

THE COUNCIL FOR THE IRISH CENTRE,  
51/52 CAMDEN SQUARE, LONDON, N.W.1.

TENTH ANNUAL REPORT

:

for the year ending 31st December 1964.

In that it saw the departure of its first Chaplain, Father Tom McNamara, 1964 will be remembered as the end of an era and a year of transition for the Irish Centre. We take this opportunity to express our grateful appreciation of the pioneering work done by Father McNamara in the very difficult years of the Centre's formation and to wish him many happy years in his new assignment at St. Gabriel's.

As the year came to a close, the Centre also lost the services of Miss Camille Acheson, who, during her twelve months as Welfare Officer, had streamlined the Welfare service along professional lines. We wish her every success in her future.

With this Report comes the announcement that Mr. Michael Casey is not seeking re-election as Hon. Secretary of the Centre, in which position he had given splendid and devoted service for three years. We wish to thank him for his loyalty and generosity and are pleased to know that he will continue to offer his service on the Administrative Committee.

We feel proud that persons closely connected with the Centre have received special honours during the year. We extend sincere congratulations to our Patron and Trustee, His Eminence, the Archbishop of Westminster, on his elevation to the College of Cardinals, and to our President and Trustee, the Right Hon. Lord Longford, on his appointment as Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords in Her Majesty's Government.

We have learned with regret of the illness of another of our Patrons, His Lordship the Bishop of Southwark, and we earnestly wish and pray for his speedy recovery to good health.

1964 can be regarded as another year of steady progress in all the affairs of the Irish Centre.

WELFARE:- It is an indication of the expansion of our Welfare Service that it now requires the full-time services of two Welfare Officers. We are deeply indebted to His Eminence Cardinal Heenan for generously consenting to meet the salary of our second Officer from Westminster Diocesan funds.

During the year seven hundred and seventy six persons called at the Welfare Office seeking assistance, seven hundred and sixty six of these being Irish. It should be noted that many of these had to be interviewed a number of times, and that the figure does not include persons calling for advice or help outside office hours, nor does it include moral welfare cases dealt with by correspondence in the Chaplain's office.

The following are the counties of origin of the seven hundred and sixty six Irish :-

Antrim	25	Down	4	Leitrim	11	Roscommon	13
Armagh	3	Dublin	226	Limerick	67	Sligo	4
Carlow	7	Fermanagh	3	Longford	7	Tipperary	37
Cavan	16	Galway	26	Louth	17	Tyrone	10
Clare	21	Kerry	23	Mayo	28	Waterford	13
Cork	81	Kildare	27	Meath	12	Westmeath	6
Kerry	11	Kilkenny	9	Monaghan	4	Wexford	16
Donegal	20	Leix	4	Offaly	8	Wicklow	7

It is interesting to note that, of the total of 766 Irish :-



183 were aged eighteen and under;  
 400 were first-time emigrants;  
 381 were seeking accommodation, employment or financial assistance;  
 385 were in the category of "welfare problems", of whom 16 were unmarried mothers, 22 were ex-prisoners, and (it must be noted with some alarm) 80 were mental cases.

Indeed, ex-mental hospital patients have been presenting such a problem that the Welfare Committee must give consideration to the provision of a specialised service to meet their needs. It is obviously a serious risk to keep such persons in our Hostels.

At the end of the year, to relieve pressure on our Welfare Office, an office within the Centre was leased to the Marian Employment Agency. This office is working very satisfactorily.

During the year the Centre became affiliated to the newly-formed Camden Council of Social Service, in which we rank as one of the largest voluntary bodies. We are confident that our affiliation to the Council will be of great benefit to our Welfare work in the future.

We feel it our duty to express our debt of gratitude to Dr. Laurence Morton, Chairman of the Welfare Committee, for his constant self-sacrificing professional service.

ACCOMMODATION: During the year, a total of 1,073 persons (669 men and 404 girls) were accommodated in our Hostels, compared with 1,242 (638 men and 604 girls) in 1963 and 1540 (697 men and 843 girls) in 1962. This brings the total numbers accommodated since 1955 to 12,784 (6,243 men and 6,536 girls).

Of the 669 men who stayed in our Hostel in 1964, 9 were non-Irish, 8 were non-Catholic, and 95 gave their age as 18 or under.

Of the 404 girls accommodated, 7 were non-Irish, 3 were non-Catholic, and 72 gave their age as 18 or under.

Counties or origin of the 660 Irish men who were accommodated.

Antrim	27	Leitrim	10
Armagh	5	Limerick	41
Carlow	5	Longford	5
Cavan	9	Louth	14
Clare	19	Mayo	22
Cork	77	Meath	14
Derry	12	Monaghan	5
Donegal	17	Offaly	3
Down	10	Roscommon	8
Dublin	173	Sligo	9
Fermanagh	2	Tipperary	44
Galway	23	Tyrone	15
Kerry	29	Waterford	9
Kildare	14	Westmeath	8
Kilkenny	12	Wexford	7
Laois	6	Wicklow	6

Counties of origin of the 397 Irish Girls who were accommodated :-

Antrim	21	Limerick	17
Armagh	8	Leitrim	7
Carlow	3	Longford	9
Cavan	10	Louth	3
Clare	12	Mayo	20
Cork	28	Meath	8
Derry	4	Monaghan	3
Donegal	7	Offaly	10
Down	5	Roscommon	10
Dublin	87	Sligo	11
Fermanagh	2	Tipperary	16
Galway	30	Tyrone	5
Kerry	6	Waterford	8
Kildare	8	Westmeath	11
Kilkenny	5	Wexford	11
Laois	6	Wicklow	6

It is regretted that we cannot accept advance postal reservations for our hostel, but experience shows that such reservations are rarely honoured.

CAREY CLUB: It is our pleasure to congratulate the Club on another very successful year and to thank their committee and helpers for their devoted work. Their fund-raising efforts and social activities are deserving of high praise. Special mention must be made of the annual Old Age Pensioners' Christmas Party, at which a record number of 146 old people from the St. Pancras Borough were entertained.

The BACON & CABBAGE DINNERS have increased in popularity. We apologise to the County Associations and other organisations for our inability to accommodate the numbers



applying for tickets for these functions, and assure them that our premises and facilities will be adequate in the very near future. In all, 52 Dinners and 21 Wedding Receptions were held in the Club during the year.

The SAVINGS CLUB continues to function, but has not attracted small savings to the extent that it was hoped.

"HOMELAND SPECIAL" :- Last year, with the participation of the Irish Centres in Birmingham and Manchester, we brought 1,350 Irish people on a holiday to Ireland by the "Homeland Special", compared with 350 in the first year of this enterprise. Though the operation cost the Centre a loss of £284, we feel that it has justified itself. We owe a debt of gratitude to Bord Failte Eireann, British Railways and Coras Iompair Eireann for their cooperation in this venture. We expect to take over 2,000 people on the Homeland Special this year.

CONCERT :- The St. Patrick's Festival Concert at the Royal Albert Hall was once again a great success, both socially and financially, with a capacity attendance of 4,500 people turning over a net profit to the Irish Hostels Development Society.

LEGION OF MARY :- The Praesidium of Our Lady Queen of Ireland, which meets in the Centre every Tuesday, continues to carry on very praiseworthy work, their apostolate including weekly visitation of the 1,100-bed Arlington House and a monthly Patrician Meeting.

MASS CENTRE :- To facilitate Catholics residing in the locality, the Oratory at the Centre was, thanks to the courtesy of Father Ferry, parish priest of Kentish Town, opened from October to the public. We now have a Sunday congregation of over 350, 90% of these being Irish people. When the new Hall opens, it is proposed that we use it as a Mass Centre on Sundays.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS : During the year, we had the privilege of welcoming many distinguished visitors to the Centre, including His Eminence Cardinal Heenan, who visited us twice; two Irish Cabinet Ministers --- Mr. Frank Aiken, Minister for External Affairs, and Mr. Michael Hilliard, Minister for Posts and Telegraphs ; His Excellency, the Irish Ambassador, Mr. John G. Molloy, who has shown such a kindly interest in all our affairs ; the Mayor and Mayoress of St. Pancras, Clr. & Mrs. C.J. Ratchford ; and the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Cork, Senator & Mrs. A.A. Healy.

PREMISES : EXTENSIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS :- The past year saw the commencement of the building of the John F. Kennedy Memorial Hall. While the ground floor of this building will be ready for use within the next few weeks, it is regretted that planning difficulties have seriously delayed the completion of the remainder of the building. However, if planning permission is forthcoming, the revised plans will now give us a three-storey building with the following facilities :- an Assembly Hall, a Banquet Room, a Television Lounge, a Reading Library, a Committee Room and a modern kitchen. The cost of this extension will be in the region of £30,000.

At the end of the year, we also started a programme of radical improvements to both our Hostels, involving reconstruction, improved sanitary facilities, decorating and re-furnishing. On the completion of this programme, our Hostels will be in keeping with modern standards.

Tenders were also invited for radical improvements to the Bar premises in our Club, and this work is due to commence any day.

Thanks to the generosity of the Archbishop of Westminster, the ownership of the property comprising the Girls' Hostel is at present being transferred from the Diocesan Trustees to the Trustees of the Irish Centre.

#### FINANCE

It will be noted from the Auditors' Statement that, while the value of our Fixed Assets had increased by £5,188 to £48,373, our Liabilities had increased by only £864 to £25,892. Such a position was in large measure made possible by the generosity of our benefactors.

We are very grateful to those who gave Covenants to the value of £981 - 14 - 6 to the general fund of the Centre, especially to Messrs. Arthur Guinness, Son & Co. Ltd. (£840), and Mr. M.J. Gleeson (£100).

Donations to the general fund amounted to £3,961 - 14 - 1. Donors of over £20 were :-

His Eminence, Cardinal Heenan :	£2,155.	Rt. Rev. Monsignor Barron :	£50.
St. Pancras Borough Council :	£ 750.	Corkmen's Association :	£50.
Jane Hodge Foundation, Cardiff :	£ 500.	The Irish Club :	£40.
Portsmouth Irish Society :	£ 100.	Cloyne League of Prayer :	£40.



Cuchulainn G.F.C. : £28.  
His Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. Quinn : £25.

His Eminence, Cardinal Conway : £25.  
Shamrock G.F.C. : £21 - 10 - 0.

We are very grateful to all the above-mentioned and not less to the numerous donors of smaller sums. We regret that, in our efforts to shorten this report, we cannot mention all by name.

Welfare Fund : Donations to the Welfare Fund amounted to £987. We thank all these donors, with special thanks to the Slattery Foundation for £100 from Dividends.

It will be noted in the Auditors' Report that the direct cost of our Welfare Service in 1964 amounted to £2,348, leaving the fund a credit balance of only £89 at the end of the year. We would like to make our welfare fund a first claim on our benefactors in the coming year.

Despite accommodation grants to the amount of £547 - 15 - 6 from the National Assistance Board, the keeping of persons free of charge at the Men's Hostel during the year cost the Welfare Fund £689 - 12 - 0. (The corresponding charge from the Girls' Hostel was £218 - 15 - 6). The large numbers arriving from Ireland without money for accommodation in their first weeks present a serious problem.

J.F.K. Fund : While we gratefully appreciate the earnest efforts made by the John F. Kennedy Memorial Committee, it must be admitted that the appeal of this fund was very disappointing, the net figure realised at the end of the financial year being only £1,165, £307 of this having come from a Film Premiere at Wembley, for which we must thank the United States Embassy and the Management of Wembley Stadium.

We wish to thank all who contributed to this fund, especially the County Associations, whose contributions ~~xx~~ were as follows :- ~~xxrk~~ Cavan, Galway, Meath, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo : £100 each ; Wexford : £25.

It is appreciated that some other County Associations intend to make contributions before the 17th. of March, when the appeal officially closes.

It is interesting to note that the total wages-bill at the Centre in 1964 was £7,215. (The wages-bill at the Girls' Hostel was £890 - 12 - 0).

For a final comment on finance, we must face the fact that our immediate programme of expansion, which cannot be delayed, will land us very heavily in debt before the end of the current financial year.

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In expressing our appreciation of the sense of responsibility for emigrant welfare manifested by the Irish County Associations in London in their generosity to the Irish Centre, while hoping that none of them may ever place county barriers to their charity, we wish to express our disappointment that there is no Dublin Association in London. The Report indicates that emigrants from Dublin are responsible for about 28% of our welfare costs. We earnestly appeal to Dublin exiles in London to ~~x~~ make some community effort to meet this responsibility.

We gratefully appreciate the support given to us by the London County Board and the Clubs of Gaelic Athletic Association, especially in the facilities granted to us at the Whit games at Wembley, for which we also owe a debt of gratitude to the Management of Wembley Stadium.

Lastly, we say thanks to our Patrons for their encouragement, to our Accountant, Mr. Patrick J. Keegan, and our Consultant Engineer, Mr. Noel O'Connell, for their generous assistance during the year, to the priests in various parishes who have been so cooperative (especially in our accommodation problems), and to all our Staff at the Irish Centre and at our Girls' Hostel for their loyal service.

Owen R. Sweeney,  
Chaplain & Treasurer,  
for the Administrative Committee.