurbished to provide offices where Management, Secretary and Welfare Advice staff can operate in close proximity. A room on the second floor was refurbished for the use of the Federation of Irish Societies. This made use of some of the unused old hostel and now leaves only the top floor and part of the second floor to be refurbished. Last year I advised we had discussions with the Irish Episcopal Commission about offering some of that section to the Irish Chaplaincy. They have since received a more favourable offer from Westminster Diocese and do not require the use of our premises. It is a very valuable piece of property - has all main services

prepared to be connected, has solid foundation and new roof. It is next in line for redevelopment. We got your approval last year to sell No. 12 Murray Street and use the money to further develop the Centre. However the Charity Commission were reluctant to allow us to sell our assets and gave us a reminder that our accounts should be represented in accordance with their new format.

Touche Ross, Accountants and Auditors, were appointed by the Government to chair and investigate the workings of the Charity Commission. The Centre, with the consent of Beatty and Co., requested Touche Ross to review and report on our annual accounts for previous years and reconstruct 1988 accounts "to the accounting standards Committee statement of recommended practice no.2 entitled 'Accounting for Charities'" for approval at this AGM. The result and cost of this work accounts for the abnormal increase in Legal and Professional Fees appearing in our Financial report.

New Loan Agreement

4) The accounts also show the problems of the old loan arrangements. When arranged in 1986 with Commercial Credit Bank the monthly repayments would pay off a loan of £200,000 in 15 years. Due to the drastic increase in interest rates the monthly repayment in 1989 did not meet the interest and our loan principal was therefore increased. Prolonged negotiations between the Oblates, the Management Committee, the Trustees and Solicitors resulted in a new loan of £300,000 at 11.5% fixed interest repayable over 15 years. This loan will enable us to redeem the original bank loan and all outstanding Brewery loans. With this new fixed interest loan the Centre can plan it's affairs in a more business like manner. This latter takes effect as from February 1990.

Refurbishments

5) Progress to refurbish and modernise the Centre continued in 1989, the Kennedy Hall was painted, decorated and carpeted in the spring. Unfortunately all this work was destroyed by fire in June and that whole wing had to be refurbished which included installing a new ventilation system for Kennedy and Douglas Hyde Halls. This has resulted in very difficult and protracted negotiations with our insurance underwriters in evaluating fire damage to the building, furniture and fittings also loss of profits. These negotiations are still in progress in 1990.

New Licences

6) Many problems were experienced by the Centre in obtaining extension licences for various functions during the year and on the advice of the police and our solicitors we successfully applied for a new liquor licence in November. Unfortunately we failed, due to the weight of objections from local residents, to obtain a late music and dance licence when our application was

heard in March this year. We again appeal most earnestly to all patrons to consider our position and to ensure that bands are not too loud. Please ensure that coaches are not double parked or left standing for long periods with engines running. Always leave the Centre as quietly as possible; there is the temptation of a last chat, yarn and laugh outside before shouting "good-night". These with the blowing of car horns, the banging of car doors and the revving of engines were some of the objections used successfully by our neighbours to prevent the granting of a music and dance licence for the Kennedy Hall.

Research

7) Given that some 40,000 leave Ireland each year we are very pleased that sponsorship from Aer Lingus allowed the Centre to engage Josephine Vaughan to research education and work opportunities for this large number of young Irish arriving in London. We estimate that over 20,000 Irish students with senior leaving certificates leave Ireland each year and we are endeavouring to have information to point them in the right direction. The result of her study should be ready for publication in June 1990.

New Hostel for the Elderly

8) In the past it seemed that elderly Irish were overlooked in our eagerness to assist young new arrivals. The Day Care Centre for the elderly opened in May 1988 continued to flourish in 1989 and they organised two highly successful outings to Eastbourne and Southend. With the help of Irish Centre Hostels Ltd we completed a beautiful new home for 19 elderly men in a new hostel at Quex Road. The official blessing and opening will take place on 23rd May 1990.

Welfare

9) For nearly 40 years the Irish Centre has tried to assist young Irish immigrants procure safe accommodation, fruitful employment with expert welfare advice. The Annual Report shows it assisted over 13,000 people with some 23,000 problems. The changes in legislation make the work increasingly difficult and the report reminds us of the big increase in the number of young people squatting and hungry in London. New regulations for proof of identity, new rules for signing-on and payment of benefit in arrears leave the young people poor and our staff overworked. Although my comments refer directly to last year, sadly the year ahead with the introduction of Community Charge (Poll Tax) does not look any brighter.

Activities

The Centre provides facilities for educational, cultural and social activities.

Irish Language Classes

1) The Irish Centre has hosted Irish classes weekly on a regular basis during school term since 1981 under the auspices of the Inner London Education Authority and Camden Adult Education Institute who appointed and pay tutor fees, other running costs being met by the Centre. I am pleased to report that we have become a vital part of the Community Service judging by the escalation of numbers attending each week. The students, who are mainly Irish and wishing to maintain their Irish identity, benefit from this facility which gives them a cultural and social enrichment.

Classes are also aimed at academic achievement. The Institute of Linguists in collaboration with the British Association for Irish Studies now offers a regular examination service in Irish Language and the Irish Centre became the registered examination centre last year when, for the first time in the UK these exams took place. Preparations are being made again this year and no doubt with the same success as last year. The examinations are aimed mainly at the adult learner, and concentrate on practical, every day language with strong emphasis on oral skills. Therefore the classes are useful to all students, whether or not they wish to take the exams.

Saturday classes for children have also been run regularly but examinations are not required or recommended. The aim is to give the children a basic knowledge of spoken Irish while enjoying it to the full and above all developing a love for it. At the beginning of the decade when families had the opportunity of returning to Ireland many children prepared for the transition in to the Irish school system, but now that the situation has changed the numbers are smaller, though constant. Thanks to Siobhan UíNeill for her dedication and for the above report.

2) Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann

On the 27th December each year the North London branch of Comhaltas holds it's Christmas session in the Kennedy Hall and 1989 was no exception, and musicians gathered together from all parts of London, St Albans and Leicester. Christmas being the season of goodwill has a special place in the hearts of Irish people and musicians, singers and dances of Comhaltas celebrated in their own way by demonstrating their love for our cultural heritage.

Most of the musicians in this branch now are second generation Irish and it is a credit to them and their parents for promoting

Comhaltas in all it's aspects.

We had a very busy year hosting the concert tour of Britain in February, organising Ceilis and sessions and together with the other London branches and the Regional Board in presenting Fleadh Cheoil of Britain. 24 members from our branch qualified for the all Ireland in Sligo.

Our Dinner Dance was the most successful for years with the North London Ceili Band providing the dance music and traditional singer Mary Brogan our guest from Ireland.

Our AGM took place in November and we were delighted to have our first Lady Chairman elected. Music classes are held every Wednesday evening at the Centre and we extend our thanks to the teachers.

Finally as the branch approaches it's 19th year in Camden we would like to thank the Director, Management and staff for all their support and encouragement and we look forward to welcoming new members to Comhaltas. Thanks to Jim Myers, the O'Donnell family and all members of the committee.

3) Ceili Club

The regular Sunday night dances in Douglas Hyde hall attracts visitors from Irish Societies outside London and some Ceili lovers while on holiday from Ireland. The adult Ceili classes continue as a big success on Monday evenings. Special Ceili evenings were organised for Christmas, New Year and St Patrick's night. Many thanks to Anton Coyle and the Ceili Committee for organising so many enjoyable Ceili events.

Irish Dancing

4) The Irish Dancing for children is going well under the expert guidance of Marie Halpin. The class is growing in numbers, performance, and enthusiasm. Together with the parents they are looking forward to trips to Lourdes and Ireland and partaking in Dancing competitions and they hope to organise a Feis later this year.

5) Set Dancing

Every Tuesday night in The Douglas Hyde Hall. Up to 40 adults danced around the floor under the watchful eye of Sera Monaghan

6) Uilleann Pipes

Every spare room in the Centre resounds with pipe music every Thursday night. The London Pipers Club provide lessons on the pipes to students of all stages of achievement on this beautiful but most difficult instrument. Thanks again to Paddy Keenan, Michael O'Brien, Liam Og O'Flynn.

7) Social Club

Thanks to our Social Club Committee for organising entertainment in the halls every Friday and Saturday night and other functions throughout the year. Thanks for their commitment in providing staff for the door and ensuring orderly behaviour.

8) Bingo

The bingo sessions which are very popular with the older generation are organised three evenings a week by Mary Kenny and her ever faithful supporters. The numbers increase in proportion to the attractiveness of the jackpot.

9) The "25 Club"

The "25" card game attracts some 60 keen players every alternate Thursday. Thanks to Frank and Maureen Screen for well organised nights.

Tea Dance

10) In addition to the Day Care Centre , socials and bingo for the elderly we also have a senior citizens Tea Dance once a month. They all come together for a great Christmas party when almost 300 senior citizens from the area enjoy a full Christmas dinner, raffles and dancing. The Mayor of Camden honours us each year by being present and enjoys meeting the people.

Youth Club

11) The Youth Club guided by Kathleen Fitzsimons meet every Monday and Wednesday evening. The Karate club comprising some 60 children aged 6-14 years meet in Douglas Hyde Hall every Monday evening to enjoy physical exercise and Karate skills.

Council for Irish Counties

12) The Council for Irish Counties, who deal with many aspects of welfare and matters relating to County Associations continue to meet at the Centre on the third Tuesday of each month. In co-operation with the Centre junior and senior championship quiz games were held in addition to their running a highly successful St Patrick's Day parade.

Parish Reunions

13) Parish reunions are becoming very popular throughout London. The Centre hosted a number of these functions and the McNamara Hall was packed to capacity. The young immigrants are slow to join their County Associations but through their home Parish affinity will also become active in their County Associations.

London Irish Festival

14) Once again the 1989 London Irish Festival jointly organised by the Irish Centre and the Council for Irish Counties proved a great day out for many thousands of young and old. The nett proceeds of the Festival are devoted to charity as to London Irish Centre Charity (50%) and Council of Irish Counties (50%).

15) Functions and Meetings

The Centre continues to provide facilities for functions and meetings. The halls have been booked regularly by RADA, Thames T.V and other groups for rehearsals. We also had property exhibitions, conferences and seminars. During the summer there were wedding receptions every weekend and both Kennedy and McNamara Halls hosted County Associations, Parish reunions and various other organisations every weekend of the year. The Amateur Boxing Association holds a contest in the McNamara Hall which is very popular. Sunday lunches got off to a great start on St. Patrick's day and had a steady demand from about 40 patrons every Sunday of the year. We also provided a full Christmas dinner for some 60 people on Christmas Day.

Irish shop

16) The Irish Shop at the Centre which stocks a range of Irish goods including videos, cassettes, as well as religious articles has continued to prove a popular facility.

17) Hostels

Thanks to all our workers in Conway House and St Louise for their dedication and commitment. It has been a very difficult year due to all the changes and legislation uncertainties eg. the new Income Support and Housing Benefit allowances, new conditions of signing on for work, payment of benefits in arrears etc. The hostels were full right through the year and many thousands more were assisted by hostel staff in obtaining accommodation and employment. 1989 also saw the completion of "An Caislean" we hope that the 19 elderly men who are the lucky occupants will see their home as "a castle".

18) Committees and Voluntary Workers

The Administrative Committee meet on the 2nd Tuesday of every month to review reports and decide policy. The Trustees meet to sanction new loan agreements and major developments. The Executive and Financial Committees meet on a regular basis with the Director and Administrator to ensure the smooth and efficient running of the centre. The Welfare Advice Committee meet every two months to review Community Care activities and agree future policies. The Social Committee meet on the 1st Wednesday of every

month to organise social functions. The Fund Raising committee arrange the Christmas Bazaar and Festival Car Raffle.

The above are all voluntary workers and give up their time freely they are far too numerous to name individually but God knows who they are and we pray that he will reward them. I must say a special word of thanks to two voluntary workers - Mary Kenny who's life is the Irish Centre and Tommy Dunne who is a Trustee and Chairman of the Administrative Committee and whose work at the Irish Centre where he spends at least two days a week is very much appreciated by me.

Thanks to each and every one of our staff - Paddy Keegan, Paul Murphy and his staff, Pat O'Dwyer and his staff, Fr Ryan, Sr Brenda, Sr Gertrude and assistants and the many volunteers, thanks to Brian Duggan, Una Cooper, Jock and Rose, the volunteer receptionists and finally to Fr Denis Cormican.

Finance

In 1988 refurbishment of the Day Care Centre, small lounge and surrounding areas were completed. The Kennedy as already mentioned was decorated in spring 1989 - the accidental fire in J F Kennedy Hall caused considerable damage, especially smoke damage to all these areas. There was a gross expenditure for the year of £110,000 as a result of the fire which with insurance claims paid to date of £70,000 results in expenditure of £40,000 at the end of the year.

The indebtedness of the Centre to Commercial Credit Ltd and the Breweries at the end of 1989 amounted to £267,317. Whilst Brewery loans were reduced by £10,968 the term loan from Commercial Credit Services increased by £2340.00 due to the abnormal increase in interest rates. The net reduction of long term loans was £8,628.

The accounts and balance sheet for the year 1989 have been presented in a format recognised and in accordance with the recommendations of the Charity Commission. This also applies to the accounts for the year 1988. These latter although presented, approved and adopted at the last AGM will because of the new format require to be presented, approved and adopted by the Council for the Irish Centre at the 1989 AGM.

The accounts of London Irish Centre Charity show that our liabilities have decreased by £56,593 whilst fixed assets have increased by £1,513 to a figure of £1,809,967. It should be pointed out that fixed assets represent capital expenditure to date less depreciation and bears no relation to the current aggregate market value of the properties. The Council for the Irish Centre show that liabilities have increased by £2,167 whilst fixed assets (furniture and fittings) have increased by £3,354.

The total income received less expenditure during the year from all sources including surplus on revenue accounts amounted to an overall surplus in the case of the London Irish Centre Charity of £17,946 and the Council for the Irish Centre a deficit of £4980

The following is an analyses of income received from various sources during the year.

<u>Grants</u>	£	£
London Borough of Camden	36,140	
Dion - Irish Government	85,413	
		121,553

Donations

London Irish Festival	38,000	
Estate - Mr McGrudder	24,106	
London Irish Society	14,000	
Toyota (Ireland)Ltd	12,725	
E Lawlor	10,000	
Aer Lingus -Research (£10,00 - 1990)	20,000	
Clare Association	1,200	
Cavan Association	1,000	
Anon (Ireland)	1,000	
A.I.B - proceeds Raffle - 2.7.89.	500	
Fr C McKeown - Longford	358	
Spade Oak Construction Ltd	350	
Anon (London)	280	
B P Russel - Waterford	270	
COIC re OAP party	250	
Kilmallock Association	241	
Comhaltas North London	200	
Clonfert Association	200	
Rev I Tonge	160	
Donegal Association	150	
Abbeyfeale	100	
Knockmore	100	
Mrs Potter	100	
KSC	100	
Newmarket Association	100	
Sundry and Anon.	354	
		115,844

Covenants

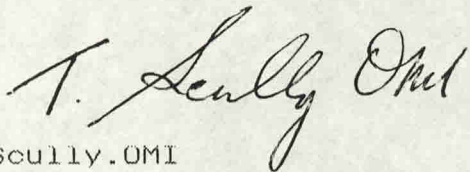
Allied Irish Bank PLC	5,000
Car Raffle (Festival)	20,108

Conclusion

Thanks to all our benefactors and patrons who continue to support the Centre. Thanks to The Irish Government, The Irish Embassy, London Borough of Camden, The Council for Irish Counties, Festival Committee, London Irish Societies, AIB, The Lawlor Foundation, Toyota Ireland Ltd, Aer Lingus, P Lennon Associates, Bank of Ireland, ILEA, the Hierarchies, Parishes who sold tickets, the Auditors, all the Committees and so many people here and in Ireland who continue to support our efforts.

Finally I once again thank all the Committees, Staff, volunteers and benefactors for your support and prayers. Down the years you have encouraged us to push ahead in spite of the difficulties we encounter.

Slán agus beanacht libh go leir.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "T. Scully OMI". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

T Scully.OMI
Director.