

THE IRISH IN BIRMINGHAM....

Birmingham Irish Community Forum Ltd NewsLetter

Issue No. 9 - Autumn 2000

THE PRESIDENTS VISIT

When the invitation from the Lord Mayor's Office was accepted and the date agreed for President Mary McAleese to visit the City and the Irish Community, a major clean up was quickly arranged. So many people volunteered to give up their time and money to decorate the Irish Centre. The Irish Forum were instrumental in forming the '32 Counties and Voluntary Organisations Group' to raise funds and help with the event.

Musicians, dancers, VIP's and representatives of the Irish in Birmingham were invited.

The final rehearsal was attended by Bob Brolly who agreed to be M.C. on the day.

The big day came and the President's first venue was to officially open Father Taaffe House, Phase one of the Irish Forums initiative to provide housing and accommodation for elderly Irish in Birmingham. The President then came to the Irish Centre where she was met by Pat O'Neill and his wife Bridget, who introduced her to the wonderful Guard of Honour made up of Irish Dancers, GAA Children, Birmingham Irish Pipes & Drums and the Tir Na nOg Band.

After meeting various dignitaries from the City, Radio and leaders of Ethnic Groups, the President met up to 200 representatives of Irish clubs and associations. After an exhibition of Irish dancing, she was welcomed to Birmingham by Pat O'Neill. The President responded with a rousing speech, she was then presented with a book called "The Irish in Victorian Britain - The Local Dimensions" of which Dr. Carl Chinn had an input.

That evening, the President hosted dinner at the Council House which was organised by the F.I.S. and the City Council. On Sunday after attending mass at the Oratory Church, the President went along to the All Britain Fleagh where she met various organisers.

A great weekend for the Irish in Birmingham and our thanks must go to the City for their support and also the Forum, especially the P.R. Group, for setting it all up.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2000

Birmingham Irish Community Forum will hold their Annual General Meeting on Thursday 12th October 2000 in the Irish Community Centre, Deritend.

The theme of the evening is 'The Contribution of the Irish in Birmingham through the Ages', with Dr Carl Chinn as guest speaker.

The meeting will look at the achievements of the Forum in the past year.

The meeting will commence at 6.30pm with doors opening at 6.00pm. Everyone is welcome to attend.

SPONSORED BY ALLIED IRISH BANK (BIRMINGHAM BUSINESS UNIT)

Views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Birmingham Irish Community Forum Ltd.

THE IRISH IN BIRMINGHAM NEW PARTNERSHIP

L.E.A.P. (LEARNING, EMPLOYMENT AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION)

You might well have heard of LEAP, but you might not know what it is. Basically, LEAP is the follow on from the Irish employment and training project. Our aim is to provide culturally sensitive advice and guidance around all aspects of employment, training and education. We work with individuals and groups within the Irish community.

What exactly does this mean?

For Individuals:

- Do you want to find out about training, a course in childcare for example? Ask us, we can help you find the most suitable course for you.
- Do you want to update your C.V or produce a C.V? We can help you do that.
- If you have an application form that you would like help to complete. We can help you with that.
- Do you have an interview that you feel anxious about? We can set up a mock interview so that you can practice before the real thing.
- Thinking about looking for a job in Ireland? We can help you access the Internet to check out what is available.

For Community Groups:

- Has your group got an event coming up? Do you want help with producing publicity material?
- Would your group like some training? Tell us what your needs are and we will see what we can do.
- Would you like to get more out of your meetings? We can provide information on how to do this.
- If you tell us what your needs are we will do our best to meet them.

All of these services are free of charge, so if you would like to find out more ring Caroline Carr on 0121 622 1168.

We are in the process of establishing a programme of courses for September. If there is anything that you would like to see included in that please feel free to give us a call.

The Irish Volunteer Development Programme (IVDP) is a partnership of four organisations: Irish Welfare and Information Centre, Birmingham Irish Community Forum, Fireside Centre and Catholic Housing Aid Society, co-ordinated by David Bradshaw. We aim to develop and promote volunteering opportunities that complement the culturally sensitive delivered within the Irish Community.

Currently our volunteers are involved in a range of advice and support services for vulnerable / isolated Irish elders. This includes work in the Irish Welfare Drop-in Centre, the Fireside Day Centre and committee work with Birmingham Irish Community Forum. We are also working to promote Irish inclusiveness within local mainstream volunteer programmes.

Additionally, there are some new and innovative volunteering opportunities being developed within Irish Welfare. For example, the Irish Welfare Befriending Service is now taking shape. This involves training volunteers to provide support and friendship for isolated Irish elders. This service is about to be piloted and should be fully up and running by the end of the year. We are also keen to see volunteers get involved in the Older Irish Adults Project and the Irish Alcohol Project based at Irish Welfare.

We are always looking for new volunteers to get involved, whatever time you have to give. Volunteering can often be a good way to gain work experience, learn new skills, develop self-confidence and meet new people as well as putting something back into the community. To find out more contact David Bradshaw for an informal chat on 0121 604 6222.

IRISH QUARTER

The public launch of the concept study commissioned by Birmingham Irish Forum and funded by Economic Development will take place on Thursday 9th November 2000. The launch will take place in the Irish Centre, Deritend. Doors will open at 5.45 p.m. with the presentation of the study at 6.30 p.m. There will be an opportunity for questions and comments and everyone is welcome. We would be grateful if you could register your interest in attending by calling Kelly on (0121) 622 4102. More Information can also be obtained on the above number.

SHORT STORY THE CHILDREN OF LIR

Continued from the last Issue:

The King stretched out his hands and blessed his children. He said, "May all things beautiful grow more beautiful to you, and may the song you have be melody in the heart of whoever hears it. My blessing be on you till the sea loses its saltiness and the trees forget to bud in springtime. And farewell, Fionnuala, my white blossom; and farewell Aodh, that was the red flame of my heart; and farewell Conn, that brought me gladness; and farewell, Fiaca, my treasure. Lonesome it is for you, flying off in places strange to you; lonesome for me it is without you.

The King covered his face and sorrow was heavy on him, but the swans rose into the air and flew away calling to each other. They called with the voices of children, but in their heart was the gladness of swans when they feel the air beneath them and stretch their necks to the freedom of the sky.

Three hundred years they flew over lake Darvra and swam on its waters. Often their father came to the lake and called them to him and caressed them. When three hundred years were ended the swans rose suddenly and flew far and far away. Their father looked for them, and their friends looked for them, but the swans never touched earth or rested once till they came to the narrow Sea of the Moyle that flows between Ireland and Scotland.

To be continued....

LOW-FAT CHOCOLATE AND BLACK CHERRY PUDDING

You will need:

3 large Eggs (separated)
4oz/100gm Caster Sugar
3oz/75gm Self Raising Flour
1oz/25gm Cocoa Powder
1 tin Black Cherry Pie filling
A little grease for the dish

Method

1. Whisk the egg whites until stiff, then add the yolks and whisk in. Add the castor sugar and whisk until all the sugar has dissolved.
2. Sift the flour and cocoa powder and fold half into the egg mixture. When nearly incorporated, fold in the remaining flour, until the mixture is smooth.
3. Lightly grease the dish and spoon the pie filling onto the base, spoon the sponge mixture on top and bake in the oven Gas 4, 180(C, 350(F, for 40 minutes or until golden brown.
4. When cooked, leave to cool for a few minutes, then loosen the pudding with a palette knife and turn out onto a flat dish.
5. Serve with low-fat fromage frais.

THE IRISH IN BIRMINGHAM WORDS OF WISDOM

"Grown men may learn from little children, for the hearts of little children are pure, and, therefore, the great Spirit may show to them many things which older people miss."

Black Elk (Native American Spiritual leader)

CARA IRISH HOUSING

Paul Finnegan and Dave Fisher have recently joined Cara Irish Housing Association and are based full-time in Birmingham.

Paul, Project Manager, divides his time between Father Taaffe House in Alcester Street, Digbeth, and the main office at Cara House, Digbeth.

Father Joe Taaffe House is a scheme which provides one bedroomed accommodation to twenty seven Irish elders and the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, officially opened this during her recent visit to the City.

In addition to this scheme, Paul is also be responsible for managing a new development of 15 three and four bedroom family houses in Balsall Heath, Birmingham.

Having secured a Postgraduate Diploma in Housing, prior to joining Cara, Paul worked as a Housing Advisor for Tamworth Borough Council. He has also worked for the Housing Department at Dudley MBC.

Dave has worked at locations throughout Birmingham whilst employed by the City Council Housing department for a period of fifteen years. This included spells in Sparkhill and Sparkbrook, where he worked with members of the Irish Community.

Since then he has also worked as a Financial Consultant for Lloyds Bank and was employed for a twelve month period at Birmingham County Court as an Administrative Officer.

Employed as Co-ordinator for the Midlands, (Cara also have sites in Coventry and Leicester) Dave is keen to ensure that the Irish Community are aware that Cara have a presence in Birmingham, which has not been the case for some months.

Both he and Paul are excited at the prospect of promoting Cara, as the organisation continues to expand, with its aim of providing a housing service for the needs of the Irish community.

Either can be contacted on Tel: 0121 772 7187 (Father Joe Taaffe House) or 0121 622 5806 (Cara House).

WATCH THIS SPACE

Small Grants Workshops (National Lottery). We have had two very successful workshops where practical advice and assistance is given on how to get a £5,000 grant for your organisation. Some of our affiliated organisations have been successful in getting grants. If you would like us to run another workshop, please contact the Forum Office on (0121) 622 4102.

Would you like to **set up an Irish Group**, perhaps a County Association. If your part of Ireland is not represented on our County Associations we can help you and support new and existing groups.

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 on the second Sunday of each month at 5pm at SS Mary and John, Gravelly Hill North, Erdington.

A Taste of Auld Ireland are a new Mail Order Gift Company set up to offer the Irish communities across the UK and Europe genuine Irish made goods by either catalogue or the internet. Contact John McGhee on (01902) 562051.

Katriona Donnelly
Project Co-ordinator

SEANFHOCAL (OLD IRISH PROVERB)

Is Mor taibhseach iad adharcs na mbo thar lear
(Distance lends enchantment to the view)

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

Re-cycle it if you can't re-use it! - glass jars, bottles, food and drink cans, newspapers and magazines, plastic shopping bags, etc.

ROAD SAFETY

When driving, slow down - **SPEED KILLS!**

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The **Annual General Meeting** will take place at the Irish Centre on Thursday 12th October 2000 at the Irish Centre. Contact Kelly Hobson on 0121 622 4102 for further details.

The **Sligo Association** are holding a Buffet Dance at the Irish Centre on Saturday 14th October 2000. Doors will open at 8pm. Tickets £5, and £3 after 11pm. For further information contact the Irish Forum on 0121 622 4102 or the Irish centre on 0121 622 2332.

The **Carlow Association** is holding a dance at St. Anne's on Friday 27th October 2000. Tickets are priced at £2.

The **Wicklow Association** are holding a Chicken in a Basket Night for Halloween on October 28th 2000 at the Irish Centre.

The **Armagh Association** are having their Annual Dance on Nov 4th 2000 at the Irish Centre.

The **Monaghan Association** will be holding a Buffet Dance on Sat 18th November 2000 at the Irish Centre, 8pm til late.

The **Carlow Association** will be holding a Dinner Dance on Saturday November 18th at St. Teresa's, Perry Barr.

The **Pioneers Association** are holding a Dance on the 18th November at St. Francis', Handsworth. Tickets are £2-3 on the door. For further details contact the Irish Forum on 0121 622 4102.

The **Tyrone Association** have a free Buffet Social evening on 8th December 2000 at the Irish Centre.

The **Limerick Association** will be holding a Dinner Dance on the 9th December at the Tally Ho. Tickets will be available from the Irish Forum. For further details contact 0121 622 4102.

The recently formed committee of the **Birmingham 32 Counties Organisation** (formerly the 32 Counties and Voluntary Organisations) held their first committee meeting on October 3rd. It was an excellent meeting with lots of exciting ideas thrown around. The first event on their agenda is a huge Christmas Party Extravaganza to be held on Saturday 16th December 2000 at the Irish Centre. The doors will open at 7.30 p.m. and is a ticket only event. Tickets will cost £8 per person with children under 16 costing £2. Tickets will be available from early November. It will be a fancy dress party and fancy dress is optional, although if you don't get dressed up you must pay a forfeit! There will be prizes, spot prizes and party games galore. Anyone looking for more information please phone Kelly Hobson on (0121) 622 4102.