

THE IRISH IN BIRMINGHAM....

Birmingham Irish Community Forum Ltd Newsletter

Issue No. 11 - Summer 2001

BIRMINGHAM'S ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE 2001

An estimated 85,000 happy, smiling people turned out for this year's parade, which was a record attendance. Just a week before the big day, who would think the parade would be such an overwhelming success?! Bands from Ireland who were coming to take part were cancelling on a daily basis. The dreaded foot and mouth disease was casting a dark cloud over the event. Just one of the nine bands from Ireland made the trip.

The big day had arrived and for the first time since the parade was relaunched, we all woke to heavy rain. There was an air of gloom as the team assembled at day break to put the road closures in place. By 9.30am we had everything in place and suddenly the rain stopped and the sun tried to show its smiling face through the dark clouds. Yes, our dear beloved Father Taffe was once again smiling down on us, his prayers answered.

By 10.30am all the floats had arrived and this year great credit is due to all who entered a float. Extra effort had been put in to make them colourful and eye catching. And what about The Old Rustic Bridge by The Mill, with an actual working water mill on board!

By 11.00am all was in place. Banner Carriers, Bands and Floats all lined out and ready to go, but still very few spectators. However, minutes before start time the street was a sea of people.

Just turned 11.30am Anthony Duffy, Chair of the event, gave the signal and the parade was under way, led by our very own Birmingham Irish Pipes and Drums, with 25 members playing lovely music. As the parade came down Deritend High Street by the Old Crown, Carl Chinn was there broadcasting the parade live on BBC Radio WM. Also linking in to Carl was Bob Brolly.

There was a wonderful buzz and excitement from the thousands lining the streets, as they applauded the wonderful bands who were taking part. The 42nd Highlanders made a first appearance and there was a welcome return of the West Midlands Police and Wolverhampton Pipe Bands, The Unity Band all the way from Portsmouth, our very own Tír na nÓg youth band and all the way from Castlederg in County Tyrone, the Carncorn Marching Band.

The various schools of dancing went past, as did the County Associations, proudly displaying their county colours. The GAA, Luton and Nottingham St Patrick's Day Parade committees were also represented. It was nice to see Michael Collins and members of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association taking part and who could forget the dazzling display of the Harley Davidson Motor Cycles. Not forgetting the various dogs involved, carrying lovely flags, and one little dog with a shamrock painted on his body.

When the parade finally came to an end, over 2 hours from start time, a treat was in store for the lovers of pipe band music, as the 4 pipe bands proudly marched into Deritend High Street from Alcester Street. It was a colourful sight to see; all the various tartans assembled together. The sound they made would make the hair stand on the back of your neck, as the 90 strong band proudly marched down towards The Irish Centre (now the Birmingham Irish Club) and back up to the Old Crown.

The marching over, it was now time for the judges to make the announcement of who won the various shields. Pat O'Neill, one of the Judges, said it was a hard task. The best float was shared by Monaghan and Wicklow, best banner went to Wexford and the magnificent Carncorn Band, all the way from Tyrone, won best band.

Great credit is due to Anthony Duffy and his committee for organising the largest street party ever seen in Birmingham and all are looking forward to in excess of 100,000 next year, when the big day actually falls on St Patrick's Day.

On the Carl Chinn show, PC Pete McCormick and Inspector Keith Arnold, praised the way the event was organised and the impeccable way the crowds behaved. Inspector Arnold said over 250,000 have attended the event since its relaunch some six years ago and not a single arrest!! This indeed is due to the hard working committee and the Lovely Smiling Happy People who attend. Here's to 2002!!

THIS ISSUE HAS BEEN FUNDED BY SOUTH BIRMINGHAM COLLEGE - THANK YOU

L.E.A.P.

LEAP (Learning, Employment & Active Participation) is a communities based project that is part of the Birmingham Irish Community Forum.

L.E.A.P. consists of Trish Donovan -Community Outreach Worker, whose parents hail from Kerry and Leitrim and Jacky Mulveen - Administrative Assistant, whose parents hail from Cork and Galway.

The aim of LEAP is to work within the Irish community in Birmingham to help community groups and individuals develop, retrain and access support or education facilities.

Our aim is to make ourselves accessible to the community, to go where they are, rather than expecting the community to come to us. We hope to reach out to people who would not normally access training and advice and give them the opportunity to succeed. We will be visiting community venues where we can help with CV preparation, interview skills, help with filling in forms and advice on courses in the area, We also hope to be invited to schools to hold surgeries for parents.

We will be holding an information and advice surgery starting on October 2nd and continuing on the first Tuesday of every month, at St. Anne's Parish Bar Centre in Chelmsley Wood. We are hoping to extend this to the Handsworth and Erdington area. If your community is interested in having this service in your area please call the office. Many of the people we have helped have never accessed any education since leaving school and through L.E.A.P. have been able to go forward and help themselves.

We referred Catherine Goodwin and Claire Kelly to a computer course at Birmingham Settlement in Aston, having no previous experience they were nervous, but since that first day they have not looked back. Catherine said "I have really enjoyed the course and have just passed my first exams. I have now enrolled in an IBT 2 course starting September. Having five children I never thought I would have the time to go back into education, but with flexible hours I can fit it in, and for the first time in years I am doing something for myself. I would like to thank L.E.A.P. for giving me a headstart.

Claire is also enjoying the course she said "With three young children under school age I never thought I would be doing anything like this, but with excellent nursery facilities I know my children are well looked after while I am training. I am so pleased that I sought help from L.E.A.P., at least now I feel I am on the right road. Sometimes all you need is a helping hand and a push in the right direction and from there on you can help yourself.

Lisa Callaghan was referred to Birmingham Settlement do to an introduction course to counselling. She is now on an introduction course on advice and guidance. Lisa said "I would like to thank the girls at L.E.A.P. for helping me to get on these courses and for giving me the encouragement that I needed. It is the best thing I could have done and I look forward to the future."

After talking to a group of mums from Kings Heath who wanted to do a computer course but didn't want to go to college, L.E.A.P contacted Mr. McEvoy at Bishop Challoner School and asked could we use the schools computer suite for the community.

Two weeks later we had a tutor from South Birmingham College, 14 local parents and a course was started. Jackie Manbie, Donna Gaynor and Vicky Ross are three of the students we first spoke to. They all like the community spirit and the relaxed atmosphere and the fact that they can gain a qualification near their homes and amongst people they know.

St. Dunstan's School have now expressed an interest in helping parents to get trained so we hope to start a course there in September. L.E.A.P set up training in food & hygiene and first-aid courses for the volunteers of the Fireside Centre who work with many Irish clients. L.E.A.P also helps the many Irish Community/Voluntary groups in Birmingham by setting up workshops.

We have also held two lottery briefings, where Irish groups in Birmingham come along and find out how to apply for grants and the criteria needed. Several groups received grants and we hope others will follow.

On June 18th L.E.A.P in association with IC Birmingham, set up a free website workshop for Irish organisations in Birmingham. We all set off for the IT Works Centre in Birmingham Town Centre and after two hours all in attendance had a website up and running, also the opportunity was there to sign up for free internet training. The groups present were The Tyrone Association, The Birmingham 32 Counties Organisation, The Limerick Association, The West Midlands Republic of Ireland Soccer Supporters Club, Celtic-Dreams, The Birmingham Women & Ireland Group, The Birmingham Irish Heritage Group, The Birmingham Irish Pipes & Drums, SWEDA and Councillor Mike Nangle. While they are awaiting the registration of their web addresses you can access their site by going to www.icbirmingham.co.uk and clicking on communities. We have organised another workshop to take place on July 30th 10am - 1pm. We know this will also be a success.

Tuesday June 5th was the last day of the free Assertiveness Course that was organised by L.E.A.P. Everyone spoke of how they had benefited from the course and of the friendships that they had made. The course started with everyone commenting on how hard it was to get up and speak in public and by the end of it you couldn't get a word in. All the women are meeting up again in September to do further courses. If anyone would like to reserve a place for the course in September in Digbeth or one in Erdington, please call the office.

If you would like anymore information about L.E.A.P, please feel free to contact Trish or Jacky on

Tel: 0121 622 1168 Fax: 0121 622 4497

E-mail: leap@icbirmingham.co.uk

www.icleap.co.uk



CARA IRISH HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Cara Irish Housing Association held an official opening ceremony on 28th March at a new development of family houses in Balsall Heath. Despite the failure of the Weather Gods to look kindly upon those present, the day was a great success, enjoyed by residents, Cara staff in the Midlands and members of the local community alike.

Among the elected members who came along to support the opening Councillor Dennis Minnis, Cabinet Member - Housing, unveiled a plaque to commemorate the occasion. The presence of members of the Birmingham Irish Pipes and Drums Band added both a splash of colour and sound to the event.

A total of 15 new built 3 and 4 bedroom family houses have been provided at Eastwood Road, in a £1 million scheme. The houses are designed to the highest standards, with large enclosed rear gardens (with sheds) and ample roadside parking.

With the support of Paul Finnegan, Project Manager, a residents group has already been established by the Cara tenants and meets on a regular basis. It is hoped that the success and popularity of this scheme will be closely followed by other developments as Cara continues to grow in Birmingham, Coventry and other parts of the Midlands.

ADVICE AND OUTREACH SERVICE TO SURVIVORS OF INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE IN IRELAND

Background

In 1970 most of the industrial schools in Ireland closed down after having been in existence for approximately 100 years. The schools were commonly known as industrial schools, reform schools or orphanages. They were mainly run by religious orders, such as the Christian Brothers (for boys) and The Sisters of Charity (for girls). The schools were funded by the state and they were responsible for inspecting them.

Over the past ten years, a number of former pupils have written autobiographies about their experiences in these schools. Some have decided to take legal action against the religious orders or against the state because of what they have described as the horrendous way in which they were treated during their time at school.

It is generally understood that many of the former pupils of these schools left Ireland and in most cases came to live in Britain. In recognising this fact, the Irish Government has provided funding for two posts with administrative support to offer advice and information to survivors. One of these advice workers will be based in the London Irish Centre, Camden Square, London. The other worker, which is myself, will be based in Coventry and will work from the

offices of Coventry Irish Society (formerly ICARG). The Coventry service to survivors of institutional abuse in Ireland will operate from 42-44 Hill Street, Coventry (the new offices of Coventry Irish Society). It is expected that the service will cover the Midlands area with its base in Coventry as previously mentioned.

The advice offered will depend on the individuals needs, but could include assistance with completing applications to the Commission to help in accessing services such as counselling or social care and health. If you have any questions regarding the above service please contact Kevin Murphy on 02476 257943.

IRISH CENTRE SAVED

Birmingham's Irish Centre, which has been in the hands of the receiver, has been rescued from a financial crisis, by the Irish Government. The Government has made a grant to the Centre of about £750, 000.

A Government spokesman said in Dublin, "Without our financial support, the Centre would have been lost to the community."

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Cowen, said that the Centre, a focal point for Irish people living in the City, would get the cash award and would be restructured under new management. Minister Cowen went on to say, "The Irish community in Birmingham endured a difficult period during the course of 'the troubles'."

"I am deeply conscious of the importance of the Centre to the Irish community and of the crucial role which it has played in sustaining their social and community life down the years."

IRISH BUSINESS GROUP - FORTHCOMING OPEN EVENING

The Irish Business Group are planning another Open Evening, to be hosted by the Apollo Hotel, Hagley Road on Wednesday 12th September 2001 at 7.00pm.

Full details will be notified on our re-designed web page and included in our forthcoming newsletter.

A variety of topics will be covered which will be of assistance to our members.

If you would like any further information on the above, please contact Tracy or Angela on 0121 693 6931.

SHORT STORY THE CHILDREN OF LIR

The sun was high in the heavens when Aodh came, and he came with his feathers bright and shining and no trace of the bitter storm on him.

"O where have you been, Aodh?" said Fionnuala and Fiacra and Conn to him.

"I have been flying where I got sight of our kinsfolk. I have seen the white steeds that are swifter than the winds of March, and the riders that were comrades to us when we had our own shapes. I have seen Aodh and Fergus, the two sons of Bove Dearg."

"O tell us, Aodh, where we may get sight of them!" said the swans.

"They are at the river mouth of the Ban," said Aodh, "Let us go there, and we may see them through we cannot leave the Moyle."

So much gladness came on all the swans that they forgot their weariness and the grievous buffeting of the storm and they rose and flew to the river mouth of the Bann. They saw their kinsfolk, the beautiful company of the Faery Host, shining with every colour under heaven and joyous as the wind in Springtime.

"O tell us, dear kinsfolk," said the swans, "how it is with our father?"

"The Great King has wrapped his robes of beauty about him, and feasts with those from whom age cannot take youth and light-heartedness," said Fergus.

"Ah," said Fionnuala, "he feasts and it is well with him! The joy-flame on his hearth cannot quench itself in ashes. He cannot hear us calling through the night - the wild swans, the wanderers, the lost children."

The Faery Host was troubled, seeing the piteous plight of the swans, but Aodh, that was a swan said to Fergus, his kinsman and comrade:

"Do you cloud your face for us, Fergus; the horse you ride is white, but I ride a whiter - the cold curling white wave of the sea."

Then Fiacra said:

"O Fergus, does my own white horse forget me, now that I am here in the cold Moyle?"

And Conn said:

"O Fergus, tell my two hounds that I will come back to them some day."

IN THE (PARROT) FASHION?

Our TOP TEN of over-used or misused words:-

- | | | |
|---------------|-----|--------------|
| 1) Huge | 6) | Hopefully |
| 2) Hugely | 7) | Obviously |
| 3) Total | 8) | Whatsoever |
| 4) Totally | 9) | Unbelievable |
| 5) Absolutely | 10) | Devastated |

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.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

• The Birmingham Roscommon Association are holding their AGM on 19th September 2001, 8.00pm at the Irish Club, Deritend. All are welcome. For further information, please contact the Irish Forum on 0121 622 4102.

• The Carlow County Association are holding a Fundraising Halloween Dance on Saturday 27th October 2001 at the Irish Club, Deritend. Tickets £2.00. For further information please contact the Irish Forum on 0121 622 4102.

• The Birmingham 32 Counties Organisation are holding a 'Ballroom of Romance Supper Dance' on Saturday 3rd November 2001 at the Irish Club, Deritend, Birmingham. Relive the great showband days with the Phoenix Showband from Co. Roscommon. Tickets are £10.00. For further information, please contact 0121 622 4102.

• The Limerick Association are holding a Dinner Dance on Saturday 2nd December 2001 at the Tally Ho. For further information please contact 0121 622 4102.

Is your association holding any events, dinner dances, disco's, etc, that you would like advertised in the Newsletter? If so, please contact Kelly on 0121 622 4102.

FIRST ANNUAL IRISH CHARITY BALL

The Birmingham Irish Community Forum in conjunction with the Irish Business Group have decided to hold the First Annual Irish Charity Ball on 6th October 2001 at St John's Swallow Hotel, Solihull.

We are currently approaching Irish businesses and the community alike to offer you some great opportunities to market and advertise your business, or possibly a County Association, on the evening or in our programme.

From the interest shown so far, we would anticipate that this will become a successful annual event and would hope that your organisation would very much become a part of it.

If you would like further information on any of the above, have any queries or would like to book a table please contact either Angela (Irish Business Group) on 0121 693 6931 or Kelly (Irish Forum) on 0121 622 4102.