



# ICPO NEWS

Issue No. 74

Summer 2017



Repatriation



Prison  
Yoga



Changes to  
Legal Aid

# ICPO

It is estimated that at any one time there are in excess of 1,200 Irish people in prison overseas. Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO) has contact with Irish people in prisons in more than twenty five countries, the majority of whom are in the UK, with many more detained throughout the US, Australia, Europe, South and Central America and the Far East.

The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO) was established by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference in 1985 in response to serious concerns regarding the number of Irish men and women in UK prisons. These deeply held concerns related to their trials and subsequent imprisonment.

In recent years ICPO has been able to offer a more comprehensive service to prisoners and to expand our existing services to prisoners' families. ICPO works for all Irish prisoners wherever they are. It makes no distinction in terms of religious faith, the nature of the prison conviction, or of a prisoner's status.

The objectives of the ICPO are to:

- Identify and respond to the needs of Irish prisoners abroad and their families;
- Research and provide relevant information to prisoners on issues such as deportation, repatriation and transfer;
- Focus public attention on issues affecting Irish prisoners (ill-treatment, racist abuse, etc);
- Engage in practical work in aid of justice and human rights for Irish migrants, refugees and prisoners at an international level;
- Visit Irish prisoners abroad where possible both in the UK and elsewhere.

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## Greetings from all in the ICPO.

In this edition of the newsletter we take a detailed look at one of the most important issues affecting Irish people in prison overseas. Firstly we consider the current impasse regarding prisoner transfers to Ireland. One of our clients in the US has written a powerful letter explaining what the lack of movement on this issues means to him and his family. ICPO Casework, Information and Policy Officer, Ciara Kirrane, also provides a detailed update on the situation and what you can do to help move things forward.

You may have noticed the beautiful Benbulbin on the front page. Quite apart from the fact that the ICPO Administrator and Coordinator are originally from Sligo, we thought it might also serve as a nice picture of Ireland for some people's wall. I hope you like it.

The newsletter also includes a very thoughtful piece from Bernie Martin, as well as a piece from Breda Power in the London office highlighting the work of Sr. Philomena as prison chaplain at HMP Chelmsford. This piece positively reflects on the vital work of all prison chaplains and we gratefully acknowledge all that they do in their pastoral ministry. We have a large selection of your poetry and stories in this edition as well as a writing competition, so please keep sending them into us.

My thanks as always to our regular contributors - Caitriona Ní Bhaoill, author of Smidín Gaeilge and Ian Hanna for his popular sports supplement. Lastly, I wish to thank the ICPO staff and volunteers (in particular Eileen Boyle) for their hard work in putting this newsletter together.

**Brian Hanley**  
ICPO Coordinator

# Repatriation

## Time Spent Waiting

Dear sir,

I am presently incarcerated in a low-security prison in the United States for the past 2 years and I am an Irish citizen. Within 6 months of incarceration the US Dept. of Justice approved my repatriation back to Ireland. It could not have been faster! However, getting approval from the Irish Dept. of Justice for my repatriation is proving to be very long and frustrating for me and my family.

My application was sent to the Irish authorities in 2016 and the review of it is now on hold because of the O'Farrell et al case in July 2016. Since that time the Irish Dept. of Justice are trying to figure out the ramifications of the O'Farrell case and need to make their recommendations on, whether amendments to the appropriate legislation might be required. Almost one year later and still no news.

Of course, this is all 'legalese' and 'gobbledegook' to prisoners and families. Why such a long delay? Why no update on the review? This is causing delays in prisoner repatriations and inability to see our family and loved ones. Unfortunately, it appears that government review and decision making cycles just grind along at a frustratingly slow pace which takes no account of the huge personal impact on prisoners but equally on family members and children. Families want to help the prisoner both on a psychological and emotional level but cannot do so because of the inability to be close to the prisoner. Recently I was visited by my brother from Ireland. The overall cost for the 5-day trip was €1,500 (i.e. his annual holiday budget used on his airfare, hotel, car rental and other costs during his visit to me). I must admit that I felt guilty about this financial burden on my family and I encouraged them to use the money on their own children's needs.

My family has tried many times to solicit a response from the Department of Justice but got only terse standard replies about how all applications are on hold pending review but with no timeline given. If they eventually propose changes or legislative amendments then one can expect many more months of delay until the minority led government can pass it. This is a disgrace as prisoners cannot reverse this time loss.

My reasons for repatriation are quite simple; to finish my time in an Irish prison amongst my own people and be close to my family. My current facility is 95% Hispanic and I don't speak Spanish. Contraband is the norm whether it is drugs or cell phones and the prison is controlled by rival gangs. All inmates must comply and anyone who is seen as solitary or different to them is suspect in the gang's eyes. In other words your own personal safety is a daily focus as violence is always underneath the surface and often prison guards turn a blind eye to avoid reporting and having things investigated. Everyone knows how drugs and cell phones get into the facility! Incidents of violence happen on a daily basis as rival gangs fight for their turf. Small things explode into brawls, over control of TVs, over programme selection, soccer matches that degenerate and fist fights over unpaid gambling and commissary debts. To be honest, it cannot be easy to control a prison of 2,500 inmates.

In US prisons, low-level prisons for non-US citizens tend to be open dormitory (barracks is the norm.) Basically, you are housed in a small pod up to 60-100 prisoners on bunk beds tightly packed and separated by an arm's length. This tight co-habitation of prisoners in a source of constant tension and friction as beds, toilets and showers are in constant occupation with no privacy and poor air conditioning in the summer only creates hellish conditions. Mass incarceration is a phenomenon of the US - it is No.1 by a long shot - only China (No. 2) and Russia (No. 3) come anywhere close in locking people up. Rehabilitation is not it's objective.

In the meantime, until O'Farrell et al is finally put to bed I can hope and pray that Ireland, my country of the 'Céad Míle Fáilte' which it extends to tourists, businessmen, it's Irish diaspora and refugees will extend also a 'Fáilte' to some of it's own citizens behind bars so they can be reunited with their families in Ireland.

Yours sincerely  
F.O'M, USA

# Repatriation

## A brief history of repatriation

The transfer of sentenced persons to prisons in their home country, or repatriation as it is commonly referred to, has been an issue of on-going concern to the ICPO for as long as the organisation has existed. The Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons was brought into force by the Council of Europe in 1985, the same year as the ICPO was founded, and allows for prisoners who are detained in foreign countries to apply to serve their remaining sentence in their home country, providing both states are signatories of the Convention and certain conditions are met. As of 2017, 65 countries have signed up to the Convention. Ireland signed up to this international treaty in 1995, following pressure from the ICPO and other agencies interested in pursuing prisoners' rights. Since then the ICPO has assisted prisoners and their families by providing information about the repatriation process and monitoring applications where requested.

For many years now, the numbers of Irish prisoners being returned from prisons abroad has been very low. Figures from the Department of Justice show that between 2010 and 2015, only 12 prisoners were returned to Ireland from abroad to serve the remainder of their sentences - an average of 2 prisoners per year. This compares poorly to other countries, for example the Netherlands, where in 2015 alone 200 Dutch prisoners were returned to the Netherlands (representing approx. 8% of all Dutch prisoners abroad).

## Current situation - all repatriation applications 'on hold'

Two recent rulings by the Supreme Court in Ireland have cast the issue of prisoner repatriation into a new phase of inaction. In 2014, in the case of *Sweeney v Governor of Loughan House*, the Supreme Court found that *Sweeney's* continued detention was illegal due to the incompatibility between the English sentencing regime and Irish law. Legal advice on the implications of the ruling for other cases was then sought by the Department of Justice but repatriations continued to be processed, albeit at a very slow pace. Last summer, in another case concerning prisoners who had been repatriated from England (*O'Farrell et al.*) the Supreme Court found their warrants to be defective and ruled that their detention had also been illegal. As a result of this decision, all applications for repatriation from Irish prisoners abroad are now on hold while the government considers legal advice. The ICPO has been informed that there is no provision within existing legislation to adapt warrants and as such a change to the legislation will most likely be required in order for the Irish Prison Service to begin processing applications again. There is no way of knowing how long it will take for legislation to be amended, if this is what is required, and no timeline has been given for when applications will begin to be processed again. This situation is entirely unsatisfactory and the lack of progress since the Supreme Court decision in July 2016 is adding to the frustration and emotional strain endured by prisoners and their families. One parent told us recently:

**'We as parents are also being denied a chance to visit our son on a regular basis and therefore being denied our rights also. Why should we be expected to suffer for what our son did wrong?'**

As the costs of visiting a family member in prison overseas can be prohibitive the current suspension of repatriations is depriving prisoners and their families of the possibility of regular visits, which is known to be an important factor in maintaining relationships and assisting with prisoners' successful reintegration when released. Achieving a resolution for prisoners and their families is a priority for the ICPO and we will be advocating for action on this issue over the coming months.

## What this means for you

The Irish Prison Service has advised the ICPO that there are 31 applications for repatriation currently 'on hold'. If you applied for repatriation before July 2016, your application should be one of these and you should have received a letter from the Irish Prison Service advising you of the current situation.

# Repatriation

If you have not received this letter please let the ICPO know. If you applied for repatriation since July 2016, and if it has reached the Irish authorities, unfortunately it will not progress any further at the moment. However once applications begin to be processed again yours will be in the queue, but please bear in mind that as a result of low rates of repatriation up to 2015 there is a substantial backlog of cases.

If you are interested in being repatriated but haven't applied yet you are still entitled to do so. The country in which you have been sentenced must agree to your transfer before the application is sent to the Irish authorities, which can take some time, so it may be worth starting the process now. It is important, however, that you try to be realistic about when you may be repatriated back to Ireland in light of the above.

## What you can do

The current situation is unacceptable for prisoners and their families and we are in touch with many of you who are deeply frustrated. The ICPO is working to get a resolution and we think you can play an important role in this too.

If you have applied for repatriation, you and/or your family may wish to consider contacting your local political representatives (your local TDs) in Ireland. Putting pressure on local politicians can help to bring about policy and legislative change. By contacting your local TDs you will help to raise awareness of the problem among Irish politicians and you will also be providing them with a very personal account of how this situation is affecting you and your family. If you have never done anything like this before or don't know where to start, don't worry - please get in touch with the ICPO in Maynooth. We can provide you with a sample letter and a list of your TDs (please remember to tell us where you are from or where your family are living). A hand-written letter can be a very effective tool in getting your TDs' attention!

For all of you affected by this situation, we understand the pain this is causing and share in your frustration. Please try to be patient and realistic but don't allow your frustration to consume you; instead try to focus on what you can do (e.g. starting the application process, writing to your TDs) and remember to get in touch with the ICPO if you want to discuss your situation.

Ciara Kirrane,

## Criteria for repatriation

Remember that in order to apply for repatriation, certain conditions must be met:

- You must be a citizen of the country to which you wish to be transferred. In some cases it will be enough if you are not a citizen but a permanent resident of that country;
- Your sentence must be final. You cannot apply for transfer before your trial or until after all appeals have been heard;
- There must be at least six months left to serve on your sentence;
- The crime you are convicted of must also be a crime in your home country.

# Yoga



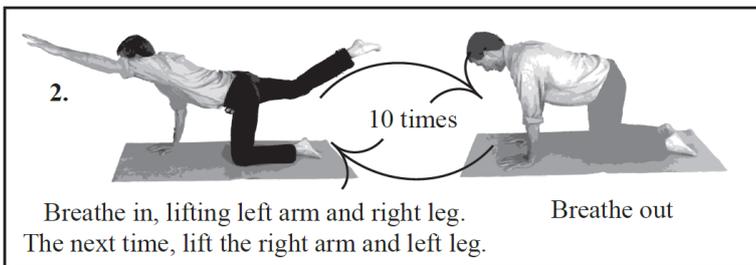
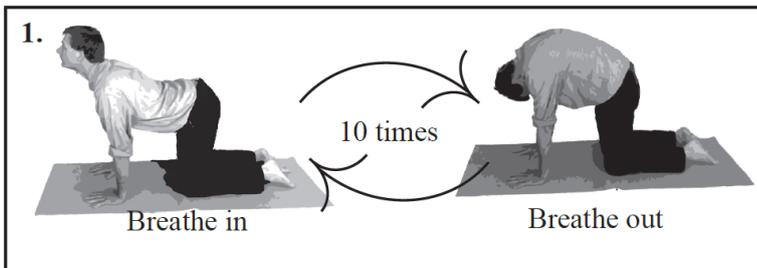
The Prison Phoenix Trust

The Prison Phoenix Trust encourages prisoners in their lives through meditation and yoga, working with silence and the breath. The Prison Phoenix Trust was registered as a charity in 1988. We work all over the UK and the Republic of Ireland in prisons, young offender institutions, immigration removal centres, secure hospitals and probation hostels.

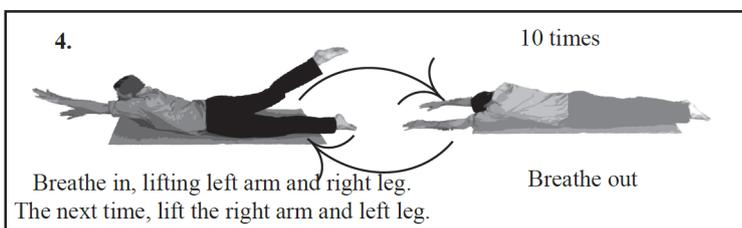
We offer individual support to prisoners and prison staff through teaching, correspondence, books and newsletters. People of any faith or no faith can benefit. We honour all religions. A key aspect of our work is training and supporting qualified yoga teachers to teach in prison and other secure conditions.

The following is taken from the Prison Phoenix Trust and reproduced with their kind permission.

Most of us have back trouble at some point in our lives. Yoga is fantastic for restoring your back to good health and keeping it happy. You've got 33 vertebrae or segments of bones (from the cervical through to the coccyx) in your spine. The poses below keep the joints between those 33 segments flexible and healthy. They also strengthen your back, so it's less likely to be injured. Move slowly and with your breath. Enjoy the feeling of movement. You are doing something good for your back!



Keep your hands an inch off the floor and your feet on the ground. Hold as long as you can while breathing normally.



Stay like this for 10 slow breaths.



Hold knee over chest for 10 slow breaths. Repeat on the other side.



Place your left foot over your straight right leg. Twist to the left. Hold for 10 breaths. Repeat on the other side.



Lie like this for 5 minutes. If your back feels okay, you can also lie with your legs straight out.

# Cuts to Legal Aid for Prisoners Ruled Unlawful

The recent UK Court of Appeal ruling in *R (Howard League for Penal Reform and Prisoners' Advice Service) v Lord Chancellor* is an important step forward in making sure that people in prison move through the system more safely and more efficiently. This will make the public safer and ease pressure on a prison system at breaking point.

Since cuts to legal aid for prisoners came into force in December 2013, violence and self-injury in prisons have risen to record levels. Almost 300 people have lost their lives through suicide. More prisoners than ever before have called the Howard League and Prisoners Advice Service (PAS) to seek help. Calls to the two charities' advice lines have increased by almost 50 per cent since the cuts were imposed.

The legal challenge by the Howard League and PAS began in 2013. At that time, prisoners were completely shut out from any possibility of getting legal aid for a wide range of problems. In the time between then and the cases coming before the Court of Appeal in January and February this year, the government conceded on four areas of concern. This left five key problems for the Court of Appeal to consider and, in three of the five, judges found the cuts to be inherently unfair.

Three judges - Lady Justice Gloster, Lord Justice Patten and Lord Justice Beatson - found that the way legal aid restrictions had been operating was unlawful in three separate areas of internal prison hearings: pre-tariff reviews by the Parole Board, category-A reviews, and decisions on placing inmates in close supervision centres.

Their unanimous judgment said: "The government's decision to remove legal aid from the five categories of decision-making that are the subject of these proceedings by the 2013 [cuts] was made because it considers that there were adequate alternative means in place to ensure prisoners can participate effectively in areas in which support has hitherto been provided by legal advice and legal representation. "The consequence is that almost no changes have been introduced to replace the gap left by the removal of legal aid. We have concluded that, at a time when ... the evidence about prison staffing levels, the current state of prisons, and the workload of the Parole Board suggests that the system is under considerable pressure, the system has at present not got the capacity sufficiently to fill the gap in the run of cases in those three areas."

## Assignment of Caseworker to North East of England.

ICPO is pleased to announce that Ian Hanna, a caseworker based in the Maynooth office since February 2015, has been assigned to a new role focussing on twelve prisons in the North East of England. He will be working in conjunction with the London office and already this year Ian and Fr Gerry have conducted a prison visit at HMP Full Sutton and are currently planning a number of additional visits over the next few months. Prior to this new assignment Ian was caseworker for North America, Europe and Scotland and brings with him his experiences gained in looking after clients in these areas. Currently he is working on a two day week basis but it is intended to increase this later in the year.



# Update from London ICPO Office

Fr. Gerry McFlynn, ICPO London



## Good News about Legal Aid for Prisoners!

The government recently lost a key Court of Appeal battle over access to legal aid for prisoners. The judicial review was brought by the Howard League for Penal Reform and the Prisoners Advice Service, and the 86 page ruling overturns the legal aid cuts imposed by Chris Grayling in 2013. It covers the five remaining areas where the withdrawal of legal aid was causing most problems: pre-tariff reviews by the Parole Board on whether the prisoner is suitable for a move to open conditions; categorisation reviews of category A high security prisoners; access to offending behaviour programmes and courses; disciplinary proceedings where no additional days of imprisonment or detention can be awarded; and placement in close supervision centres. It will be welcome news to countless prisoners and especially those with learning difficulties and mental illness who were at a singular disadvantage under the existing system. It is surely the hallmark of any democratic legal system that it be fair and robust for all users.

## Suicide and Self-harm in Prison

A record 119 people killed themselves in prisons in England and Wales in 2016 - an increase of 29 (32%) on the previous year and equal to one every three days! The rise in suicides has been accompanied by a 23% increase in incidents of self-harm, to a total of 37,784. This sharp rise in suicides and self-harm shows that too many vulnerable prisoners are slipping through the net with tragic consequences.

Prisoners need to be reminded that whatever their personal circumstances, there are people they can go to in prison for help and support. There are Listeners and Samaritans in most prisons whose job it is simply to listen. The prison Chaplaincy is another source of help. One doesn't have to be religious to avail of the help and support Chaplaincy members can offer. Just talking to someone and being listened to can be a huge relief in difficult times. Prison is a place where one can try to deal with one's past. There, one has time to reflect and try to put things right. The prison Chaplaincy is there for you - so please use it!

## Travellers recognised as a distinct ethnic group in Ireland

On March 1st the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, announced formal recognition for Travellers as a distinct ethnic group within the Irish State.

The Traveller community has for many years campaigned to have their unique heritage, culture and identity formally recognised by the State.

In the Dáil, the public gallery and an overflow room were packed as members of the Travelling community watching the announcement. There was sustained applause and a standing ovation when Mr Kenny made the announcement.

Pavee Point said this recognition would help Travellers' standing with the United Nations, the Council of Europe, European Commission and other international organisations.

President Higgins welcomed the news and said "I have no doubt that today's clarification will be of assistance in interpreting legislation in relation to Travellers' rights, and ensuring respect for Travellers' distinct identity within the fabric of Irish society."

"Recognising Traveller ethnicity will not fix these problems overnight, but it will help Ireland get to grips with the discrimination and disadvantage that many Travellers face in their lives."

# High Sheriff County Community Award

Sister Philomena, a chaplain at HMP Chelmsford

I can't think of a more fitting winner of the High Sheriff county community award. Sr. P is a force to be reckoned with, a brilliant advocate of the Holy Spirit, which she shares with anyone who she comes into contact with. She has boundless energy with a second-to-none sense of humour that is infectious and an honesty about her that you implicitly trust; she makes you feel safe and validated; Sr. P is a bright light shining in a sometimes dark place. She gives a voice to some of the most vulnerable and marginalised in our society and makes no apology for doing so. She encourages us all to come in, to help and pray together, for strength and a knowing that all will be okay no matter what the circumstances. Every prison and indeed every institution needs a Sr. P!

Breda Power  
ICPO London

## High Sheriff's Award citation

Sister Philomena (Sister P) is the longest serving member of the chaplaincy team at HMP Chelmsford, and continues to offer exceptional service to staff, prisoners and the community at the age of 77 with an enthusiasm and energy which is seldom seen in people thirty years younger.

Sister P began her working life in teaching as a member of the Ursuline sisters. She offered education in some of the most challenging parts of Essex and East London before joining the Prison Service in February 2002 to continue using her teaching gifts with prisoners. She taught the Fathers Inside course, supporting the men in taking a responsible parenting role, as well as the Living with Loss course. Her pastoral gifts were evident and her role within the establishment soon broadened to encompass these.

Sister P's care and support is exceptional, as an active member of the care team she is always on hand to support those involved in incidents or who are experiencing personal difficulty. She pays close attention to the staff as she moves about the prison, she knows who everyone is, and what challenges they or their family are facing ensuring that they are offered both a listening ear and practical help where appropriate. It is not unusual to hear that Sister P has visited staff, sent cards or turned up at court to offer her support to someone facing a charge, much of which is in her own time and at her own expense.

All of this work is carried out with her unique sense of humour and tireless energy, ensuring that the work of the Care Team has continued when it might otherwise have failed and offering consistency in the face of many changes. Always described by staff as "the person who has always got a smile, a kind word and a listening ear".

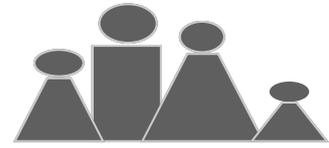
She is also a great advocate for all the prisoners of all religions and none. Chelmsford prisoners have a great respect and love for her.

Sister P has worked with the travelling community both in and outside of the establishment, working as a chaplain to the Dale Farm Travellers site. She is a regular visitor to the site working in partnership with the local parish, taking them Holy Communion and preparing their children for Holy Communion. She has brought that experience into the prison, being an advocate and point of contact for a group of people who are otherwise isolated and disenfranchised.

The current Governor said "Sister P is an extraordinary woman and has always had a knack of knowing when perhaps I have been distracted or slightly low in mood. She regularly sends me positive emails and cards whenever I have done anything of a positive nature for staff or prisoners, she has natural gift for raising peoples spirits and uses this for the benefit of all but especially those groups who traditionally are isolated."



## FAMILY ISSUES



This section is for families who have a loved one in prison.

Do you have useful information that may be helpful to other families?

Have you a question you would like to see answered on this page in the future?

If so, please contact Claire O'Connell, Caseworker and Family Support Officer, ICPO,

### Prison Visits

Many of you have been in contact in recent months regarding the high cost of making visits to prisons in England and elsewhere. Remember that if you are based in England you can apply for financial assistance under the Assisted Prison Visiting Scheme. Contact the London or Maynooth offices for further advice on how to apply. For those of you living in Ireland; if you are in receipt of State benefits, you can apply to your Department of Social Protection (formerly Community Welfare Officer or CWO) Officer for an Exceptional Needs Payment to help with the cost of flights and accommodation. This is a discretionary payment and whilst some CWOs are very favourable to providing financial support, others are not. Should you be unsuccessful, you should always ask for the reasons in writing. Also, ICPO can provide you with a cover letter confirming your loved ones' imprisonment and giving you other information to show your CWO that payments for prison visits may be awarded. If you are thinking of visiting someone, contact ICPO well ahead of time and we will do what we can to help. Don't forget to organise your Visiting Order (VO) before you go as well. Visits can now be booked online without a VO for some prisons in England and Wales. Visit [www.gov.uk/prison-visits](http://www.gov.uk/prison-visits) for more information on this. A number of families wish to travel to be with their family member for their trial. Our advice is to think carefully before booking anything. It is very common for trial dates to be moved or for people to plans to travel to what is just a preliminary hearing and not in fact the trial. Such trips can be very expensive so talk to your loved one and someone in ICPO before booking anything.

### Insurance Matters

When a family member returns to your home after their time in prison, it is very important to check that your insurance policies don't need to be changed or updated to take this into account. Some policies (e.g. home and motor insurance) will likely need to reflect the fact that somebody with a criminal record is now under the policy. There may be an additional charge in some cases but the alternative is that, should something unforeseen happen - you won't be covered.

### Upcoming Family Information Day

Our next Family Information Day will most likely take place in June. Those that attend really seem to gain from the experience - whether it is because they realise for the first time that they are not the only person or family going through this situation, or because they get to catch up with people they met at other Family Information Days, or to meet the ICPO staff and volunteers and have a more relaxed chat over a cup of tea or some lunch.

We encourage all of you to think about attending. The Day is specifically for families and the short talks and presentations are chosen to reflect that. If needed, ICPO can also cover the cost of your travel to and from the event. We hope to see as many of you as we can on the day.

## Visiting the United Arab Emirates

In February ICPO Coordinator Brian Hanley and I undertook a ten day trip to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The purpose of the trip was to visit three people imprisoned there and to familiarise ourselves with agencies and networks operating in the UAE. More broadly the aim was to learn about the judicial and penal system in the UAE. It is only in recent years that large numbers of Irish people have emigrated to the UAE so there is a lack of historical and cultural connections with the UAE which are more apparent in countries associated with traditional emigration, such as the UK, US and Australia.



We visited prisoners in three Emirates: Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and Dubai. We also had meetings with the Irish and British Embassies, the Catholic church in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the Abu Dhabi Irish Society, a former ICPO client and a visit to a Dubai Court.

Thankfully we encountered no issues with visiting the 3 people in detention, although the time permitted for visits varied from approx. 15 minutes to 1 ½ hours. I had never visited a prison outside Europe before so I didn't quite know what to expect. The visiting rooms were comfortable and clean and the prison officials were generally friendly - this was no doubt assisted by the fact we were accompanied on 2 visits by a representative from the Irish Embassy. As a caseworker, it's a great privilege to get to meet the people we are assisting and to finally put faces to the names I had become so familiar with. The three people we visited were very welcoming and generous in sharing their stories with us. It was clear that the conditions varied from prison to prison. This is also the case for the legal system, as each Emirate operates under its own laws. Over recent years most of the people that the ICPO supports in the UAE have been imprisoned for financial crimes, for example bounced cheques. Very often they may have charges in more than one Emirate, and because of the independent legal systems, this means they will be convicted separately and serve separate sentences in each Emirate. Sentences are usually consecutive rather than concurrent so people spend considerable periods of time in prison, often for offences that are not considered criminal matters in Ireland.

It's fair to say that the issue that seemed of most concern for prisoners was the lack of information they receive in relation to their case. This causes a great deal of anxiety for both prisoners and their families; they may not know their release date or whether there are further charges pending on their release. The courts also operate very differently to what we are accustomed to in the West and the role of the defendant or their lawyer appear to be limited. In comparison to the numbers of British citizens in prison in the UAE, Irish citizens have a far lower rate of imprisonment based on population size but there didn't seem to be any obvious explanations as to why this might be the case. We had very interesting meetings with the Catholic churches in Abu Dhabi and Dubai (Dubai is thought to be the biggest Catholic parish in the world!). Incredible work is being done by religious and lay volunteers to support vulnerable immigrants from all over the world who have come to the UAE in search of work and a better future.

The lasting impression I have of the trip is the gratitude expressed by the prisoners for our visit - whether it lasted 15 or 90 minutes. It was clear to me how much a visit can mean to someone when they don't get many visitors. For Brian and I, it is us that are grateful to them.

Ciara Kirrane,  
ICPO Maynooth

# Meditation



Each time a newsletter is planned in the office I am asked to write an article for it. Sometimes I will have one done and on file and other times I think and think for days about what I should write. I question my own nerve in writing something for you to read. What do I know about your circumstances and how can I reach out and somehow make your life more bearable.

I know mindfulness is a great help to people in difficult situations and has helped many people who have been troubled in body and soul to a place of peace, but is it suitable for everyone. I have had sleepless nights when I tried to quiet my racing thoughts and relax my brain but found that mindfulness did not work for me on those occasions.

Some years ago I did a workshop on angels and healing your life. The lady who facilitated it, Joy\*, had been through great trauma in her life and had been at rock bottom. At the same time as she realised she was at rock bottom a voice inside her said, "well lady, there is nowhere to go from here but upwards." She set about getting some help and went to see a counsellor. She worked through her trauma which was difficult for her at times but she persevered. She rebuilt her relationship with her family which had suffered through the bad times and gradually she got back on her feet again. It took a lot of hard work and time on her part but she got there and after nearly a lifetime of sadness and being in a low state she felt reborn full of light and fun and laughter. Then she got cancer.

When I first met her she had been through chemo and was recovering. She was in no way bitter about the hand she had been dealt but was so thankful for the life she had then and for the wonderful family and friends she had. All through her illness and her final days Joy continued to have a positive outlook on life, she danced and sang and painted until she was too weak. I visited her in the hospice a few days before her death and I wheeled her to the oratory. We stayed there and sang Gospel songs together for ages and discussed preparations for her funeral. There was no distress on her part she was prepared to die and was just moving on to somewhere else free of pain and disability. She had made her peace with God and with her life. After I said my goodbyes to Joy and left the hospice I sat in the car and cried bitterly. This lady whose life had been so marked with trauma and who emerged so beautifully from it like a phoenix from the flames had taught me so much and had given so much of herself to everyone. She was truly an inspiration.

One of the things we had to do as part of the workshop was visual meditation. We had to visualise a place that we could go to that was safe and warm and somewhere where we could return to in times of trouble and stress. It wasn't easy at first to go within oneself away from all the distractions, it took a

bit of practice but eventually I managed to get the pictures in my head and actually feel that I was there.

The following is my meditation; you are welcome to come with me on the journey.

Close your eyes and start with the breath. Breathe in... and out, breathe in deeper... and out, breathe in deeper... and out, becoming more and more relaxed with each breath. Release the tension from your body starting with the shoulders and downwards through your body. Feel yourself becoming more relaxed and calm. Breathe in and out slowly.

I am walking up to a gate, a small metal gate about waist high. It is painted black but is rusty at the joints. There are two stone pillars on either side of the gate supporting old stone walls which are covered in sweet honeysuckle. I look at the gate and notice that there is a lever about half way down on the left side. I press down on the lever and the other end of it clicks out of the metal holder and the gate softly opens. I can smell the sweet of the honeysuckle and hear the bees buzzing around the flowers. I stand and listen and smell the beautiful aroma. I move through the gateway and find myself on a small wooden bridge that spans a gentle stream below with water babbling over the stones and I hear the gentle trickle of the water as it hits the stones. Crossing the small wooden bridge I find myself on a grass path which meanders through beds of flowers. The grass is soft underfoot and I bend and take off my shoes and feel the soft blades on the soles of my feet. I stand and take in the scene around me. In the flower beds tall flowers in blues and lilacs and pinks and whites stand to attention at the back of the borders and the soft colours are repeated in different heights graduating towards the front of the beds. I recognise Stock, Ceanothus, Lavender, Lilac, Rosemary, Verbena, Penstemon, Lillies and Lupins to name but a few.

Butterflies of different colours flit from flower to flower their delicate wings closing and opening while they take the nectar from the flower. Bumble bees and honey bees buzz and gather up pollen to take back to the hives. I wander farther into the garden soaking up the wonderful sights and scents feeling the soft grass underfoot and touching the flowers as I pass. I see in the distance a clearing where there is a wooden bench. I walk up to the bench and touch the seat, the sun is shining directly on it and it is warm. I sit down gently on the warm wood and take a deep breath. The smell of the honeysuckle now combined with the scent of stock and lilac and lilies all blend to a heady mix and I close my eyes and breathe in

through my nose relishing the wonderful scent. I sit for a time feeling the sun on my skin and listening to the birdsong while being intoxicated by the sweet smells. I stay here as long as I need and when I am ready I walk back slowly towards the gate and back out into my conscious life.



This is my meditation and you are welcome to use it if you wish but I would encourage you to create your own. It could be a place in your past where you felt safe and secure and happy or just create such a place in your mind. Be gentle with yourself and allow time, to expand and grow the images in your mind. My simple meditation calms me in times of stress and even when I think of that garden and the sights and sounds and smells immediately a sense of calm comes over me and I feel good, there is nothing nasty or negative in my garden just nature and all good things. It is a place of safety, nobody else can come in there it is mine alone.

Bernie Martin  
ICPO Maynooth



# Sports Shorts

with Ian Hanna

Well folks, great to be writing to you again with what I hope are some interesting sports shorts for you. If you have any ideas or sports that you would like to be included please drop me a line and I will see what we can do. Bear in mind there is always a shortage of space for this article so I have to keep within the strict guidelines laid down by the editor.

## Boxing

First of all I will start with boxing and after the very poor showing of our boxing hopefuls in the Rio Olympics some of our biggest amateur names joined the professional circuit. Currently there are about 14 Irish professionals including Katie Taylor who has made a blistering start winning all her fights to date. There is a strong possibility that she could fight for a world title later this year in either Ireland or America. Her latest professional fight at the end of April saw her achieve five wins from five and winning her first title belt in the process, the WBA Inter Continental Lightweight title. Her huge disappointment in Rio may have decided her new path a few years before she intended but she has clearly demonstrated that she can win at this level. Michael Conlon was very upset at his elimination in Rio and had his first professional bout on St Patrick's Day this year in Madison Square Garden and won easily. He is 25 and has a relatively short space of time to win titles and make his money. Paddy Barnes has earmarked 2017 to win a European title and to have a crack at a world title. With a bit of luck we could have another Irish world champion or maybe even more to join Carl Frampton at the pinnacle of professional boxing. Recently the Irish Athletic Boxing Association has appointed Bernard Dunne to the High Performance Unit where his world title winning experience will best prepare boxers for Olympic success.



## GAA

At long last have we seen a chink in the armour of the two heavyweights in football and hurling? Dublin lost their national league title by a point to Kerry 1-16 to 0-20 in a pulsating final while Kilkenny hurlers were well beaten at home by Wexford in the league quarter finals. Perhaps we should not read too much into these results but Dublin scraped into the final by a combination of results on the last day of the regular league while Kilkenny were defeated twice in the group stages. Davy Fitzgerald, the new manager of Wexford has brought loads of his devilment and in-your-face attitude which prompted his beloved Clare to win the All Ireland in 2103 when he was manager. Wexford are serious contenders for Leinster honours but have to overcome serious opposition to claim a first title in many years. Then there are the current All Ireland champions Tipperary who were well beaten by a more skilful, physical and hungry Galway in the National League final on a score line of 3-21 to 0-14. Galway's demolition of Tipp has blown open the race for the Liam McCarthy so we are promised a summer of quality hurling. However never underestimate Brian Cody and the Cats. They are hurting after being well beaten in last season's All-Ireland final and a poor league campaign but they will have a major say come the All Ireland series. The omens indicate it will be an exciting hurling championship with 4-5





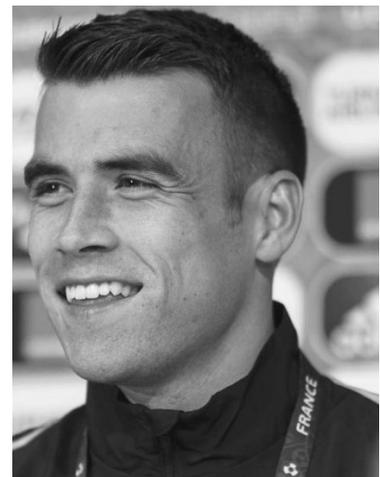
# Summer 2017

serious contenders and I at this early stage am going for Tipperary to retain their title.

Meanwhile in football Dublin have felt the cold breath of quality opposition as during the group stages of the league they drew three and won two of their seven games by only a single point. They drew with Kerry, Donegal and Tyrone albeit outside Croke Park but I reckon they will have learned a lot and take nothing for granted. They would love nothing better than to win three All -Ireland titles in a row but Kerry and Donegal are serious challengers as Mayo and Tyrone seem to have come unstuck.

## Soccer

All eyes are on the World Cup qualifying groups and in Group D Ireland are in with every chance of bagging the top spot to automatically qualify for the finals in Russia. After the March 1-1 draw at home against Wales remembered mainly for the horrible tackle on the Irish captain, Seamus Coleman in which his right leg was broken in two places, we are equal on points with Serbia at the top of the table. Ireland has to play Serbia, Moldova and Austria at home and Georgia and Wales away. Our next game is against Austria in June and we can't afford to drop any more points at home. The Welsh match is our last outing in the group and we may well need a draw if not a win to secure qualification. Ireland doesn't have the capability to recreate a fortress Lansdowne Road when compared to the Jack Charlton era and neither Serbia nor Austria will have any fears about coming here and taking points off us. The lack of quality strikers is becoming a major problem for Martin O'Neill and he is also depending on having all his players available to him for these crunch games. Finishing second in the group will put us into a home and away playoff series against possible quality opposition including Italy, Spain, France, Sweden, Denmark, and Portugal.



## Rugby

We all need to be reminded that "flattery deceives" and the Irish rugby team did that to us during the recent six nation's completion where they finished runners up behind England. Points difference ensured we achieved second place on 14 points the same number as France, Scotland and Wales. If Wales had not conceded a try in the most bizarre of circumstances in the 20th, yes 20<sup>th</sup> minute of injury against France we would have ended up second last in the table. Ireland became the recognised rugby party poopers of the rugby world as in November we defeated New Zealand who were going for a world record of consecutive international victories and promptly did the same against England last March! Some achievement but we need to get more consistency into our own game in order to compete and win at the highest levels. If the team flattered to deceive eleven players were awarded with what must rank as one of the crowning moment in a players career, by being selected for the British and Irish Lions tour in June to New Zealand.

The Rugby World Cup draw for 2019 which will be held in Japan sees Ireland as one of world top four seeded countries in a group with Scotland, Japan and Europe 1 qualifier and a playoff winner. It can't be better than this and we must have high hopes of at last reaching the semi-finals at long last.

Finally to all our readers your achievements in getting out there and doing that workout, walk or run in difficult situations which makes you our real winners.

## Where the Trees Weep

In the small town of Ypres in southern Belgium there's a memorial arch that marks one of the most tragic military campaigns in history. During the First World War hundreds of thousands of young conscripts marched down the road towards Menin where their foe awaited them in trenches. Many of these young brave men were never to return.

The countryside around Ypres in Flanders witnessed some of the most ferocious fighting of the First World War. Over several years entire divisions of troops, each many thousands strong, marched with the British army into mortal danger. Many of these troops were only teenagers. Some were little more than boys and the youngest was John Condon from Waterford in Ireland. He was only twelve when he enlisted but was a big lad for his age. Claiming to be sixteen he was soon sent into battle with very little training. He was killed shortly after his thirteenth birthday.

For four long years the troops embedded themselves into trenches just a stone's throw across no-mans-land from the German machine-gunners. Occasionally an enemy shell would score a direct hit and everyone inside the trench would be buried where they fell. The entire area around Flanders suffered from heavy rain and the countryside was reduced to a quagmire of mud and the blood of the innocent. In all, nine hundred and eighty thousand died fighting with the British during the catastrophic campaign.



After the war it was decided that a permanent memorial should be built to honour the sacrifice of those who had never even been given a proper grave. Today, The Menin Gate stands as a proud memorial to their great courage. It's a large arch that crosses the expanse of road and those young conscripts marched along as they went to meet their fate. Adorned with wonderful engraving skills along it's walls are the names of all fifty-five thousand men who were buried where they fell and never got a

proper grave of their own. Engulfed in the mud in which they fell, the arch now marks their final place of eternal rest. There are English, Irish, Welsh, Scots, Indians, Australians and more besides. It's a beautiful monument and is always kept spotless clean with regular bouquets of poppies and wreaths laid at it's base. Every evening of the year there's a solemn memorial beneath the arch. Complete with recitals, buglers and drummers, it is always marked with the utmost respect and ends with the sounding of the last post. As the standards are lowered you can hear a pin drop. After the service the crowd, maybe a hundred strong, disappear into local restaurants and taverns. Military veterans, relatives of the dead, tourists and locals alike all remember the fallen over a beer or maybe a whiskey. They intermingle easily and you find yourself thinking if they could intermingle like this all the time would we ever have wars at all?

Around Ypres, there are a horde of military cemeteries, British, French, American and German too. The biggest, Tyne Cot, is marked with twelve thousand small white tombstones. This is an American graveyard but all the cemeteries are equally poignant. Each cross bears the young soldier's name, half of them only teenagers.

As you walk around the battlefields today everything is so peaceful. The fields that witnessed some of the worst carnage in history are tranquil and deserted. The sunshine bathes the long grass and the wind blows gently through the leaves on the streets. Yet as you stand and look around you are mentally transported to a bygone era and your unchained imagination becomes vivid in front of your eyes. The wind whistling through the leaves on the branches remind you of the cries of the dying and it almost seems as if the trees themselves are weeping. This is a soul destroying place and what happened here was awful.

Honest Jim, UK





Brush up on your Irish with Caitriona Ní Bhaoill

# Smídín Gaeilge

Cuir sios an citeal. Ba bhreá liom cupán tae.

Put on the kettle. I'd love a cup of tea.



Béile	<i>Bayla</i>	Meal
Bia	<i>Bee-a</i>	Food
Deoch	<i>Juck</i>	Drink
Bricfeasta	<i>Brick-fawsta</i>	Breakfast
Lón	<i>Lown</i>	Lunch
Dinnéar	<i>Din-air</i>	Dinner
Ithim	<i>Ih-im</i>	I eat
Ólaim	<i>Oh-lum</i>	I drink
Bialann	<i>Bee-a lun</i>	Restaurant
Mearbhia	<i>Mare-via</i>	Fast Food

Sín chugam an salann le do thoil

*Sheen hugam an salunn le du hull*

Pass the salt please

Tá mo bholg thiar i mo dhroim le hocras

*Taw mo volg hear I mo grum le hucras*

(Literal—My stomach is back in my back with the hunger) I'm starving.

Ubh	<i>Uv</i>	Egg
Tósta	<i>Tow-sta</i>	Toast
Bagún agus Ispíní	<i>Bawgoon agus Ishpeenee</i>	Bacon/Rashers and Sausages
Pónairí	<i>Poe-nuree</i>	Beans
Arán and im	<i>Arawn agus i-m</i>	Bread and butter
Subh	<i>Suv</i>	Jam
Ceapaire	<i>Capara</i>	Sandwich
Cáis	<i>Cawsh</i>	Cheese
Sailéad	<i>Salayd</i>	Salad
Feoil	<i>Feowil</i>	Meat
Glasraí	<i>Glasree</i>	Vegetables
Torthaí	<i>Turhee</i>	Fruit
Prátaí	<i>Prawtee</i>	Potatoes

Chorus of *An Déirc*—A traditional Irish song

Ólaim punch 's ólaim tae

*I drink tea and I drink punch*

'S an lá ina déidh sin ólaim todody

*And the following day I drink todody*

Ní bhím ar meisce ach uair sa ré

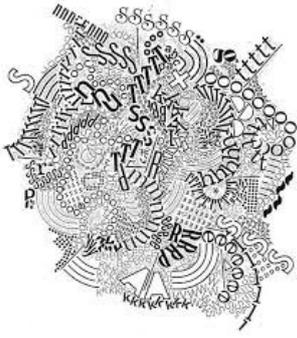
*I'm only drunk but once a month*

Mo ghrása 'n déirc is an té a cheap í

*Thanks for charity, and from anybody*



# Poetry Corner



## Tears in my eyes

You left me home and dry  
You've turned your back on me for the last time  
As I've grown strong  
And I'll fight on  
These tears won't hold me back  
And I'll move on.

You thought you broke my heart  
But strengthened it instead  
When you going to stop girl  
As you're no longer in my head.

So where do you go from here  
Keep breaking people's hearts  
Well tears in your eye's now  
Fait accompli has made your bed.

You've played with fire now you've got burnt  
As a lesson hopefully you have learnt  
That breaking others hearts  
Wasn't the right way to go  
Tears in your eye's now girl  
And it's time for me to go.

S. D., UK



## His Hardest Fight

He's sitting in the prison van  
He's not long left the dock.  
Eleven years his sentence  
His body's still in shock.

When he's passing through reception  
He hears the prison calls  
And he fears because he cannot read or write  
That he'll have no voice at all.

One thought is utmost on his mind  
Whilst sitting in that cell,  
That if he does not learn to read and write  
His sentence will be hell.

He knows if he's to make it  
This will be his hardest fight  
And he knows his life will be richer  
When he learns to read and write.

Now three long years have come to pass  
And he's made it in that jail  
And all that hard work was worth it  
For he's finally reading mail.

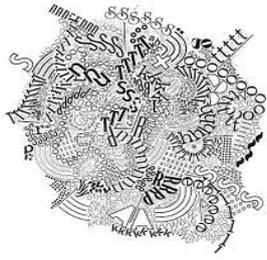
So you can spend your time in darkness  
And you may never see the light  
Or you can spend your time in learning  
And know your spent your time just right.

J.C., UK





# Poetry Corner



## Free is what I want to be

Day is night and night is day  
 Stay in prison but I want to go away  
 Pray to God, to God I pray  
 Lay in my bed, dream of Freedom's day.

Night is when I think, I think at night  
 Light comes then, the morning light  
 Bright, I rise when it's bright  
 Bite my thoughts back until night.

Free is what I want to be  
 See the things I want to see  
 Glee will overpower me  
 See the mountains and the sea.

D. G., South America

## Positivity

I learned life the very hard way. It's still hard what more can I say but we learned that positivity helps a lot. But will you help even though families forget? All I can say is I trust it will work for me and in the end I'll see all my family because even though I feel very sad positivity can make good come from bad. That's the way I'd like it to be

Just focus on positivity  
 When outside these prison gates  
 I'm taking nothing with me just my faith  
 I'll leave all the negative things behind  
 Keep all the positive things in my mind  
 Pick myself up, brush off the dust  
 Hope to see family, in God I trust  
 For anyone out there who thinks they can't make it  
 Yes, you can but see the circle you're in? Break it.  
 Yes, you are going around in circles blind to all  
 But you must also help yourself when down you fall  
 I do the same, soon I pray for happy ever after.  
 I know God will give me that day, then I'll be full of laughter.

By M.J., UK

## Writing Competition

*Prize for winning entry: €50*

*Closing date for entries: 30th July, 2017*

*We have had some wonderful entries in previous writing competitions and this time we have decided to adopt an idea used by a local writing group.*

*How it works:*

*You need to (1) select a person from the first column, (2) give them a personality type from the second column and (3) choose the subject of the story from the last column.*

*Good luck folks — we look forward to hearing from you.*

Person	Characteristic	Story
A lottery winner	Shy	Rescues someone
A gardener	Nervous	Breaks a record
An actor	Sporty	Finds a large sum of money
A lorry driver	Happy go lucky	Takes a train journey
A celebrity chef	Funny	Gets a new pet

# challenge yourself!

## All Things Irish



E T C E R A D L I K Y K T H E  
 L H I M C O R K N R C R Y A C  
 T E L E R I E I A O I L C L N  
 S P B R A N L R R C L E O F A  
 A O U A T B E M O O L G N P D  
 C G P L U P A L N T I D N E R  
 D U E D P H O N I L K J E N E  
 R E R I S U O C S M O P L N V  
 O S T S R C D O N E G A L Y I  
 F P H L S T P A T R I C K B R  
 H E G E L L O C Y T I N I R T  
 S P M P G N I L R U H D B I Y  
 A A X R S S E N N I U G V D P  
 J B L A R N E Y S T O N E G U  
 N U A H C E R P E L Y R R E K

Ashford Castle	Blarney Stone	Celtic	Cork	Donegal	Dublin
Tipperary	Emerald Isle	Eire	Guinness	Half Penny Bridge	Harp
Hurling	James Connolly	Kerry	Kildare	Leprechaun	Mayo
O Connell Street	Republic	River Dance	Shamrock	Sligo	St Patrick
The Pogues	Tricolour	Trinity College			

Submitted by FK., France

### Brain Teasers

1. Before Mt. Everest was discovered, what was the highest mountain in the world?

2. If you were running a race and you passed the person in 2nd place, what place would you be in now?

3. How much dirt is there in a hole that measures two feet by three feet by four feet?

4. A farmer has five haystacks in one field and four haystacks in another. How many haystacks would he have if he combined them all in one field?



# challenge yourself!

## Spot the Difference

Can you spot 10 differences between these two pictures?



## Word Puzzle Pictures

1

TRAVEL

\_\_\_\_\_

CCCCCCCCCCC

2

DO 12" OR

3

JUS 144 TICE

4

BED  
&  
FA ST

## Sudoku

				1	7	
2					4	
	9	6		7	8	2
1	6		5			2
				8		9
5	4		9			1
	2	7		1	9	
6					7	
				3		8

Each Sudoku grid has a unique solution that can be reached logically without guessing. Enter digits from 1 to 9 into the blank spaces. Every row must contain one of each digit. So must every column, as must ever 3x3 square.

## Answers

Spot the Difference: 1. Tree missing on top of mountain. 2. Mountain on left missing. 3. Bush on left missing. 4. Bird in water moved. 5. Ripples in water. 6. Water lilies missing. 7. No foliage on bush on left. 8. Bird on pagoda roof missing. 9. Peacock's head feathers moved from bird one to three. 10. Peacock two looking other way.

Word Puzzle: 1. Travel Oversees. 2. Foot in Door. 3. Gross Injustice. 4. Bed & Breakfast

Brain Teasers: 1. Mt. Everest. It just wasn't discovered yet. 2. You would be in 2nd place. You passed the person in second place, not first. 3. There is no dirt in a hole. 4. One. If he combines all his haystacks, they all become one big stack.



# RECENT EVENTS IN IRELAND



**Bishop Eamonn Casey 1927—2017**  
Former Bishop of Kerry and Bishop of Galway, Bishop Casey worked tirelessly in support of Irish emigrants. He also had an important role in securing government funding for ICPO.



**Martin McGuinness 1950—2017**  
Turning his back on violence Martin McGuinness was instrumental in bringing peace to Northern Ireland. He served as Deputy First Minister in the Northern Ireland Executive from May 2007 to January 2017.



A Co. Clare family celebrated the rare birth of quad calves on their farm near Lahinch in February. The four heifer calves came as a complete surprise. The odds of such a birth are about a billion to one.