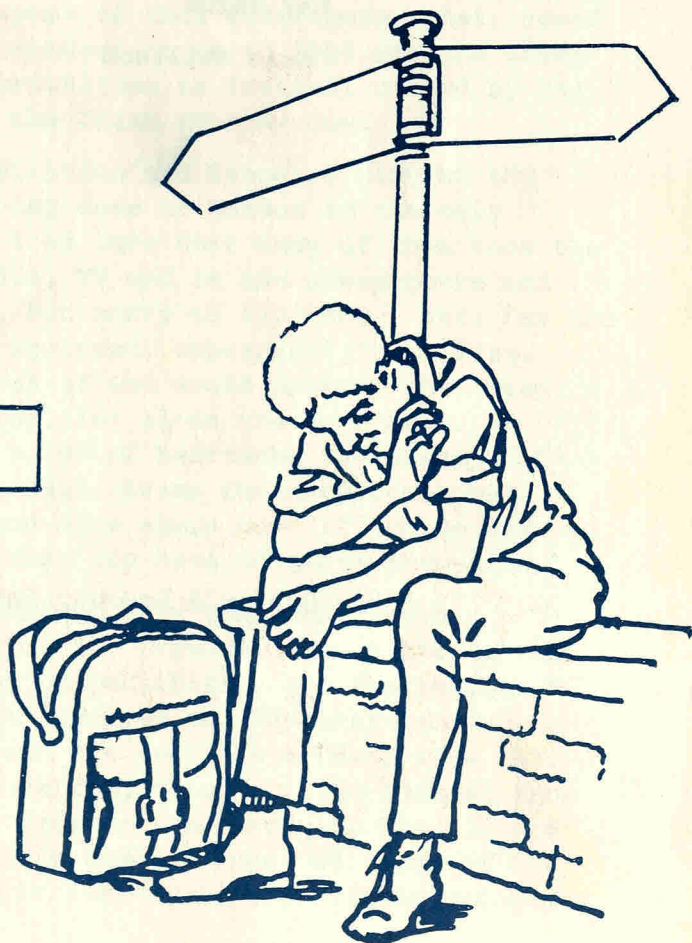
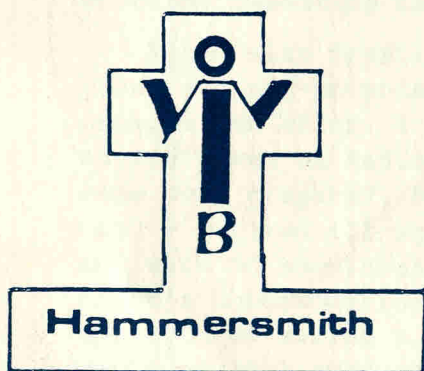


IRISH WELFARE BUREAU
HAMMERSMITH, LONDON.

14th annual report
1984



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BUREAU and HOSTEL STAFF

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INTRODUCTION

It is not difficult to explain the increase in the demand-and-supply situation that was part of the day-to-day running of the Bureau in 1984. Anyone opening their doors and offering their service to the community as we do must expect to find many more people seeking help now than in past years.

However, one aspect of this development that caused especial alarm and concern to us in 1984 was the steep decline in job opportunities in Ireland, caused by the problems besetting the Irish economy now.

Faced with frustration and despair, many of the young and not-so-young come to London as the only prospect on offer. I am sure that many of them took the advice given on Radio, TV and in the newspapers and came well prepared. But sorry to say many - far, far too many - arrived ill-equipped, unprepared, penniless, and with no knowledge of who would provide the first night's accommodation, let alone the next meal. In the hope of saving a lot of heartache and disappointment, could I once again stress the need for common sense to prevail, and once again say: "If you do have to come, do make sure that you have adequate resources."

Another acute problem this year was that a considerable number of our friends died. Although the Bureau undertook the responsibility for the burial of six of them, we were involved and fortunate enough to help make contact with the families of many more. All who died were long-standing friends, like Michael from West Cork who first came to the Bureau in May '72 and died in an Old People's Home in June '84. Some of the others had more tragic deaths, like Billy who was badly

beaten, or Frank who was found dead on the local Green, or John, discovered early in the morning lying face-down in a hole in the road, or Tommy whose death is still in the hands of the Police. The close relationship we had with them all enabled us to make contact with their families and give the kind of support that was necessary at the time.

Talking of support, we also had many occasions to concern ourselves with offenders and ex-offenders. Not only were our prison visits increased, but the aftercare with many was most important. For a visit like ours is their only contact with a friend during a sentence, and without exception these visits are much appreciated. To quote from a recent letter:- "Thanks very much for coming along to pay me a visit. It was good to see you, also the Crack was a break from prison chat that becomes a bit old hat after a while." Because of the complicated system of movement from time of arrest, remand, conviction and sentence, many of these visits would not have taken place were it not for the cooperation of the Chaplaincy team at the various prisons. In particular I would like to say a special word of thanks to Sr. Agnes for her many calls on behalf of our friends and her arranging of pastoral visits.

Although the financial outlay for all services during the year increased by 15%, our fund-raising team not only provided for the increase but created a substantial credit balance for the coming year. Once again, it was the dedication, hard work and team spirit of our helpers that brought success to the Bazaar, Jumbly and Furniture Sales and Dances. Besides the Barbecue we had two exceptionally generous donations: one from the Council Of Irish County Associations and the other from the Monaghan Association, London. To the many people who supported the activities that made these donations possible, my sincere thanks.

Each year we are grant-aided by the Irish Government and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. Last year we received what I consider a well-earned boost by the Irish grant being doubled to IR£10,000 (£8,438), while at the same time we received a disappointing 2½% increase from the local Borough. Although we take pride in the fund-raising done from within, we do also acknowledge and appreciate the importance of these grants and wish to thank the Irish Government and the local Borough for their continued interest and support.

Finally, our thanks to the great number of people who continue to supply the Bureau with much-needed clothing. Your kindness brought dignity and happiness to many during the year. To my Augustinian Community at St. Augustine's in Hammersmith, I wish to express the gratitude of all concerned in the Bureau's activities. We know that without your continued loyalty and encouragement there would never have been a first Annual Report, never mind a fourteenth. And to my colleagues my deepest gratitude and appreciation.

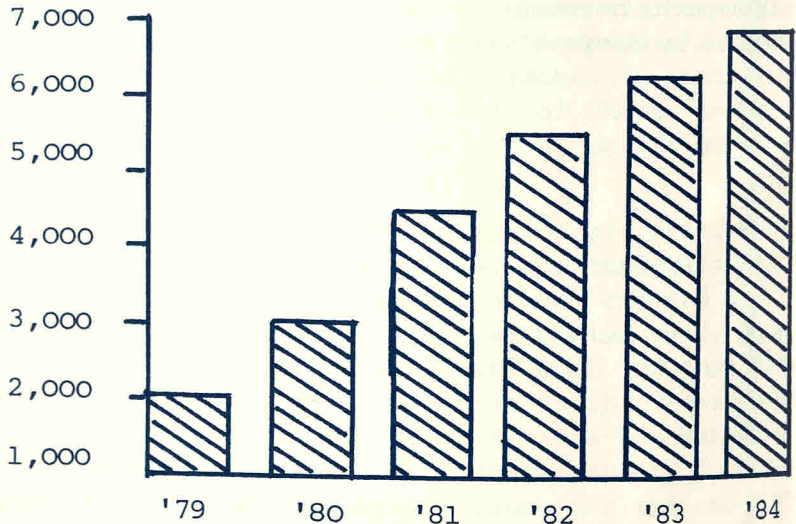
Brian Lawlor OSA

SOCIAL WORK REPORT

This year, like others, has been a difficult one for the Bureau staff. Our statistics continue to show an upward spiral reflecting the current economic climate. We are not only helping more people than before, but the help required is of a more complex nature.

The human faces behind the figures

The graph below shows that 6,776 Interviews took place in the Bureau this year, but statistics like these give a very inadequate picture of the diversity of the human need which we encounter everyday.



While there is no such thing as a typical problem, the following examples might give some insight into the kind of service we give.....

CASE 1

(Names are fictitious)

When John called to us he was penniless, homeless, hungry, cold and very distressed. He had been one week in London. The first two nights he booked into a Bed and Breakfast Hotel and the rest of the week he walked the streets and slept in old buildings. John had hoped to meet up with friends from his home County, who had given him a glowing account of life in London while at home on holiday, but he failed to locate them at any of the addresses given.

John left school when he was 11 years old. He is semi-literate and had no work experience. By the time he came to us he had had enough of life in England. Although we offered accommodation in a secure environment, John wanted to get home as soon as possible. We gave him a meal and later that evening put him on the coach for home.

Many of our cases like this one are concluded at the first or second interview.

CASE 2

Margaret, a 57 year old woman, was referred to us in Feb. '84 by the Nurse on duty at her place of employment. She was concerned about Margaret's mental state and suicidal tendencies. After several abortive visits to the flat admission was finally gained late one afternoon. Margaret was still in her dressing gown having spent the previous few days lying in bed and not answering the door to anyone. She talked about her job, the difficulties she was experiencing with her colleagues and supervisors and how she felt that she could no longer cope with the job.

The flat was damp and musty-smelling, and in the kitchen the water was literally running down the walls which were covered in fungi. The Council Repairs Officer came out immediately to see the situation for himself and he too was horrified. The flat was in a dangerous condition and a health hazard. The electricity had to be switched off and the Disaster Corps from the Council set to work immediately.

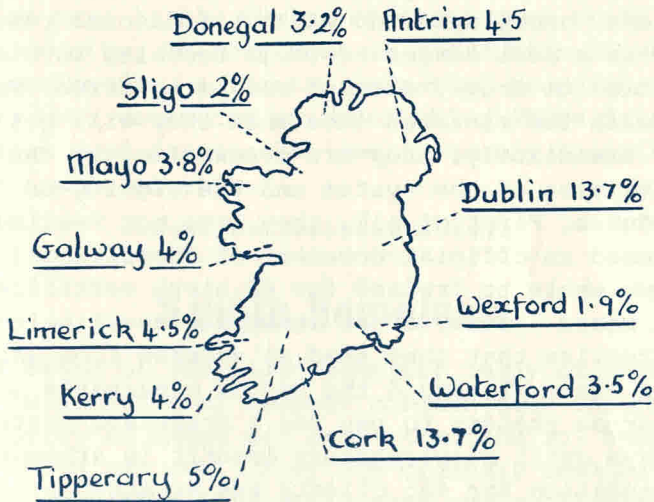
Margaret agreed to see her G.P. and was referred to a local psychiatric unit for treatment. In July she was well enough to holiday in Ireland. On her return, having discussed the matter with her Doctor and the Personnel Officer at work, she resigned from the job. We helped her claim the various benefits available to her and to work out a budget which she could manage. Meanwhile we continue to offer Margaret on-going support helping her to get involved in the local community.

The second case is much more complicated and time consuming, involving home visits, phone calls, letter writing and the involvement of a number of agencies. 37.7% of our workload this year needed continuous support and counselling, advice and information

New cases in 1984

Of the 602 new cases dealt with this year, 36% came to us direct from Ireland, an increase of 45% on last years figures. Most of these new arrivals were in the 15-24 age group, urban background, unskilled, disadvantaged and having little chance of employment.

Where do they come from?



(See table at back for full figures)

Young people

Apart from those who come to us from Ireland we meet many young people who are drifting around London from Bed and Breakfast accommodation to Hostels to Squats. They are referred to us by many agencies including Riverpoint, a night-shelter in the Hammersmith area which provides a week's emergency accommodation for homeless people. As it is the only night-shelter in the West London area it attracts many of the alcoholic and

homeless people who have deep personal problems. It can be a very traumatic experience for a timid young person who has recently left home to find himself in such an environment

Most of these young people come to us penniless with not even a change of clothing. Because they are homeless, unemployed and without financial resources, there is a real danger of their becoming involved in addiction to drugs, alcohol and petty crime. Having come with the mistaken idea that they will get dole money immediately, they are overwhelmed by the complexities of the system and the signing-on procedures. First of all, they have not realised that they need an official document of identification (this year we wrote to Ireland for 67 birth certificates, which means a delay of at least one week); neither do they realise that they need an address from which to make a claim. To avoid the use of unsuitable lodgings the Bureau prefers to pay Bed & Breakfast costs for a few days until Supplementary Benefit is arranged. Accommodation for 465 clients was arranged at our expense in 1984. (£3,037.26)

To many it comes as a real shock to find out, the hard way, how desperate is the Housing situation in London and the exorbitant prices charged. There are few rooms to let in the area and those available are beyond the means of most young people, especially when huge deposits are demanded. Most are faced with a future in Bed and Breakfasts with no privacy or security, 3-4 sharing a room, shabby furniture, no cooking facilities and often dirty and dangerous conditions. Those who are fortunate enough to have found accommodation frequently risk losing it because of late and missing Giro's and they end up back on the streets

again. Very few landlords will allow residents to stay on even for one night if a Giro is late arriving. It is useless for these unskilled young people to take up employment as they would not earn enough to cover the high cost of their accommodation. (£70 for a single room - £56 sharing per week.)

It is obvious from the above that young people in this situation are at risk, and unless they are supported have little chance of getting on their feet in this country. To help them we run Austin House, where we can accommodate a limited number of young men between 18 - 25, when vacancies are available. There is a tremendous need for similar small, homely hostels, not run for financial gain.

Single homeless

The state of the older homeless (many of whom are Irish) is a matter of deepest concern here in London. The majority of these men are not alcoholic, mentally ill or 'down and out'. They are ordinary unskilled workers who worked hard while work was available and are now victims of the appalling housing and employment situation. A recent survey reports that at least 6,000 live in huge hostels which cater for 250-1,000 people in one building. Thousands more are living in substandard Bed & Breakfast accommodation, and large numbers are sleeping rough on the streets or in derelict buildings. As this report was being typed a 58 year old Sligo man came to seek help from us. He had left his B&B accommodation to sleep in an old building in freezing conditions. This, to him, was preferable to the lack of privacy he had endured sharing a small room with strangers. His sole possession was one plastic bag containing one blanket.

The price, in human cost, is high: severe depression, suicide, mental breakdown and alcoholism. Many die lonely and tragic deaths. It is disturbing that so many live in such appalling conditions. The vast majority who were interviewed by the Dept. of Environment for the report 'Single and Homeless ' expressed a preference for accommodation in houses or flats. This year we joined a local pressure group set up to campaign against the poor housing conditions in the Borough. Many of the multi-occupied houses are fire-traps and unfit for human habitation, while high rents are still being charged.

We encourage all our clients who are unsatisfactorily housed to register on the Council waiting list, now numbering 10,134 (of whom 7,541 are requiring single accommodation).

We give a good deal of support to those who are lucky enough to be allocated a Council or Housing Association flat: helping them with removals and settling in. Many need further help in learning how to budget and pay their bills. Some entrust us with their savings for bills, holidays and in case something happens to me" (funeral).

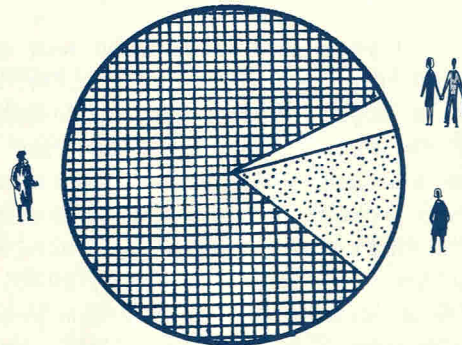
One of the biggest worries for many people is how to obtain the necessary furniture and equipment. This is particularly difficult for someone who is working and on a low wage, or for D.H.S.S. clients who are refused an exceptional Needs Payment because of Clause 10(I)(a) in the Supplementary Benefits regulations. Many local organisations are campaigning for the removal of this clause. We are fortunate, through the generosity of our friends, to have a good stock of curtains, blankets and cooking utensils.

The S.B. allowance for a single person covers the

cost of B&B, basic meals and £8.55 per week for personal expenses i.e. fares, phone calls, toiletries etc. The cost of eating out in Cafes is high, so this year we provided 3,373 vouchers for take-away meals. (£3,165.72) Clients in emergency accommodation while waiting for their benefit to be assessed are penniless and have to walk the streets all day. Little money is left for clothing and we supply a considerable amount of this: suits, shirts, socks, underwear, shoes. Also pyjamas, slippers and dressing gowns for those going into hospital.

While many disapprove of giving 'handouts', we feel that we must continue to do so while the needs exist. These practical services are also a means through which we build up a friendly relationship with our clients and keep them in contact with us, so that when they need help with their deeper personal problems they feel secure enough to confide in us.

Sex of clients



Male 81.3% Female 14.2% Couples 4.1%

Advice and information

We find that many people are unaware of their rights and do not know how to go about claiming them. We gave advice and information to 675 clients this year, covering such areas as legal problems (marital, custody), social security entitlement, housing and other benefits, relatives in trouble etc. In addition there were 2,968 telephone enquiries concerning accommodation, addresses of hostels, missing persons, funeral arrangements etc.

Case-work

While so far in this report we seem to have concentrated on the problems of the young, and of the single homeless, another large section of our work is family casework. This year it involved 520 home visits, 95 hospital visits and 30 prison visits. All of this demands a great deal of time spent in travelling to many parts of London, contacting other social work agencies here and in Ireland, form-filling, letter-writing and phone calls. There is an Irish dimension in many of these cases. The following case history illustrates the kind of work that we do.....

CASE 3

Joan is a 28 year old woman who was brought up in care in Ireland until the age of 15. On leaving care she worked as a housekeeper, and eventually married a soldier when she was 15 years 11 months. As a result of this marriage she had 5 children. The Husband was eventually imprisoned and she had great difficulty caring for the children. They were received into care. Joan has been in this country since 1978. At first she lived in various squats - had a drink problem and spent some time in Holloway Prison. In 1980 she gave birth to a baby boy. The baby's father, with whom she has since been living, had a stabilizing effect on her and she is now a changed person.

Over the years, Joan had expressed a wish to be reunited with her children in Ireland particularly with the two older boys, as their foster placement had broken down. At a Case Conference in '83 I was asked to contact Social Services in Ireland re the possibility of the children coming over here initially for a holiday to develop their relationship with their mother. After a year of negotiations, letter-writing, attending case conferences, court cases and a trip to Ireland to see the children and discuss the matter with the social workers involved, the two older boys were reunited with their mother in July; with the help of the U.C.M. we were able to provide the whole family with a holiday in the South of England. We continue to support Joan and the children as they adjust to their new environment.

A number of grants were given in answer to appeals for financial help towards holidays, rent, gas and electricity arrears. The Bureau also arranged and paid for a holiday (with the help of the Dublin Association) for a young family with three children. Both parents are deaf and dumb and the father has a low-paid job. He was brought up in care in Dublin - he ran away to this country when he was 14 years old. He has not been back since.

We have occasionally been involved with families wanting to return to Ireland for very personal reasons: for example, a young mother with two children, whose husband died of cancer and who had no friends here to support her. In spite of having made contact with the Statutory and Church bodies in her home county, we found no one willing to offer help. While we appreciate the difficulties, we feel strongly that such cases should be given sympathetic treatment. We are saddened by an apparent lack of interest and compassion.

Conclusion

Current decreases in public spending inevitably effect both the statutory and voluntary welfare agencies. Many of the latter are threatened with closure because of cut-backs in grants and high salary and administration costs. We are fortunate that only 58.7% of our total income is used for salaries and administration and that we are able to raise 64.7% of our income by our own efforts and the support of our friends. This means that a high proportion of our funds - 41.3% - can be used directly for welfare.

OUR THANKS

We would like to express our thanks to the following for their support, help and co-operation: the Irish Embassy, the Irish Chaplaincy Scheme, the Federation of Irish Societies Welfare Sub-Committee, the staff of our local D.H.S.S. office, Charles House, for their ever ready help; the Social Workers in the Local Authority Agencies and Irish Welfare Agencies, the Salvation Army, S.V.P., U.C.M. and the County Associations who give us support. My special thanks is due to Fr. Lawlor and my colleagues at the Bureau, without whose dedication and co-operation it would have been impossible to cope with the volume of work.

Sr. Carmel McGowan I.S.C.

Social Worker

ANNUAL STATISTICS 1984

Total number of callers dealt with in 1984:	6,776
This figure includes	
A. Cases carried forward from previous years:	833
B. New cases referred in 1984	602
C. Additional Interviews	<u>5,341</u>
	6,776

TABLE I

<u>This case load entailed:</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>
Domiciliary Visits	225	460	520
Hospital Visits	115	130	95
Prison Visits	20	21	30
Supportive Appearance in Court	1	3	2
Transport & Escort to Trains etc.	4	14	33
Ongoing Supportive work	484	470	541
Number Repatriated	7	9	8
Number of Burials	4	6	6
Telephone Enquiries	2,025	2,496	2,968
Interviews in Bureau	5,488	6,263	6,776

TABLE 2

<u>TYPES OF PROBLEMS:</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>
Accommodation	533	465
Material	3,025	3,309
Meal Vouchers	2,735	3,373
Financial	532	432
Advice & Information	526	675
Psychiatric	54	30
Birth Certificates from Ireland	42	67
Bus Tickets	124	181
Groceries	81	170
Application for Repatriation	14	21
General Welfare	48	52

COUNTY OF ORIGIN and NON-IRISH

<u>Counties of Ireland:</u>	<u>1984</u>
Antrim	66
Armagh	16
Carlow	5
Cavan	10
Clare	26
Cork	196
Derry	21
Donegal	46
Down	17
Dublin	196
Fermanagh	7
Galway	60
Kerry	57
Kildare	15
Kilkenny	14
Laois	7
Leitrim	24
Limerick	65
Longford	9
Louth	14
Mayo	54
Meath	13
Monaghan	13
Offaly	6
Roscommon	16
Sligo	30
Tipperary	73
Tyrone	22
Waterford	51
Westmeath	11
Wexford	27
Wicklow	11
<u>OTHER NATIONALITIES:</u>	
England	141
Scotland	70
Wales	10
Other Countries of Origin	12

NEW CLIENTS 1984

TABLE 4

AGE GROUPS:

15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
19	53	124	52	122	116	55	67
			<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>		
Males			669	597	516		
Females			123	103	92		
Families			24	35	26		

TABLE 5

<u>Types of Problems of New Clients:</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>
New Arrivals from Ireland	60	150	217
Financial	530	421	361
Accommodation	269	222	183
Employment	52	64	68
Information & Advice	48	56	70
Personal	19	20	9
Material Aid	243	248	159
General Welfare	10	19	17
Marital	21	18	9
Mental	15	21	18
Ex-Offenders	30	22	11
Alcoholics, Drug Addiction	27	32	38
Pregnant & Unsupported Mothers	2	6	8

TABLE 6
Sources of Referrals of New Cases

	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>
Alternatives	30	14	27
C.A.B.	3	4	2
Clergy	120	140	131
CSS Prisoners	3	12	2
Crusade of Rescue	-	4	3
DHSS	1	13	10
Friends/Clients	345	285	266
Good Neighbour Centre	3	4	2
Irish Organisations	12	9	10
Job Centre	4	4	7
Law Centre	-	-	2
LBH Housing Aid Section	2	7	3
Medical Social Workers	3	4	2
Nazareth House	9	10	2
Personal Application	155	76	73
Police	3	6	3
Probation Service	6	11	9
Riverpoint	18	28	30

BOROUGHS

Hammersmith & Fulham	21	15	12
Islington	3	2	2
Kensington & Chelsea	2	3	3
Lambeth	1	2	2
Wandsworth	1	3	2

TABLE 7
Places of Origin of New Clients

<u>Counties of Ireland:</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>
Antrim	36	28	40
Armagh	6	6	5
Carlow	1	3	1
Cavan	3	11	3
Clare	11	10	11
Cork	76	77	91
Derry	14	5	9
Donegal	89	79	93
Down	12	5	9
Dublin	89	79	93
Fermanagh	2	-	3
Galway	37	38	19
Kerry	25	33	23
Kildare	12	4	6
Kilkenny	7	12	4
Laois	-	-	2
Leitrim	8	5	12
Limerick	33	51	20
Longford	8	7	3
Louth	5	5	6
Mayo	24	21	20
Meath	8	5	4
Monaghan	4	7	6
Offaly	3	5	3
Roscommon	12	3	7
Sligo	24	38	10
Tipperary	24	38	27
Tyrone	17	13	10
Waterford	19	19	29
Westmeath	12	6	3
Wexford	6	15	14
Wicklow	5	11	6
<u>OTHER NATIONALITIES:</u>			
England	130	99	58
Scotland	70	47	27
Wales	10	12	2
Other Countries of Origin	23	17	5

INCOME January 1984 - December 1984

December 1983 Credit Balance £12888.06

Grant:London Borough of Hammersmith
 and Fulham 5150.00
Grant from Irish Government 8438.82
Donations 2012.01
Bazaar & Raffle '84 12735.00
Barbecue 1869.00
Jumble & Furniture Sales 1922.50
Council of Irish County
 Associations 2500.00
Monaghan Association -
 Big Tom Golf Classic 1000.00
Dances organized by Friends
 of the Bureau 1698.50
Death Grants via Council of
 Irish County Assocs. & DHSS 900.00
St. Augustine's Church Poor Box 1076.50
From Development Fund 1000.00
Refunds 311.00
Exchange 163.19
Interest 340.63

41117.15

54005.21

December 1984 Credit Balance £21084.22
Petty Cash in Hand 9.97

£21074.25

Bank Statement 31.12.1984 £21074.25

EXPENDITURE JANUARY 1984 - DECEMBER 1984

	£
Salaries	14096.86
National Insurance	1396.80
Material Aid to Clients	4027.23
Meal Vouchers	3165.72
Accommodation	3037.26
Grants to Families	701.03
Burials	1571.50
Motors (Insurance, Tax, Petrol, Service)	1204.15
Telephone	671.82
Heating & Lighting	515.23
Holiday Grants	481.10
Welfare Travel	148.45
Repatriation	204.50
Office (Stationery, Stamps, Postage)	160.22
Pre-paid Bus Tickets	150.00
Accountants Fees	577.25
Birth Certificates	57.36
Rent on Furniture Store	156.00
Exchange	163.19
Decoration & Maintenance	174.87
Conferences	116.00
Insurance on Bureau	39.29
London Borough of H & F - Trade Refuse	90.16
Renewal of Lotteries Registration	10.00
H.F.V.S.C. Subscription	5.00
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	£32920.99