

THIRTY SECOND ANNUAL REPORT  
(REPORT FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 1986)

INTRODUCTION

1986 has been a very active and demanding year for the Irish Centre. This was reflected in the loss of our Director and Secretary plus changes in the Administrative Committee. The great increase in immigration stretched the resources of the Community Services Department to its very limits. It put enormous pressure on the staff of this department as they tried to cope with this influx and meet the immediate needs of these often lost and vulnerable people.

REPORTS

WELFARE

The Annual Report for 1986, which is issued separately, documents in a very detailed and accurate way the number of people who came to our Community Services Department for help, advice and counselling. The greatest problem which confronted the very dedicated staff in this Department was that of finding accommodation not only for young single people but increasingly for whole families. It is unfortunate that people coming from Ireland seem to be totally unaware of the lack of accommodation in London. Looking at the statistics of the age group of immigrants there is a noticeable increase in new arrivals under 19 as well as an increase in the older age groups. The enormous increase in the number of callers to our Community Services Department has put tremendous pressure on the staff who make an all out effort to meet the needs of all callers. To each and everyone we would like to say a special 'thank you'.

HOSTELS

Here again the Annual Report documents the statistics relating to our two hostels, St Louise at Medway Street which accommodates 135 girls and Conway House in Kilburn which accommodates 100 young men. The report from St Louise's mentions that on the whole girls coming from Ireland are much better prepared.

Conway House

There was a dramatic increase in the number of people seeking help. One of the big problems here is the lack of move-on housing alternatives.

This year we welcomed a new member of staff, Miss Eithne O'Flynn, as advice worker. We hope she will enjoy working at Conway House.

## EXISTING SERVICES, IRISH CENTRE COMMUNITY SERVICES, CAMDEN SQUARE

The list of services provided are as follows:

- 1 Services to the newly arrived.
- 2 Services to the domiciled Irish.
- 3 Educational services.
- 4 Information services.
- 5 Missing persons service.

The Missing Persons Service is undertaken by volunteer, Mr Brian Duggan with overall responsibility by Breege Brandon. Brian has worked very hard and conscientiously over the year and has had a very high success rate in tracing missing people. 36 cases were carried forward from 1985. During the year a further 71 cases were added making a total of 107 cases in all; 32 people were located and 17 returned of their own accord.

## AGIY (ACTION GROUP FOR IRISH YOUTH)

AGIY now has premises of its own at Brent Irish Community and Cultural Association (BICCA). It has received funding from the London Borough Grants Unit to employ one full time development worker and a part-time Administrator. The purpose of employing workers is to try and meet the needs highlighted in earlier research. The AGIY is in the process of becoming a Limited Company and Registered Charity.

## EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

### Irish Language Classes

Our Irish language classes are very successful. It is interesting to note that 90% of the adults are English born. There is an increasing interest in the Irish language which is very encouraging, with many of the students joining the classes because of their Irish background. The Saturday morning classes for children are well attended by very enthusiastic youngsters. Some of these children are about to return to Ireland with their parents and are preparing to integrate into Irish society. Fifty students went to Summer School in the Gaeltacht for 2 weeks. As well as being a very successful holiday there was also a noticeable improvement in their grasp of the Irish language. A special 'thank you' to teacher Siobhan O'Neill for all the effort she put into organising the event and thanks also to Aer Lingus, Board Failte and Eastern Tourist Board for their financial support. We must not, of course, forget the residents of the Gaeltacht and our hosts who did everything in their power to make the occasion a truly memorable one. The class was delighted when our host and organiser Seamus O'Maoloid from Charna paid a visit to the Irish Centre at Christmas.

More advanced students went as usual to Colaiste Na Rinne in Waterford to attend the Summer refresher course in the last week of August where not a word of English is spoken.



## NUMERACY LITERACY AND TYPING CLASSES

These classes continued throughout the year. While the literacy classes were not so well attended, typing classes proved very popular especially with young people who wanted to brush up their skills before interviews. Several of the students managed to get jobs once their keyboard skills improved.

## COMPUTING AND WORD PROCESSING

With a contribution of around £1,500 from the Irish Centre for computer equipment the classes got off to a good start. There was good demand for word processing classes as most students now realize that this skill is now becoming vital for modern office work and would therefore increase their chances of getting a job, as would other computer related skills.

## CARE OF THE ELDERLY - PROVISION FOR YOUTH CLUB - PREMISES

Negotiations are in progress for re-development of the ground floor as a Day Care Centre for the Elderly and Youth facilities in the evening.

## CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

### (1) Music and Dance

Thomas Nagle and Siobhan O'Donnell have Saturday afternoon classes for 50-60 children. They teach a variety of instruments, whistle, fiddle and piano accordion and are very pleased with the enthusiastic response from the children.

### (2) Crean School of Dancing

We thank Mr Paddy Crean for his active role in the Crean School of Dancing. There are very successful dancing classes at the Centre twice a week.

### (3) Uilleann Pipers

The Uilleann Pipers have had another successful year and their Thursday evening classes are very popular.

### (4) Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann

The group meets regularly at the Centre and hold sessions once a month on every second Friday. They also have branch meetings on the first Tuesday of every month. We thank them for being such staunch supporters of the Centre and also for their very generous Christmas donation.

## (5) Ceili Dancing

During the year, our Sunday night Ceili continued to be a great social and financial success, with a wide appeal to all age groups and nationalities. Once again, there were many visitors from home, the Continent and overseas. The variety of dances was greater than ever, the cross reel proving a popular addition to the repertoire. Though we all deeply miss Tommy Maguire, RIP, his legacy of talent and teaching was well preserved in the excellent music of the John Maguire Ceili Band.

We maintained our wide range of other dancing activities:-

Through the Adult Beginners' Classes (Mondays & Thursdays) at least a further sixty people discovered an easy and enjoyable route to the dance floor. In fact, recruitment is already well under way for our 1987-88 courses.

The St Patrick's Night Ceili (ticket only) was completely sold out before the feast had even arrived! It was 'full house' too for our big dance on New Year's Eve, and Dracula again danced with Cinderella at the ever popular Fancy Dress Ceili.

There was keen interest, also, in the Ceili Dancing Competition for which the Irish Centre, some years ago, donated a beautiful perpetual trophy. And of course the Annual Dinner Ceili was, once again, one of the highlights of a very active and interesting year, as was the anniversary Ceili, when we were able to reflect on our long and very happy association (since 1980) with the Irish Centre.

To give wider publicity to these and other events our Committee launched 'Ceili News' (an occasional bulletin of dates and events) and a revised edition of our handout leaflet.

( For copies, or for further details of our busy Ceili programme, telephone Anton, 272-5815 (evenings) or Eamonn 272-5064 (evenings) or write to The Secretary, Ceili Committee, c/o Irish Centre.)

Our Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed so much to the continuing success of the Ceili:-

- the Irish Centre's Management, bar and kitchen staff
- the John Maguire Ceili Band, Tommy Nagle (dancing class accordionist) and the many other musicians, singers and dancers who performed on various occasions
- the Competition Adjudicator, and judges of our Fancy Dress Ceili
- the 'Irish Post', RTE and other publishers, broadcasters and groups who helped publicise and support our functions during the year.

And of course we are especially grateful to the countless individuals



who continue to regularly attend our Sunday night Ceili here at the Centre and the Friday night Ceili, run by our 'sister' Committee, at St. Joseph's Parish Centre, Highgate.

#### (6) Karate Classes

We continue to have weekly classes in Karate for those interested. Classes attract a number of enthusiastic children and young people.

#### OUR YOUTH UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF MISS KATHLEEN FITZSIMONS

Our Youth Group has continued to meet and had a very successful year but find the lack of proper premises a big disadvantage. The Group won many sporting events, were well represented on Diocesan activities, pilgrimages to Lourdes, Rome and Assisi and had a most enjoyable American trip during the Christmas season. Unfortunately the Discos had to be cancelled at the end of the year. We again appeal to parents and young adults of the Club to offer their full assistance to the Youth Leader to ensure proper supervision and allow the Discos to start soon again. We hope new premises will be available this year to ease the problem and hopefully this will be a big boost to the development of Youth activities at the Centre.

#### SOCIAL CLUB MEETINGS

Entertainment in our halls and the running of the bars is organized by the social Club Committee. Popular bingo sessions are organized by Mary Kenny, Paddy and Mary O'Brien. Card evenings featuring '25' are organized by Frank and Maureen Screen. To all who are involved in planning and ensuring the smooth running of these events we express our thanks.

#### VOLUNTARY WORKERS

Each year we express our gratitude to the many people who give up their free time and work energetically to help out in the running of the Centre. We depend to a great extent on our voluntary workers, Tommy McGuinness who answers the telephone, Christina Loftus, who is at the reception desk in the Community Services Department on a Saturday morning, Mary Furlong and Alice Ellis who are receptionists on Mondays and Wednesdays in the Social Club section, Mr and Mrs Jock Rutherford who arranges the Hall so nicely for masses and of course Mary Kenny who is here every day, week in week out. A special 'thank you' to all these people.

## COUNCIL OF IRISH COUNTIES

This year we thought we would write a brief history of the Council of Irish Counties Associations, its aims and objectives.

The Council was formed 33/34 years ago as a non-political and non-sectarian organization.

The Executive of the Council consists of the President, four Vice-Presidents, five officers and seven other members. Representation is open to all County Associations who accept the Constitution and pay an Annual affiliation fee.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- (1) The promotion of an Inter-County quiz - senior and junior.
- (2) To organize the St Patrick's Day parade and the Annual Dinner Dance.
- (3) In conjunction with the Irish Centre to organize and promote the London Irish Festival - an annual event which provides funds for the Council Welfare Fund and the Welfare Fund of the London Irish Centre.

The Council uses the Centre as a base for meetings and functions.

Individual County Associations have down the years played a very prominent part in the Centre through holding Dinner/Dances, meetings and Fund Raising functions there.

During the last ten years, since the opening of the McNamara Hall, a greater involvement of the County Associations is noticeable. The Council is very much concerned with the present needs of the Centre, given the upsurge in emigration.

We wish Fr Tom Scully well in the difficult task ahead of him and assure him of our support at all times.

## ADMINISTRATION/MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING

Paddy Keegan and Tommy Dunne continue to be deeply involved in the Administration of the Irish Centre. During the year the Executive met a number of times to discuss all problems of the Centre and to try and reduce the overall responsibility and pressure of work on the Director. A very special thanks to Bridie Rooney for all her efforts over the past years and we wish her every success in her new appointment. She is a sad loss and the Centre misses her expertise and the Administrative knowledge she had built up over the years.



## FINANCE

The Balance Sheet dated 31st December 1982 showed Current Liabilities as £999,902. The Current Balance Sheet reveals Current Liabilities as £307,206.

These figures reveal a not inconsiderable amount of hard work, negotiation and fund raising over the short period of four years. The initiative in this downward trend in liabilities was the well known "CYCLE RIDE" in 1983. The funds of approximately £90,000 which emanated from this venture enabled the Centre's Management to negotiate a favourable deal with its major creditor. In the ensuing years considerable repayment of monies due have been made to the Bank of Ireland. In 1986 negotiations between the Bank of Ireland, The Irish Centre and Commercial Credit Services Limited were satisfactorily concluded. The results of these negotiations were basically as follows:-

The Bank of Ireland Term Loan of £300,000 was reduced by £100,000 to £200,000 on transfer of the aforesaid £200,000 to Commercial Credit Services on a FIFTEEN year mortgage basis with ANNUAL repayments of £30,768.

On 1st January 1986 the second phase of the previous bank arrangements came into force and interest became due on the Balance of £300,000 as at 1st January 1986 at bank lending rate plus 1.5%. Hence interest charges of £39,846 in revenue account for the Year 1986.

Brewery Loans continue to be repaid at a rate of £22,500 per annum. We are now entering a new phase of negotiations in respect of same which later should be effective from 1st July 1987.

The above annual commitments have placed, and will continue to place a not inconsiderable burden on the funds of the Centre but the honouring and settlement of our debts are of paramount importance.

We must here extend a very sincere thanks to our Auditors Messrs Beatty & Co for their major contribution in all of above negotiations.

## FINANCE (cont'd)

The following is an analysis of Income received from various sources:

### GRANTS

	£	
London Borough of Camden	37,122	
Irish Government	42,812	
		79,934

### DONATIONS

London Irish Festival Ltd	25,000	
W G Society	15,241	
Per B Shaw - Clare (Chairs)-1986	5,258	
COIC (Floor - JFK Hall)	3,100	
Laois Association	1,000	
Cavan Association	500	
Roscommon Association	500	
Comhaltas Ceoltoiri	500	
Limerick Association	400	
Kilmallock Reunion	250	
Clonfert Association	200	
Cork Association	100	
Donegal Association	100	
Mrs T Maguire	100	
Per Ceili Committee	130	
Irish Dance Commission	100	
Sunday and Anonymous	923	
		53,402

COVENANTS Inland Revenue - Final 3,572

### CONCLUSION

The summary of the accounts shows how the Centre's debt is reducing steadily, but we must keep up the pressure and not relax our efforts. Thanks to Camden Borough Council and the Irish Government for their substantial grants. The London Irish Festival was again a great success and we thank the Committee for their generous contribution. Thanks to our Fund Raisers and all who gave donations. Nineteen-eighty-six saw the start of the '2000 Member Car Raffle' which brought in almost £20,000. We hope it will continue and reveal its full potential in 1987/8.

To the many who work in the background, to all our members and helpers, to our Committees and staff, a very sincere 'thank you'. May we continue to work together for the good of the Irish in London.

Rev T Scully OMI  
DIRECTOR