



ICPO NEWS

Issue No. 71

Autumn 2015

What's Inside



Health and Safety in
UK Prisons



ICPO 30th
Anniversary
Conference



Resettlement Report



1985 - 2015
30 Years Supporting Irish Prisoners Overseas
and their Families

The ICPO

It is estimated that at any one time there are in excess of 1,200 Irish people in prison overseas. The ICPO has contact with Irish people in prisons in more than twenty 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 the ICPO has been able to offer a more comprehensive service to prisoners and to expand our existing services to prisoners' families. Currently the 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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London

Fr. Gerry McFlynn, Liz Power, Breda Power, Russel Harland and Declan Ganley

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London: Sr. Maureen McNally, Noel Wynn, Sr Maura Keane, Jayne O'Connor, Sr Agnes Miller, Sara Thompson, Kathleen Walsh and Sally Murphy

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IRISH CATHOLIC
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
COMHARLAIS BREPAID CHILDEACH DIKEAMH

SVP
Society of St Vincent de Paul



AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
Department of Foreign Affairs

A word from the Editor ...

2015 marks ICPO's 30th year in operation and I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of all who work with ICPO, to thank you – prisoners and families alike – for the faith and trust you place in us. Whilst ICPO has been through many changes over the last 30 years, our commitment to you remains steadfast. We continually strive to improve and extend the supports we can provide and always welcome your input and suggestions. Congratulations to Maurice Crossley and Stephen Shearwood who both won prizes in the Listowel Writers Competition for their thoughtful and engaging pieces. I hope it might encourage others amongst you to enter next year's competition. We will be sending you an application with our Christmas supplement. ICPO also ran its own competition this year. The winning entries in the poetry, prose and art/craft categories are contained within. The standard of entries was exceptional and I gather made the 'judging' very difficult. Congratulations to Jazzer, SS and AC. My thanks to Caitriona Ní Bhaoill, author of *Smídín Gaeilge* and to all who provided articles for this newsletter. Included in this edition is a helpful piece by Breda Power dealing with health and safety concerns in UK prisons. Breda and Claire O'Connell have written interesting pieces about a day in their life as a Prison Visitor and Caseworker. Ian Hanna has also written about his recent prison visits to the US and superbly doubles as our in-house sports reporter.

Earlier this year and with funding from the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, ICPO commissioned a piece of research on the resettlement needs of Irish people returning here from prison overseas. The report raised a number of different issues and highlighted particular areas where supports are required. A short summary of the report and its finding is contained overleaf. The research will be launched at our forthcoming conference in Dublin Castle and we will give you a full report on it and the conference in our next newsletter.

Finally, I would like to thank the ICPO staff and volunteers for their hard work in putting this newsletter together.

Brian Hanley
ICPO Coordinator

A Message from Bishop John Kirby, Chair IECE.

ICPO is a subsection of the Bishops' Council for Emigrants (IECE) and is now 30 years in existence. Its work offers an important form of institutional witness to the gospel message: "He has sent me to announce good news to the poor, to proclaim release for prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind" (Lk4: 18-19).

ICPO, both by word and example, in practical, pastoral actions and in cooperation with other religious and secular groups has, in the name of the bishops of Ireland, responded to the special plea of the Holy Father when he visited Ireland and asked that "the care of prisoners be made a priority" (Drogheda 1979).

As ICPO marks this significant milestone in its history, I wish to pay tribute to a number of people and organisations. To the founding members of ICPO, for identifying the need for this outreach, to the current staff and volunteers for their dedication and commitment, to those who have supported ICPO down through the years – the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Sisters of Mercy, the Presentation Sisters and to all who have been involved in and supported the work of ICPO, I express my heartfelt gratitude.

To those of you reading this who find yourselves in prison far from home, or to families who are separated from a loved, please be assured of my on-going prayers.

I recall here the words of Pope Saint John Paul II, when visiting Regina Coeli Prison in Rome, he said to those gathered:

"... I greet each of you prisoners with fraternal affection. I stand before you as a witness to God's love. I come to tell you that God loves you and wants you to follow a path of rehabilitation and forgiveness, or truth and justice."

A Step at a Time – The Resettlement Needs of Irish People Returning From Prison Overseas

With funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Emigrant Support Programme, ICPO engaged Paul Gavin to carry out research on the resettlement needs of Irish prisoners overseas returning to Ireland. The report was commissioned in order for ICPO to better understand the issues encountered by clients returning to Ireland. The report's Executive Summary (below) gives a synopsis of how the research was conducted and some of the findings and recommendations arising from it. We are very grateful to the former clients and service providers who contributed to this research.

Executive Summary

On release from prison, ex-prisoners may require a range of supports in order to successfully resettle back into the community and avoid re-offending. Most immediately, they will require access to accommodation and money, for example through the social welfare system. Some ex-prisoners may also have physical and mental health issues, including addiction issues and may need to access relevant services, as well as registering with a G.P and obtaining a medical card. In the longer term ex-prisoners may have re-training and educational needs to address in order to re-enter the workplace.

Whilst these resettlement needs may be common to all ex-prisoners, the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO) have observed that the particular circumstances of Irish people in prison overseas and the difficulties they face can place them in greater need of post-release support and put them at a particular disadvantage when it comes to preparing for release. This report was commissioned in order to investigate further the particular resettlement needs of Irish people returning from prison overseas.

The ICPO works with approximately 1,200 Irish people imprisoned in more than 30 countries around the world. It provides information, support and advice to prisoners and their families. Part of the ICPO's work involves supporting returning ex-prisoners in their resettlement.

This research was conducted in two stages. The first was to engage in a general review of the literature on resettlement and of Foreign National Prisoners (FNP). Particular resettlement pathways were identified and used as a set of lenses through which the resettlement needs of this group was examined. The following resettlement pathways were utilised:

- Accommodation;
- Education, Training and Employment;
- Health & Addiction Issues;
- Finance; and
- Family.

The second stage involved conducting a series of semi-structured interviews with ex-prisoners who had returned to Ireland as well as resettlement service providers and ICPO staff. Their views and opinions were sought on a wide range of issues relevant to the resettlement process. These interviews proved very useful for this research as it provided an original and undocumented source of information on the topic of Irish ex-prisoner resettlement needs. It provided first-hand accounts of imprisonment abroad as well as the challenges they encountered upon their return to Ireland. Interviews with service providers working with returning FNP allowed for an examination of the same issues from a different perspective.

A relatively small number (estimated to be less than 100) Irish overseas prisoners return to Ireland each year. However, of those that do, a significant number are acutely vulnerable and lack many of the basic social supports people take for granted. This modest figure also means that any proposed changes or recommendations cited in this report do not carry substantial resource implications.

This report finds, *inter alia*, the following:

- There is a paucity of academic research pertaining to the resettlement needs of Foreign National Prisoners;
- Irish prisoners overseas seeking or being compelled to resettle in Ireland face additional challenges *vis a vis*, Irish prisoners being released from an Irish prison, in terms of their resettlement;
- Amendments to current practise regarding the dispensation of statutory benefits are needed to better assist this group on their return from prison overseas;
- The means by which a former overseas prisoner returns to Ireland (i.e. deportation, voluntary return, prisoner transfer, under probation supervision) will impact on their resettlement needs;
- Access to suitable accommodation and pre-existing family support are of primary import in terms of resettlement;
- On their return, many returning prisoners possess significant mental and physical health problems associated with their imprisonment overseas;
- Access to relevant education, training and employment opportunities can be difficult for some ex-prisoners on their return due to their poor literacy skills, distance from education and training facilities and a lack of employment prospects in their catchment area.

Visiting Prisoners in the United States

Ian Hanna
ICPO Caseworker



Earlier this year I visited five Irish prisoners on the East Coast of the United States (US) with funding provided by the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. I also visited a number of organisations and people that provide help and assistance to Irish prisoners.

The visit took place in September and I was based in Yonkers, New York as the majority of the people I met were in prisons throughout New York State and neighbouring Pennsylvania. I was greatly assisted by Sister Christine Hennessy from the Aisling Irish Community Centre in Yonkers. She accompanied me on some of the visits as she is in regular contact with many of our clients and has established a marvellous

relationship with them. In previous years she also accompanied Kate Jackson on some of her visits.

This was my first visit to prisons in the US but prior to this I had visited some Irish prisoners in London which greatly prepared me for my own journey. It made me much more aware of the importance of prison visits and how to approach them.

Prior to my departure all visiting procedures and protocols had been approved and I wish to thank all those people who assisted in this. Despite all this work there is an ever present dread that the visit might not take place. I urge family members to make sure that they are on their loved one's visiting list and that you are expected. Most American prisons have a website that outlines the visiting procedures and times. There is always the possibility that prisoners may be moved to another prison after the visiting arrangements have been made. It is also a good idea to give the prison a ring to confirm that there are no changes before you commence your journey. I would advise prisoners, as soon as you know you are moving prisons, to inform family members, the Irish Embassy or Consulate and the ICPO.

There are varying degrees of visiting room security depending on the security classification of the prison and other factors. These range from all sitting around a table talking and sharing some snacks to glass partitions and talking via a phone. Prison staff, must of necessity, be on duty in the visiting room, however, they did not encroach or have an overbearing presence. I know this is not the same for all prisons especially during busy visiting periods where time restrictions may be imposed.

The visits took place in an easy and relaxed manner and all the clients were in good form. They were all engaged in either prison work or in education programmes which they said they found very beneficial. The topics of conversation ranged from conditions within the prison through personal concerns to legal appeals. It was stimulating, interesting and at times quite moving.

It was interesting to hear all the clients say how much the support of their families and ICPO meant to them. They all remarked on how they love receiving a letter as they can read it a number of times while formulating a reply. A relatively new development in some American prisons allows an inmate to receive an email through an approved system but they cannot yet send a reply in the same way. This is a good way for families to get news to prisoners.



Visiting prisons is a central pillar of the work of ICPO and I will end by saying thanks to all who assisted me in putting the visits together. In particular to the ICPO clients who made me so welcome and shared their stories with me.

A Day in the Life of an ICPO Prison Visitor

Breda Power
London Prison Case Manager

My name is **Breda Power**. Many of you will know me as the London Prisons Case Manager with responsibility for ten prisons in the Greater London area.

My journey to become an ICPO prison visitor has been a long and arduous one and at times daunting. I remember the first time I acquired a set of keys to enable me to manoeuvre around the prison without an escort. I was told by the managing chaplain “go on then, get lost in the prison”. I cannot remember a time when I felt more vulnerable at work. To say I could have quit there and then is an understatement. What got me through was reminding myself that my fear must be a minuscule fraction of what someone must feel when first brought to prison to serve a sentence and I consoled myself that I would be able to leave at the end of the day. I prayed to God that I would be able to see as many of those on my list as possible and not waste too much time “getting lost”.

I remember too, the elation when my visit was over. I had seen around 20 prisoners with a range of issues; from phone credit to keeping in touch with family, advice on how to get accommodation on release, to support letters for various stages of the criminal justice process. However, nothing gave me more satisfaction than meeting the few who had no outside support at all. I remember one man telling me he had never had a social visit in all the years he had been in prison. I offered one person some phone credit but he declined saying “I have no need for phone credit, Miss, I have nobody to call”. Initially I felt awful for him but just as I was leaving he thanked me for visiting him and with a beaming smile said, “Please visit again”.

The day usually starts early in prison, therefore I often have to leave very early in the morning. I live on the East London and Essex border, so getting to most prisons can take hours. Sometimes I feel like I’ve already done a day’s work by the time I get to the prison. Once at the prison there is the hassle of going through security and in prisons where I can get keys; the protocols for picking them up have to be adhered to. All of this and I have to be on the wing around 9am as there is only a two hour window of opportunity before lunch is served.

It can be chaotic on the wings if the prisoners are on association or ‘free flow’ - the time when prisoners can move from one part of the prison to another for work or education purposes and it is not unusual to meet people on my list en-route. During these times it can be noisy on the wing and with prisoners sometimes queuing up to talk to me, it can be really hard to concentrate. Ever in the back of my mind is the time limit too. Organising time can be a real challenge as it can be very difficult to drag myself away from someone who has lots of issues, is distressed or just never receives another visit. Still, a noisy clanging wing is preferable to the quiet eerie silent wing indicating ‘bang up’. When prisoners are locked up due to staff shortages or officers’ lunchtime, etc. I can only speak through the prison cell door. This can be frustrating as the cells are so close together and trying to maintain some confidentiality, particularly if the person has a ‘cell mate’ can be almost impossible. Then there is the issue of hearing.

I am a little deaf and often have to ask the prisoner to repeat him or herself a number of times through the crack in the door. I find myself apologising over and over and can sometimes feel the agitation felt by the prisoners trying to convey to me issues without anyone else hearing. I have met people on association for the first time that I have visited many times when they have been behind their door and didn’t know them to see. It is dark in the cell and the window is very small, making it impossible to make the person out. I call this ‘blind visiting’ because you don’t see the person.

Prisons are vast institutions and my list of 20 can be spread out over numerous wings and landings. I can walk or run miles (as I do in most cases to ensure I get around everyone) on a day I am in prison. Depending on which prison I have visited and if I am lucky enough to get a seat on the train home, it is not unusual for me to fall asleep. I am lucky, too, if I get home by seven in the evening if I have been prison visiting and with the physical and emotional journey I have been on that day I usually have to unwind a little when I get home. I do this by practicing ‘gratitude’. Gratitude that I can go home! No matter how hard my day was or how challenging some of the issues, I was able to go home. That is what I’m thankful for and what keeps me in my job as a prison visitor for ICPO.

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?

Family Information Day October 2015

We had a good turnout for our most recent Family Information Day which was held at the Camden Court Hotel in Dublin on 19th October. It was nice to meet some new families and also see some familiar faces. We really appreciated everyone struggling through the Monday morning Dublin traffic to get there.

Sr. Mary Whyte started us off with a relaxation exercise which helped get everyone calm and focused on the day. Myself and Ian Hanna then gave a short presentation on prison visits. Both of us have recently been visiting clients in prison abroad. I spent several weeks visiting a number of countries in South America and Ian had recently visited prisons in New York State and Pennsylvania. I was able to share some practical advice for families on preparation for visiting prisons in the UK (see below). Ian gave attendees an interesting insight into the experience of going into the prison itself as a visitor.

Next, we were delighted to be joined by Darren Butler from the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative who gave a powerful talk on addiction issues. He discussed the nature of addiction, how it affects families and how families might approach dealing with a loved one who suffers from an addiction. He also talked about organisations that may be able to assist. There was a great response to Darren's talk and he kindly stayed for the rest of the day and spoke to some people individually.

We had a delicious lunch in the hotel and it was great to see people chatting together and sharing their own experiences. In the afternoon, Breda Power from our London office gave a very comprehensive overview of prisoner health and safety issues as well as an update from the ICPO London office on UK prison issues. This was followed by a brief Q&A session. We expect to have another Family Information Day in Spring 2016.

Claire O'Connell
ICPO Caseworker and Family Support Officer

Practical Aspects of Visiting a Loved One in a UK Prison

In the last newsletter I talked about some of the financial aspects of prison visits. Here are a few practical considerations too which were emphasised at the recent Family Information Day:

- * **Preparation is the keyword when it comes to prison visits.** Some prisons are out in the middle of nowhere and it is important to know the logistics of how to get there, what you can and cannot bring, what money you might need etc.
- * It is a good idea to **call the prison for up-to-date information** on visiting regulations as different prisons have different rules. Prisons will have a visit booking line you can call. It is also recommended to call them again the day before visiting and check all is in order. This is because we have heard cases of visiting systems being changed and families booked to visit from Ireland not being updated by the prison and subsequently being denied access.
- * **Try to stay overnight if possible** to be well rested and get a good breakfast the day of the visit.
- * **Leave plenty of time for getting to the prison** in case there are problems with transport etc.
- * **Family Visit Days - If the prisoner has enhanced status** and you are bringing children then it may be possible to have a "family visit". The family visit is allocated more time than a regular visit and takes place in a different part of the prison. There are usually activities for children such as music, story time with library staff and an arts corner and the visits overall are much more relaxed. If you would like more information on Family Visit Days please ask your loved one to enquire at the prison or you can contact one of the ICPO offices.

My Time with Prisoners

Sr. Agnes Hunt



Walking up Du Cane Road towards Wormwood Prison for the first time I was full of doubts. It was the 21st January 1978, the Feast of St. Agnes. To delay my progress I asked a lollipop man how I would get into the prison. "Sure, is that where they're putting you, Love!" he replied. Then he told me that I could enter by the

small gate behind the letter box. Later, on reflection, I thought how the small gate was symbolic of the separation of the outside world from the prisoners.

The Chaplain met me and I found myself surrounded by barb-wired covered concrete walls, high fences and locked gates. For a moment the open colourful shrub savannah that I had left in Zambia flashed before my eyes. Now I was in the concrete jungle. It was like a dead place, so artificially quiet and grim.

I was given a "talking to" on prison rules before doing a tour of the prison and being introduced to staff. At long last, we arrived at D Wing and I was to meet my first prisoner face-to-face. He was young, smiling and looked like anyone on the outside. We got on very well despite his cockney accent and my Cork blas. Why was I led to think that prisoners should be different? After that introduction, I was assigned more and more long-term men for a chat on a weekly basis. Each one was his own person and had his own story.

I began to work full-time as Assistant R.C. Chaplain a year later. One of my tasks was to see the new RC prisoners on reception. Each one was a unique individual with his own dreams and fears. I knew I had no answers to their problems but I promised that I would help in any way I could. There were no telephones then, so the offer of a phone call to a loved one was gratefully received. "But do come back with an answer, Sister" and I did.

A lot of the reception process was demeaning and degrading. Each one was stripped, made to undergo a body search, given a kit and a number and was probably 'twoed' up in a cell with somebody not of his own choosing. The prisoner had not been on his own to speak to anyone until he saw the chaplain the next morning. Some were ready to speak out with pent up anger, or cry when they mentioned a loved one. Some were not able to speak at all. It was important to listen to what they could not voice. Often this was the start of a relationship which eased the pain of separation for the prisoner.

Applications to the Chaplain were many and varied. It might be a simple request for a Rosary or for someone

to listen to their fears that a marriage may break up or the anguish they are feeling when a loved one is dying. The chaplain had to deal with a number of issues in quick succession. In all cases, listening with compassion to a person's concern is paramount but also offering practical help is very important. Having seen those on reception, I would spend the rest of the morning dealing with the applications. For some reason, prisoners don't expect compassion and are very grateful when they get it. I always believed that each one is a unique person and is deserving of the respect that is his right. Labelling is dreadful.

In my time in Wormwood Scrubs, we had a wing full of long-term or life-sentenced prisoners. Much of our time, the R.C. Chaplain and I, was spent in D Wing, either on a one-to-one meeting or for a short religious service. Evening groups in the chapel were held with these prisoners in mind. With this level of interaction friendships grew as we attempted to help each one to make the most of the induction period of their sentence. When prisoners were relocated to another prison we kept in touch as far as possible, sometimes until the person was released.

I had particular difficulty in getting in touch with families overseas as we could not ring out of the country from the prison and we had no contact organisation. In 1985, I heard about the ICPO, then shortly founded, so I was able to get contact with the families through that organisation. It may have been just to wish a child a Happy Birthday, or congratulate a child on her First Communion. Requests were often simple but meant the world to someone locked up in prison. I became very friendly with some of the families and would meet them when they visited the prison. The prison held about 1,500 men at the time; some on remand, some on short term sentences and then the long-term and life-sentenced prisoners.



The applications from each section differed greatly, but all were opportunities to chat and build up relationships. It was not my duty to judge anyone and innocent or guilty the person ...

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A Day in the Life of a Caseworker

Claire O'Connell
ICPO Caseworker and Family Support Officer

My name is Claire and I am a Caseworker and Family Support Officer with the ICPO in Maynooth. I joined the ICPO exactly one year ago and I handle the casework for Australia, South America, Asia, the Middle East and Africa. I also assist families who have a loved one in prison in the UK. With over 1,200 Irish people in prison overseas casework can be extremely busy at times but it is a very rewarding job. I thought that readers might be interested in seeing what a day in the office is like for a caseworker here and so I made a few notes one Tuesday recently.

Morning

It's a Tuesday in the office. My work involves liaising with people in a range of different time zones and this morning I have received an email from a priest in a South American country confirming that they were able to visit a new prisoner there and letting us know that they are well. Usually I wait until later in the morning to make calls to families as not everyone appreciates a call at 9am! However in this case I know the family have been waiting for news and so I call them to let them know. The line is bad but they tell me they are so relieved to hear that their loved one is OK although naturally they are concerned about what the future holds. I advise them that I am due to visit South America on prison visits the following month and will arrange to see their loved one in person and bring them some items they need.



Yesterday I had a call about a new client in Asia and this morning I plan to write an introductory letter to them and to the family. When we write to someone for the first time we invite them to let us know how things are going, if they are well and we advise them of the services we can offer. We also send a few copies of our newsletters, some information on the ICPO, a special prayer card for prisoners plus some self-addressed envelopes so they can write back to us without having to buy stamps. I tend to draft letters early in the day as

the phone can get very busy later on and I staff the main phone line into the ICPO.

I am gathering together the enclosures for the letters and the phone rings. It is a lady calling about her son who has been arrested in Australia. She is completely shell shocked and had no idea something like this could happen to them. She received our details from the Department of Foreign Affairs after ringing their consular assistance team in Dublin. Fortunately her son has friends in Australia who have been able to visit him and keep in contact with her. However, she wants to know more about what will happen from now on. I talk to her about the processes around arrest, detention, and sentencing in Australia. We also discuss deportation of foreign nationals from Australia on completion of the custodial part sentences. I also pass on the details of an Irish welfare association that is based near the prison where her son is being held. She tells me that she feels so much better having spoken to someone. The number of Irish people in prison in Australia has grown in the last few years and while a year and a half ago we had four people on our books, today we have 30. The ICPO was also able to visit a number of Australian prisons last year. This means that we are generating a good understanding of the prison system there, which helps us advise families and clients better.

I finish my introductory letters in between answering calls and putting them through to the relevant staff. It's coffee time already and after coffee I collect the post. I handle opening the post and passing it on to relevant staff. Some days we might only have a few letters and other times we might get ten. Today there are four letters for me.

The phone is very busy and the calls include a man who is on licence in the UK and wants to return to Ireland to his family. He has no family in the UK but under the terms of his licence he is not allowed to return to Ireland without permission. I ask him about the specific details of his case and advise that it is possible to make an application to resettle in Ireland on licence and that he needs to speak to his probation officer. In order to assist, I will draft a letter to him which explains the process and he can also pass a copy to his probation officer and I offer to speak to them if necessary.



Afternoon

In the afternoon I start off by tackling more of the post that has arrived today. One of the letters is from a lady whose son is in Australia and who needs help dealing with his lawyers. The family have been paying the legal bills but the lawyer hasn't given them a sufficient cost estimate or breakdown of the work carried out. She is confused by a lot of the legal terminology they are using. She has sent me copies of the emails back and forth and I call her to go through it. As a former solicitor myself I am able to explain some of the terminology and where the case is at. I then draft an email which she can send to the lawyer which sets out the information she needs in relation to costs. We tend to find that most complaints in relation to lawyers are around costs and a lack of communication.

In the afternoon we also have a hardship fund staff meeting to discuss hardship applications that have been made. I have a new client in Dubai who is living in tough conditions and has to purchase additional food in order to supplement his diet. We are able to agree to send a quarterly payment to him. I also have a request from a family who need financial assistance to visit their son in prison in the UK. We are able to help out and I call the family afterwards and give them the good news.

The team here usually have a cup of tea together at about 3.30pm and if we are really lucky our administrator Bernie will have brought some of her baking into the office!

The end of the day I spend following up on emails. A prison chaplain has got in contact with us as a vulnerable prisoner in the UK hasn't heard from his elderly mother in some time and is concerned. We have to be very careful with enquiries like this in case the family doesn't wish to be contacted. However checking the file I see that they have been in contact before and so I call the local parish priest in her area to see if they know anything. I am not able to get through but I leave a voicemail, send an email and diarise to follow up later in the week if nothing has been heard.

I finish the day by looking at my task list and planning what needs to be done as a priority the next day. It can be very busy at the ICPO and planning only goes so far! Sometimes we will receive a call or letter that requires immediate attention. It is never a dull day here. One thing that strikes me about the caseworker and family support work is that every phone call, email and letter we send has an impact on someone.

ICPO 30th Anniversary Conference

Supporting Irish Prisoners Overseas and their Families

Conference Title: Reaching Out – Supporting Irish Prisoners Overseas and Their Families

Venue: Dublin Castle

Chair: Mark Hennessy, Irish Times

Date: 1st December 2015

09.00 Registration Tea/Coffee

09:45 Welcoming Remarks and Brief Outline of the Work of ICPO

Bishop John Kirby, IECE Chair, Bishop of Clonfert

10:00 The Early Days of ICPO

Nuala Kelly, First Coordinator of ICPO

10:30 President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins

10:55 BREAK

11:20 Resettlement Needs of Returning Ex-Prisoners to Ireland

Paul Gavin, Researcher, ICPO Commissioned Research

11:55 Current Trends and Contemporary Challenges Facing Prisoners Overseas and the Organisations That Support Them

Pauline Crowe, OBE, Chief Executive, Prisoners Abroad

12:30 Questions & Answers

12:45 LUNCH

14:00 The Right Type of Education – A Briefing on Education and Training Provision for Gypsy and Irish Traveller Prisoners in England and Wales

Ellena Costello, Policy Officer, Traveller Equality Project, Irish Chaplaincy

14:20 The Importance of a Pastoral Outreach to Prisoners Overseas

Fr. Gerry McFlynn, Manager, ICPO London Office

14:40 Family Matters - The Impact of Overseas Imprisonment on Families

Claire O'Connell, ICPO Caseworker and Family Support Worker

Denise, a mother with a son imprisoned overseas will speak about her experiences

15:00 Questions & Answers

15:15 Looking to the Future

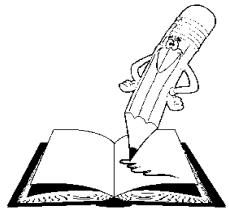
Brian Hanley, Coordinator, ICPO Maynooth Office

15:25 Closing Address

Mr. Charles Flanagan T.D., Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

15:40 Concluding Remarks by Conference Chair, Mark Hennessy

Winner of Listowel Writers' Week Competition 2015



When will you make my telephone ring?

It was another eventless day for Edmund as he arrived at the depot to collect his orders for the day. First port of call was kiosk #1467, opposite the Red Lion at the corner of Thatcher Way.

The routine was pretty much the same: clean the glass, wipe the handset, brush and mop out, remove the graffiti and any unauthorised adverts.

Although, lately he had also had to put up removal notices this had caused him to worry about his future.



This kiosk will cease operating from 10pm on
20.12.13.

We would like to apologise for any inconvenience.
See www.scottel.co.soc for further information

The Square soon came to life as the locals carried out their day to day business passing the kiosk. Our first user was Arlene who had started at the top of Thatcher's Way, leaving her calling cards hopeful that someone would pick them up although she had realised business was slower these days, maybe it was time to go digital and join the age of Skype and embrace the internet. After all the library offered free courses. Everyone was tweeting, texting these days.

Arlene decided to join the locals for lunch at the Red Lion to decide on her next business strategy as she exited the kiosk, a young man entered. Danny had bunked off school today, it was sports and he hated sports, he also hated not having a Smartphone like his peers. Lifting the receive, he dialled the operator.

'Operator, how may I help you?'

'Is there a Mr Walls there?'

'No'

'Is there a Mrs Walls there?'

'No, I think you may have a wrong number.'

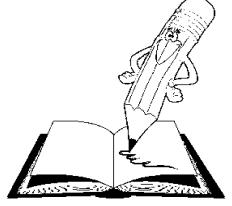
'What about any Walls then?' sniggered Danny

'Right, young man, stop wasting my time.' screamed an irate operator. All that she could hear was the sniggers of Danny before silence as he dropped the handset and exited the kiosk.

Watching from across the street was Johnny, the local vagrant who always kept one eye on the telephone box in the hope of sweeping up any loose change that was left behind but even he had noticed that less coins were left behind although that didn't stop him checking after the Community Support Officer moved him on. After all he needed a few pounds to get his carry-out if under the bridge was to be his home for the night.

As the rain fell into the early evening, passers-by entered the kiosk to light cigarettes, drip dry while waiting for friends before the world famous Red Lion Karaoke Night kicked off, checking their iPhones and Blackberries.

Winner of Listowel Writers' Week Competition 2015



Sitting in the warmth of the Red Lion, the clientele heard an almighty racket that attracted them to the windows and door for a minute. A local youth had aimed his Buckie bottle at the kiosk which had rebounded and smashed against the ground. Scottel had stopped using glass a long time ago as a result of vandalism in an attempt to avoid increased repair bills. Once the youths realised that the glass wasn't breaking, they decided an attempt at the money box was worthy of a try. Alas, hundred year old technology couldn't be beaten by the ebullient energy of an inebriated bunch of teenagers. The destruction continued with the handset being ripped from the socket.

'OMG it's a moby noo'
'That's like pure smart man.'
'Gonny gies a go?'

The various youf's voiced before moving on as boredom and the reality that there was nowt to destroy set in. One youf wasn't done yet, Manksy. Diggin' intae his poacket, oot came the aerosol can. Giein' it a gid shake he began tae spray his tag until summit caught his attention. It was Arlene's card, he scooped it up and put it in his pocket before carrying oan wi his taggin'.

Mansky completed his work of art, stepped outside the kiosk and admired his masterpiece until he realised that his friends had disappeared into the night. Mansky headed off home, after all there was no point in him hanging around on his own.

Shortly after Mansky left, a couple stumbled out of the Red Lion, a little worse for wear and looking to take the plunge to the next level. Ducking into the kiosk they fumble around with clothing and the ridiculous lack of space, unaware that it is closing time. The street is about to get busy as the bar empties. They hear a noise that brings their shenanigans to an abrupt ending. Exiting the kiosk they see a man stumbling about.

Before the door closes he manages to grab the handle and on entering the kiosk, he unzips his fly and begins to urinate until his bladder is fully emptied, a quick tidy up of his clothes and he's on his way once again.

Edmund arrived the next morning to disconnect the equipment as part of Scottel's social responsibility strategy. He noticed a large holdall and on opening it he notices the large sum of money it contained, on further examination of the holdall, Edmund can find no identifying marks or clues to the owner.

Edmund pondered 'Surely I cannot keep this?'
'Could I?'

Maurice Crossley, UK

ICPO Penfriend Scheme

The aim of the scheme is to enable Irish people in prison abroad to keep in touch with everyday life in Ireland. It can also help with any loneliness and isolation that you might be experiencing.

If you do not already have a penfriend and would like to maintain a friendly correspondence with one of our volunteers, please contact us.

Update from London ICPO Office

Autumn 2015

It's hard to believe that we are now nearly at the end of yet another year! However, the passage of time is relative – depending on where you are. From the vantage point of a prison cell time it probably doesn't pass quickly enough! This year the ICPO marks 30 years of outreach service to Irish prisoners and their families and the occasion is being celebrated by a conference in Dublin Castle in Tuesday, 1st December which the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, will attend. But more about that elsewhere.

Back at the coal face we continue to make the best of a difficult situation. And it's becoming more and more difficult to find anything positive to say about the prisons situation. Facts and figures produced by the Bromley Briefings back in the summer make depressing reading. Facts like: since 1993 (the year I joined the ICPO), the prison population in England and Wales increased by more than 40,000 – a rise of 91%, representing an estimated additional cost of £1.2 bn annually; re-offending by all recent ex-prisoners costs the economy between £9.5 and £13 bn a year; prisons are getting bigger with 43% of prisoners now held in prisons of over 1,000 places or more while the number of staff employed in the public estate has fallen by 29% in the last four years - 12,980 fewer staff - raising public concern about health and safety.

Small wonder, then, that at the recent **Conservative Party Conference**, both **David Cameron** and his Justice Secretary, **Michael Gove**, felt obliged to comment on prisoners and imprisonment. At least it was encouraging to hear the Prime Minister mention some of the reasons why people end up in custody such as drug addiction, mental health problems, childhood abuse, etc. He also said that prisons would "be a big area of social reform in the next five years". Their comments prompted the **Bishop for Prisons, Richard Moth**, to state:
"Prisons are an integral part of our criminal justice system, but far too many men and women spend whole days locked in their cells without anywhere near enough access to education, training, chaplaincy, restorative justice programmes or the other opportunities necessary to turn their lives around".

Time will tell whether the political rhetoric is matched by action but the omens are not good. Public and private penal bureaucracies want super-jails because there are economies of scale in stacking prisoners high and keeping them cheap. The Ministry of Justice plans to open Europe's biggest jail in Wrexham in 2017 where some 2,100 men will be kept on the site of an abandoned factory. Other large prisons are likely to follow. And this despite the fact that every study by the National Audit Office or Prisons Inspectorate says that smaller prisons have lower levels of violence and better relations between staff and prisoners. I recall Lord Justice Woolf's inquiry into the 1990's prison riots stating that what the system needed was small local prisons so that wives and girlfriends could visit inmates and keep their relationships going. He was merely stating the obvious in saying that men with a family to welcome them home on release are more

likely to go straight and keep out of trouble. Wrexham and other super-prisons are guaranteed relationship-breakers.



Anyway, enough of this whingeing and back to basics!

Repatriation: as mentioned in previous newsletters, this process can take up to 2 years to complete so it only makes sense to apply if one is serving a longer sentence. Furthermore, there is a sliding scale of priority requirements. Only those with strong family ties (parents, spouse, children) are now even considered. Other family members simply don't count. Pending a number of cases moving through the Irish courts, applications are not being fully processed at present either.

Transfers to prisons in Northern Ireland continue to be problematic. There are only three prisons operating there Maghaberry, Magilligan and Hydebank (YOU/Female) – and all are full. Moreover, as priority is given to those with current addresses in Northern Ireland, there is now a long waiting list for transfers.

IPP Prisoners (Indeterminate Public Protection Sentences) wishing to be repatriated. We continue to campaign on behalf of the small number of IPP prisoners wishing to be repatriated. Progress is slow and this will be a priority for us in the New Year.

The London Office Staff and Volunteer

Prison Visitors:

Breda Power	all the London prisons and follow-up casework
Liz Power	chief caseworker
Russ Harland	part-time caseworker
Declan Ganly	office administrator
Sr. Moira Keane	office helper and prison visitor
Sr. Maire Power	prison visitor for HMP The Mount
Sara Thompson	prison visitor for HMP Send
Sr. Agnes Miller	prison visitor for HMP Bronzefield
Sr. Maureen McNally	prison visitor for HMP Guys Marsh, Erlestoke and Coldingley
Kathy Walsh	prison visitor for HMP Holloway
Jayne O'Connor	prison visitor for HMP Dartmoor, Channings Wood, and Exeter
Sally Murphy	prison visitor for HMP Liverpool, Altcourse, Kennet, Kirkham and Styal
Gerry McFlynn	Project Manager and prison visitor
Ellena Costello	Project Officer at the Traveller Project
Conn MacGabhann	Manager and Researcher for the Traveller Project.

Finally, the Director of the Irish Chaplaincy, **Eugene Dugan**, is always on hand for advice and support.

Fr Gerry McFlynn

Competition Winners

Short Story Winner

Dodging the Bill

"So good they named it twice". That's why I was there. I had reached New York on my trip Stateside on the way to Fairfax County, Virginia. I had made the decision to check out the sights, sounds and smells of 'Noo Yoik' for a couple of days before my trip south to meet family.

The usual tourist attractions were duly seen and registered in my travel memory - from consuming bagels to the Statue of Liberty - leaving me with just the Empire State Building to go. The whole aura and magnificence of this historic monolith had always fascinated me; from its dimensions to its history and its unique place in the American psyche. I had saved the best until last.

I alighted from the C train at Madison Square Garden and took the short walk from there to my destination with an air of anticipation and turning a corner there it was. I stood awestruck with the realisation of my dreams. It was everything I had imagined and all the films and images became real before me. If I could see the top of its spire from where I stood at its base, King Kong would be there, swatting airplanes out of the air. It was easy to see where the term 'skyscraper' came from.

All around the building and at its foyer were flashing lights and uniforms hurrying to and fro, lending an air of methodical urgency to this already wondrous spectacle. I made my way through the throng of official vehicles, not really noticing that I wasn't apprehended or even paid attention to and entered the vast vestibule of the Empire State Building. I passed many more uniformed and smartly dressed men and women on my way to the lifts, passing rows of reception desks and secretaries voicing "Have a nice day" in clipped nasal tones to their telephones. The bell-hop at the first lift informed me that they were "elevators and I had to take three of them to reach the top." Small comfort to someone with a thing about lifts. The thought of one continuous lift shaft would have turned me smartly on my heels.

The doors shut behind myself and three women, obviously tourists like myself. By the time we had acknowledged each other and exchanged basic pleasantries the doors were opening again. It seemed as if we hadn't moved and exclamations of wonder and disbelief were shared as we realised we were already a third of the way up. We waited for half a minute and the process was repeated. We felt

like old campaigners as we entered the third lift which we soon exited, now as comrades-in-arms. A quick walk along the corridor and through a bank of sliding doors and there it was, the balcony of a million proposals, backdrop of a thousand films with the Big Apple laid out all around like an intricately constructed rug.

The first thing one does is compare, calculating your own altitude against the nearby Chrysler building and surrounding towers of commerce and industry, realising you are the mightiest of all. The lack of Twin Towers is forgotten. As you walk around the perimeter, fenced above and around to deter suicides, your eyes slowly work their way down to the streets. People cannot be distinguished, cars are insects and only major landmarks like Times Square can be identified. It's hard not to feel totally disassociated; that the sheer scale of it all has left you adrift. There is nothing to relate to. Nothing to hold in comparison to judge your bearings and slowly the realisation sets in. The magnitude of this achievement is a tribute to human endeavour of the highest order.

Two hours of stifled superlatives later I head back to the elevator/lift. After a three minute wait it arrives and I enter, minus my previous adventurers. I am alone as it begins its descent and almost immediately it judders to a halt, the doors opening wide. I am confronted by cameras, lights and security men as an instantly recognisable man enters the lift and steps past me. A large group of men and women make as if to enter with him but realising they won't all get in, they hesitate and step back. The doors glide shut and the lift continues its downward descent, only to stop suddenly again. The doors do not open.

"Goddamn press!" said my irate fellow inmate, not realising we had stopped between floors. "How the hell did they know I'd be here?"

I stood speechless as he scowled his annoyance and he grunted as he took in his surroundings. He began to regain his composure and visibly relax before turning to face me and exhibited that famous grin, honed by years of politicking.

"Good day, Sir" said Bill Clinton, ex US President, extending his hand.

"Good day to you too" came my muted reply as I accepted

Competition Winners

his firm, dry handshake.

"How long you in for?" he said as a form of icebreaking wit.

"Should be out on the first" said I, surprising myself.

There was a moments stunned silence before the great man guffawed and exploded into laughter. "You mean first floor, right?"

I nodded with a smile, mentally congratulating myself on my cleverness.

"You English?"

"Yes, London."

"Love your accent" he said, mimicking what every other American had said over the last two days.

"I haven't got an accent, you have."

He gazed at me quizzically before accepting this as humour rather than an angry patriotic retort. I was doing well I thought, so far at least.

There was a short silence as we adjusted to our odd situation, the preposterousness sinking in. We were here together, like it or not and good humour has formed a strange understanding between us. It was a promising start and a massively unexpected addition to an already momentous day.

"So you're the cause of the commotion downstairs?" I said as we began to relax a bit.

"Yes, sorry about that. You tend to take it for granted after a while, you know, forget about the inconvenience caused to people."

"Is it a specific threat they look for or just blanket cover?"

"Well as far as I know it's to cover any eventuality. The Feds keep their cards close to their chest concerning security. I'd probably be the last to know about any specific threat or identified danger. Not everyone loves the U S of A, or ex-Presidents." The mention of hated ex-politicians flashed up an image of Thatcher and Blair but Presidents seem to escape this deep down resentment when the next one comes along. "Well you haven't been the pin-up of any war as far as I know" I said thoughtfully.

"In my experience that's even worse. It's much harder presiding over a country at peace because people spend more time looking at what I'm up to rather than military manoeuvres. Your personal life matters more than subsidies for dairy farmers, I can testify to that!" He said this with an angry but resigned shrug. I knew he was referring to the various accusations of extra-marital affairs he had been through, especially the one concerning Ms Monica Lewinsky, the White House aide who began his downfall and nearly brought about his impeachment.

"I think it was the lying factor that people didn't like, you

know, rather than the actual deed itself" I said instantly regretting it.

"Of course it was" he replied, seemingly unconcerned. "The only way to keep the Democrats in office was to drag the whole thing out as long as possible. You must understand the behind the scenes shenanigans by the Republicans. We had such a high mandate in our term for our policies as well as my own personal popularity they were grabbing anything and everything to shake us loose. They weren't going to let a juicy bone like than get away." He spat the last sentence out. "It wasn't about me, there were too many factors to count. Politics is a dirty game, played by dirty players. Sometimes things like honesty and integrity are lost in the bigger scheme of things."

I paused to take this in.

"You don't mind talking like this?" I asked him, not quite believing that the subject was being discussed so soon and so candidly. I was caught up in the flow, and the President, as I still thought of him, amazed me with his straightforward answers to my impertinent questions. The intelligence literally shone from him as his sonorous voice filled the lift as it had umpteen stadia.

"You're nor a Republican journalist or cuckolded husband are you?" He said looking around meaningfully, "In here silences could be uncomfortable."

This brought a smile to both our faces and, good humour restored; I pushed harder and asked how his wife was. He immediately caught my thread "Jeez, Hillary breezed through it all. She is the strongest, most beautiful, intelligent person I know, and without her I am nothing."

He was so emphatic with this statement I half expected a punch line. It sounded well-rehearsed.

"You mean she forgave you?"

"Forgiveness was never the issue. It may sound corny but between me and some fellow I just met in a lift Hillary and I are too strong to be touched. We know each other so well that we have become self-accountable and we both look to each other to sort out whatever it is before it becomes a problem. She has her ways of putting me in my place, and I'd take impeachment and even a whipping over that any day. When we first met at Yale, before I went to your green and fertile land at Oxford, it just seemed preordained that we would be together."

I got the distinct impression that he had convinced himself of this, trying to find an acceptable line or explanation to tell his side, but I was not sure that Hillary would feel the same way. Unless of course there was two way traffic in which Mr

Competition Winners

Clinton himself could be the butt of derision. It made good telling though and one would rather leave it as said than pursue it. He said it so emphatically, brooking no argument.

"Of course," he continued, "When Chelsea came along it just cemented our relationship even more. We were both working all hours in something we really did believe in so we weren't the most attentive of parents, but she never wanted for anything and our relationship bears no scars. I'm just glad that mine and Hillary's politics run along the same lines. I'd be in deep do-do running against her."

"That's caused you problems as well though hasn't it?"

"You mean our political careers?"

"Yes, there have been times when you've been more than helpful to each other when a bill needs passing or funding for a new piece of legislation backed by Hillary," I ventured, "And Howard Marks, Mr Nice?"

"Oh that will always raise eyebrows, they don't call me Bill Clinton for nothing," he chuckled. "The fact is I actually agree with the things she was doing. It wasn't a case of nepotism when Hillary needed something. I really thought I was doing the right thing."

"Does that include sacking the staff at the Travel Office?"

He looked at me quizzically, a slight suspicion setting in.

"Mr Clinton, I assure you that I am in no way a threat to you. I happen to have a lot of respect for you and your wife and have followed your careers for years. I'd be a fool not to grasp this opportunity and not talk about things other than the weather."

He seemed to notice me for the first time, gazing at me intently. "What's your name?"

"Steve," I replied. The sounds of shouting and people hammering on doors could be heard. It sounded very far away "We could play hide and seek," I suggested.

He looked at me in disbelief and the widest grin I've ever seen appeared on his face. For the second time he seemed to compose himself, loosening his tie and sliding down the lift until he was sitting on the carpeted floor. I joined him. He had his arms draped over his knees as he began to talk in even, measured tones. His oratory was overpowering, his presence immense. I was caught as he seemed to grow in front of me.

"On my way to the Presidency I faced one lawsuit after another, one accusation after another, most of them sexual. My enemies would try anything they could to split Hillary and I up, seeing her as the real threat. Our relationship is a story of success from day one. An American dream. I was brought up by my grandparents in Hope, Arkansas, and when my mother came back I had a stepdad to go with it, Roger. He was a bastard to all of us but he got me through school and gave us a family name. My real Pa died before I was born. All I wanted to do was play music; I wanted to

make a life at it. I had to be the best at anything I did but I knew I'd never do that in music. It's too random. Instead it was my bullshit that got me noticed. I've always had a gift for the rhetorical and politics was happy hunting ground for me. I went into law, met JFK, listened to Dr King, and ended up in Georgetown D.C studying foreign service. Poor kid makes good. I went to Oxford, learnt to respect rugby rather than the gridiron and returned home. I was against the war in Vietnam, hated it, and I got a rough ride for not going. Then I went to Yale and met Hillary."

The flow of speech ended abruptly, leaving me speechless. I was caught in the glare of headlights like a rabbit, trapped by his eloquence and passion. There was no way this could have been rehearsed, he had sidestepped what I thought were well put questions and I don't know how. "You make it sound like an ending, or a beginning, depends how you look at it."

"Oh it was definitely a beginning. Before her I was on the way to becoming a successful lawyer, maybe making it higher up in State politics in Arkansas after my time in Dallas, but never Presidency. We functioned brilliantly as separate entities and, please don't think me boastful, we always knew the answers. People smell B.S when you answer a question and if it is not prepared. A lot of our off-the-cuff answers actually became party line. I said we did well separately, together we were unstoppable. We spent our first five years discussing changing the world, for the better of course, and we worked our way up the political ladder. We went through the usual scandals, promotions and elections. I eventually made it to the office of Governor of Arkansas when Chelsea was born in 1980. We were on a roll, nominations, campaigns, elections for this and that, all leading up to the '92 election when we beat Dubya Bush for the White House. He wasn't very popular at the time but we still felt good when we won."

"Of course, Bush messed up after the Gulf War didn't he?" I asked, "Something to do with taxes?"

"You know your stuff. This goes back to what I said earlier. Dubya was, and is, a wartime President, and the people can always depend on him to supply the goods, and he certainly served his purpose. Being a peacetime leader, in my view and experience, is infinitely tougher."

He paused, collecting his thoughts.

"The American homeland has never been invaded, so the people haven't been exposed to the real ravages of war. Watching it on TV is as close as it gets. But you touch taxes, or food stamps, or petrol prices and you get raging lions on your hands, as George Bush found to his eternal regret. There is an art to leadership in times of peace, when nothing is being blown up or U.S servicemen coming home in boxes, and the media have free rein on internal affairs

Competition Winners

whether they are in the public interest or not!" He sounded very bitter, and paused for a moment. "No-one remembers my stance on Vietnam, just me not going. Bringing down, and keeping down taxes in every area I've worked in, my opposition on the death penalty and being made to watch three of them because it was my frigging job. Gays in the military, educational reform, health reform, with policies that actually worked. All this before I even became President. Everyone was looking straight at me and Hillary, with no distinction to take the pressure off - like a good shot of fighter jets raining death. I won't be known as the President who nearly got assassinated in the Philippines. I'm the one cheated on his wife and lied to the nation about it!" He was more than aggrieved at this as I cut in, unable to prevent myself:

"But you also expanded the death penalty in your '94 Crime Bill. Your stance on gays in the military was, "Don't ask, don't tell, a half-assed attempt at doing something."

"I soon squared that in '96 when I signed the Defence of Marriage Bill, no one was in any doubt about where I stood on gays." He grinned.

"But you changed again in '09, coming out for gay marriage, excuse the pun." I thought I had him.

"It's not a matter of changing anything. It's staying with trends."

I was struck dumb with that answer, straight out of the blue. His deadpan expression left me slightly unnerved. I had just been 'Clintoned' - an expression I had thought up years before. He swiftly continued:

"In the larger framework of U.S policy and at the time took a lesser prominence to our continued war against alien interference in our role on the world stage. In '96 China tried to adversely alter our domestic policies, and, with tighter curbs on immigration and being re-elected as an Incumbent President, we had enough to think about. Hillary was beavering away with SCHIP and the '97 budget balance and the situation in Somalia was demanding more and more of our attention and action."

Clintoned again.

This was unreal, his scope, memory and recollection of such important issues was unnatural. He was right about the bullshit, but you couldn't fault the data. I felt swept along by his rhetoric. This man could not be categorised simply as the man with the busy zipper, he truly was a cut above the rest. I tried to cut in but he held his hand up and steamrollered on.

"My whole life has been spent in the pursuit of something

better. I'd rather have people complaining about the price of milk or football scores than missing limbs or the horrors of war. FDR had to deal with the aftermath of the depression, a thankless task, but as soon as WW2 came along his popularity went through the roof. It must be remembered that being popular is not what leadership is about. It's doing what you truly believe is best. When I entered office the Eagle was facing the arrows."

I didn't understand and asked him to explain.

"In the centre of the Oval Office there is a circular motif in the carpet of the American Eagle. In its talon it holds arrows and in the other a quill. If the eagle faces the quill it means we are at peace, the arrows mean war. It's changed accordingly. It faced the quill during my whole time as President. There were things going on in Bosnia, Iraq, and of course, Somalia, yet all-out war was avoided. It's been facing the arrows again since I left. Continuously."

I was captured. Entranced. His grasp of nuance and the ebb and flow of conversation was incredible. It was easy to see how he had survived the tempestuous sea of politics for so long. I could have sat there for days. Alas, it was not to be. The lift sprang into action, going down. The sudden movement startled us and broke his train of thought and snapped me out of my reverie. He stood up, straightening his tie and shirt collar. He had maybe two to three inches over me, adding to his presence even more. Up close I could see the fine lines of his face and tired bags around his eyes. The eyes themselves still had their steely glint. He may not be President anymore but his party needed him more than ever. Just his name on a Bill could ensure its success. The lift stopped, and we could hear people outside. Quickly I stood in front of him, holding his gaze.

"Can I just ask Mr President, did you have sexual relations with that woman?"

He grinned. "Define Sexual relations."

At that moment the doors glided open and a gang of burly men rushed in and pulled him out. I was pushed against the side of the lift. The President swore harshly at them, demanding my release.

"Answer, please!" I begged.

The sardonic grin was back as he morphed back into his persona. It was 'Clinton-esque'.

"Just don't inhale Steve, don't inhale," he said as he marched away, waving to no-one in particular. He looked back over his shoulder and winked.

Grinning.

SS, UK

Competition Winners

Poetry Winner

A PRISONER'S DREAM

O' How lonesome I feel,
When I'm far far from home.
When night-time comes round.
It's there that I roam.

I see all the places,
Where my feet often trod.
Past the church on the hill,
I gaze at the cross.

'What's that there?'
I say in my dream,
As hundreds of people
Stroll about Stephen's Green.

Closer and closer
I can't make it out.
Just a minute,
I see it,
It's coming to me now.

All of a sudden,
The lights flash on.
I hear 'Stand for count'
And my dreams are all gone!

I open my eyes,
As my feet hit the cold floor.
Another night over,
I'm dreaming no more.

Jazzer, USA

Health & Safety in UK Prisons

Prisoners have legal rights regarding their health and safety, including the right to receive medical care and the right to be free from ill-treatment and injury.

Individuals, whose human rights have been violated and need to bring their case to court may find it difficult following recent legislative changes and cuts to legal aid. Chris Grayling (former Secretary of State for Justice) argued “prisoners should use the prison complaints system”.

The Prison Service, the Governor or Director and all members of staff in a prison have a duty of care towards prisoners: to feel safe, to receive medical care, to be protected from bullying and harassment and to be free from inhuman treatment, such as excessive force. In reality this is not always the case and you may need to make a formal complaint.

Lodge a Complaint in Writing

Often, prisoners believe their complaints are futile, especially if an immediate response is not forthcoming. This should not deter you from lodging a complaint in writing and taking that complaint through to a resolution, i.e. with the Complaints & Requests, Independent Monitoring Board (IMB), and Prison & Probation Ombudsman. Even if your complaint goes unanswered, it will be counted somewhere and if enough complaints are received, someone will be accountable. In a recent IMB report the question of short staffing and 23 hour lockdown was addressed to the Governor and the Minister for Justice. All of IMB's information came from prisoners via visits, letters and applications submitted.

Prisoners should receive the same healthcare as anyone on the outside. On reception into prison your health should be assessed and a doctor or nurse should be on hand. If you have an addiction or mental illness you should be referred to services in the prison. Some prisons have a ‘healthcare wing’ where treatment can be received.

Most prisons have a ‘listener scheme’, which means the prisoner can talk to someone confidentially if in need of support. Sometimes it is necessary for prison staff to segregate a prisoner in order to protect their safety. Units are now called Care & Support Units (CSU). This is because they are not solely used for punishment. A prisoner can be segregated for a number of reasons:

- If you are being threatened, bullied or assaulted.
- To improve supervision while waiting for a transfer to another wing or prison.
- If you are unable to cope with normal location.
- If you have been pressured to bring in contraband i.e. drugs, mobile phones.

Self-Harming

One of the biggest challenges faced by the prison service is the problem of self-harm. If you are worried about harming yourself, tell a member of prison staff. Most prisons have helpful Chaplaincy teams who are happy to visit you, particularly if you are worried about anything. Whichever department you contact, a concern will be raised especially if you are worried about self-harm. Most prisons have a number of ‘safer cells’, constant observation cells, CS units and healthcare wings. If you are worried about your health and safety you can do a number of things:

- a) Tell someone in the prison.
- b) Put in an application to see a professional from healthcare.
- c) Contact an outside agency such as ICPO.

Shockingly, the prison population has nearly doubled in the last 20 years (a whopping rise of 91%). However, there are fewer staff looking after more prisoners. As a result the strain on the prison NHS and Prison and Probation services is enormous. Currently in many prisons, due to staff shortages and to keep prisoners safe, time out of cell is limited to an hour a day.

Prisoners are having to make sacrifices around religious services, medication, kit change, showers, telephone calls to family, association and exercise. This causes many prisoners to feel down, frustrated and even depressed. If this is the case then:

- Put in an application (app) via the complaints and request form, which can be found on every wing. Be factual and assertive and as hard as it is, keep emotion out of it, as this can be interpreted as something else (for example, anger or aggression) by the prison service and can go against you.
- If you get no response, put in another app stating you have already submitted one complaint which hasn't been answered.
- Keep copies with dates and times. Also, keep a record of any responses you are not happy with.
- If you are not happy with how your complaint is answered, you can request to meet the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB).
- If you are still not happy, you can complain directly to the Prison and Probation Ombudsman.
- Confidential complaints can be put in a sealed envelope, marked ‘Confidential’ and put in the complaints box in the usual way.

Health & Safety in UK Prisons

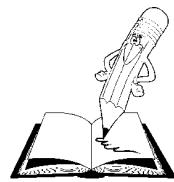
In addition to the above you can:

- Write to the MP in the jurisdiction of the prison.
- Contact the Prisoners' Advice Service (PAS) who provide free legal advice and information (Rule 39 applies).
- Further advice is available from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) who are in many of the resettlement prisons in England and Wales. If they are not, in the prison where you are, a member of staff should be able to provide the contact details for the local CAB.
- Complaints about healthcare in Prison should be made through the prison's NHS procedure unless it is one of the privately run prisons who will have their own procedure. If necessary get advice from the local Healthwatch.

Above all, remember there is help and support out there. You do not need to suffer in silence or be isolated. If you have a problem please talk to someone or contact ICPO.

Breda Power
London Prisons Case Manager

Winner of Listowel Writers' Week Competition 2015



**WINNER: Poetry
Writing in Prisons Overseas**

Slightly Less

The young boy was born on a Tuesday,
Proud parents called him Wes.
They'd have dressed him in designer clothing,
They settled for slightly less.
He was healthy, bonny and bouncing
Better than all the rest.
But without the cash or social class
His chances were slightly less.
He excelled in class and athletics,
At team games he was best.
He badly needed football boots,
He settled for slightly less.
He was full of verve and energy
He threw himself into his quest
Computers and hi-tech weren't there for him,
He had to settle for less.
He hit school like a steam train
His parents were so impressed.
His school friends got there by Volvo
He settled for slightly less.
He soon discovered females,
Perfume, snogs and breasts.
His girl wasn't the nicest
But only slightly less.
He stayed on and went to college
And soon passed all his tests,
University was calling,
He threw himself into his quest.
He passed with flying colours
He's surfing on the crest,
No second hand for his kids,
They won't get second best,
And they won't get slightly less.

Stephen Shearwood, UK



Sports Shorts

With Ian Hanna

GAA

The GAA inter-county season has drawn to a close but the All-Ireland club championships are in full swing. No change on the hurling front with Kilkenny retaining their All-Ireland title after crushing Galway in a storming second half performance. Galway won the minor title with Limerick winning the Under 21 crown.

In football the Dubs easily dethroned Kerry in a subdued final played in a continuous downpour. The Sky Blues were superior in every area of the pitch with their defence dominating the feared Kerry forward line which included the Gooch. This was Dublin's third win in five years and they will be around for the next few years. Kerry retained the minor title and Tyrone won the Under 21.

In Connacht Mayo won their fifth title in a row, in Ulster Monaghan regained their title from Donegal, in Munster Kerry won out after a reply against Cork while in Leinster, Dublin won their tenth title in eleven years.

A major fall out of the championship was the vote of no confidence by the Mayo footballers in their management team who subsequently resigned. This was followed by the Galway hurlers also publically saying they have no confidence in their management team. Over the past few years both counties have narrowly lost All-Ireland finals and maybe this is a way of trying to deal with their own frustrations and sense of loss. Some commentators are saying that the players need to look at their own performances in very tight matches as they seem to wilt when the winning line is within their grasp.

Anthony Cunningham, the Galway hurling manger has now resigned but not without some well-directed criticism of some of his senior players and how they are reacting to influences outside the Galway hurling setup. Whoever takes up the appointment will have a major struggle on his hands, what with gaining the support of all the players and getting them to win that All-Ireland title.

Apart from Ulster the inter-county football scene is becoming very predictable with only Meath and Kildare challenging Dublin in Leinster. In Munster it will either be Cork or Kerry while in Connacht there will be keen competition between Mayo and Galway, with Roscommon and Sligo offering some opposition. The ever increasing imbalance between many of the counties in terms of players numbers, infrastructure, playing standards and expectations is well documented, but many now believe that the financial clout commanded by teams like Dublin, Kerry, Cork, Tyrone, Kilkenny, Tipperary and Cork is becoming the key deciding factor. Dublin for example is sponsored by AIG who are associated with many

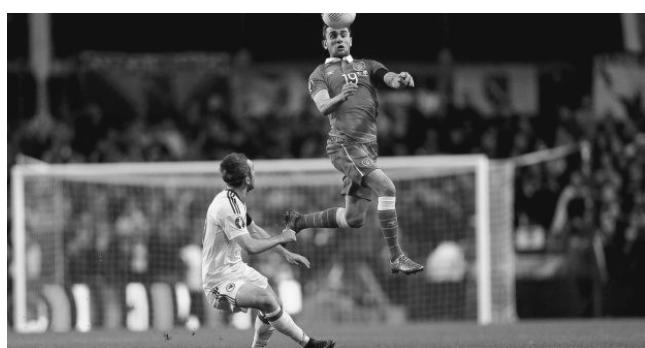
Premiership and Championship League teams.

Rugby

Rugby is settling back down again after a very successful World Cup dominated by New Zealand who became the first team to retain the trophy and also the first team to win it for the third time. Their win against Australia in the final was rugby at its best. Ireland's exit was disappointing as we had hoped to reach the semi-final stage for the first time. Argentina had other ideas and easily defeated a tired Irish team minus Paul O'Connell, Johnny Sexton and others. The gulf between the Tier 1 and Tier 2 countries has closed considerably as witnessed by Japan's well deserved victory over South Africa, Samoa's very close defeat by Scotland and Georgia making a good game of it against New Zealand. We can all look forward to this season's Six Nations Championship commencing in February 2016 where Ireland is planning to retain the trophy which they have won for the last two years. On the club scene the gulf between the Irish provinces and the main English and French clubs is becoming ever wider and it is difficult to see Munster, Leinster or Ulster winning the European Club Championship in the foreseeable future.

Soccer

The soccer team has given the country a huge boost by qualifying for the European Championship finals to be played in France in Jun 16. After a pulsating two-legged play off against Bosnia-Herzegovina to decide who will earn the right to play in France, Ireland emerged victorious on an aggregate scoreline of 3-1. In the first leg played on a foggy night in Bosnia, Ireland secured a nervy but well deserved 1-1 draw. The fog was so thick the TV commenters could not see the Irish goal being scored! The second leg was played in Dublin on a cold crisp night. Ireland was the better team winning 2-0 with a polished and commanding performance. Jon Waters (Stoke City) scored both goals, the first a rather fortuitous penalty in the first half and a well-placed shot that went in at the near



Man of the Match, Robbie Brady in action against Bosnia-Herzegovina at the Aviva Stadium

Sports

post in the second half. We now join the 24 teams that have qualified including Northern Ireland, Wales and England. The draw for the 6 groups of 4 will be made in France on 12 Dec 15 and while we cannot draw either Wales or Northern Ireland we could face up to England. The other teams to qualify through the play-offs are Hungary, Sweden and Ukraine.

By qualifying for the 2016 championships this is the first time Ireland has qualified for back to back European finals. We played in the 2012 finals held in Poland and Ukraine but failed to win even a point in any of our group matches. This time round with Martin O'Neill in charge we are expecting to get to the last 16 at least.

It is estimated that between 40,000 and 50,000 Irish soccer supporters will travel to France for the finals. This will be in addition to all those Welsh, English and Northern Irish supporters who will also be there. At the 2012 championships the Irish fans were voted the best supporters and were welcomed anywhere. This is a reputation we have developed from the World Cup "Italia 90", a reputation we are very proud of. The manager Martin O'Neill has had a fitful campaign the highlight of which was a win over the world champions Germany 1-0 in Dublin and just about managing to scrape draws at home with both Poland and Scotland. However all that matters are the results and since qualifying Irish sports fans are enjoying talking about our world beating team!

Golf

From tee to green the Irish golfers have had what many would consider a rather average year with no Major winners. Rory McIlroy lost his World No 1 spot while Darren Clarke and Padraig Harrington played well without scaling the heights associated with them over the last few years. Shane Lowry played consistently well with a fantastic win in the WGC

Bridgestone Tournament and a couple of top 10 finishes as well. He is currently third in the race for Dubai and could easily win it. Graham McDowell returned to winning ways after recent success on the US tour at an event in Mexico. This was his first win since 2012 and is a welcome return to form. Rory McIlroy is leading the race to Dubai and is very keen to win this trophy.

Boxing

In amateur boxing Ireland did very well in the recent World Championships winning gold, silver and two bronze medals. This was the first time Ireland won gold in the World Championship and this can be added to the two gold medals secured in the European Championships held in August this year. Michael Conlan won a European Championship gold last August and he now holds the world title as well. Joe Ward won silver and qualified outright for the Rio Olympics in 2016.



Olympic medallist's Paddy Barnes and Michael Conlon have booked their place at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

The success of the boxers was overshadowed by the controversial decision of Boxing Ireland Head Coach, Billy Walsh to leave the Irish boxing setup to take up an appointment with the US Women's Boxing Association. He is the mastermind behind Ireland's success in the London Olympics, the European and World Championships. Despite many public rows over why he was leaving, he left for America and Ireland has lost its most successful boxing coach. He will be hard to replace.

Continued from page 7

My Time with Prisoners by Sr. Agnes Hunt

has his own unique qualities. These qualities of personhood are invariably glossed over by the batch-processing agenda of prison. I always believed the prisoner himself must be given the time and dignity to face his own particular situation.

When I finally decided that I had given what I could actively in the Chaplaincy, my Congregation asked me to return to Ireland after thirty-five years away. However, I could not leave people I had known so well and who had shared their stories with me without contact. Some friends had long moved from Wormwood Scrubs and were well into their sentences. On reflection, I remembered my friends in the ICPO in Parnell St. in Dublin and I wondered if I could work 'from the other side of the desk' as it were. So the writing started in about the year

2000 and has continued ever since. The ICPO is now accommodated in Maynooth and I have enjoyed working with a most dedicated team; all committed to working for prisoners wherever in the world they happen to be.

My final words have to go to you, my friends in prison. Thank you for keeping in contact with me over the years. I love receiving your letters. I know that every word you write or receive is censored and yet you share so much. I appreciate your time, your stories, your cards and your gifts. Many thanks.

Sr Agnes Hunt



Your Letters



Life in Mountjoy

Hello readers.

My name is Michael. I am a life sentence prisoner repatriated from the UK. I'm here in Mountjoy 3 years now. When I first came here it was all slop out bar just one wing. However it has now been fully renovated. All four wings are brand new and most of all it is singles, no more double up (or triple up in some cases). Mountjoy is no longer the cess pit that people once knew, it is completely brand new.

The Governor of this prison is very good. His name is Governor Murphy. He believes in rehabilitation etc. He has even started the steps programme which is a brilliant course, brand new to Mountjoy. It's all about the way we think and act etc.

To those getting repatriated to Ireland, it's not as bad as some might hear. In fact, it has had a serious transition to modern life in prison. Those with tariffs, I, myself, have a tariff of 18 years. However Ireland doesn't have tariffs. I can't go into detail about the Irish system with lifers and parole, however I'm certainly happy with my transfer agreement.

Anyway, just a little about the system itself, there is no A, B, C, D Cat. It is just two types of prison, top security and low security. We have two open prisons, one in Cavan and one in Wicklow and from what I know they are fully working prisons. Most prisoners in Mountjoy are working towards open prisons. There is a system here for open prisons. It is just like England – keep your head down, do courses and be positive and then you will get a move. Most weeks in here some lads get moved. They have all sorts of sentences from 6 months to life. Most Lifers move after 10 years. It depends on behaviour and what work you have done and of course, prison reports.

Anyway, you can ask for T.R. at any stage, that's temporary release, maybe for Christmas or Holy Communion, whatever... you will get the chance depending on your prison record. You will also get the chance here to get enhanced. You will get extra time on visits and extra spending money. However, you can also spend as much private cash as you want. The gym is open 3 times a day, no list, no messing around, just go – it's no lists back here, most things are just turn up.

The visits are one full half hour visit a week and you get two six minute phone calls a week that are free. The shop is twice a week. The prison wages are €18 a week. You get your breakfast at 8 o'clock, dinner at noon and tea at 4 o'clock – seven days a week.

Lock up times are open at 10 o'clock, bang up at 12 o'clock, open at 2 o'clock, lock again at 4.30, open at 5.30 'til 7.30, seven days a week. I hope you enjoyed this, I know I did when reading articles from abroad.

Best wishes to all prisoners abroad. All the luck in your safe return home. Take care.

ML, Ireland

Crisis in UK Prisons

Although the UK Government continue to deny that the prison system is in crisis, you don't have to be an intellectual to realise the system is in extreme difficulty.

You may be aware that the prison system is being stretched to breaking point, overcrowded, under-financed and more dangerous than they've been for years. Has the system just become a revolving door policy to maximise profit – profit from failure – or just a cauldron for disaster?

Before we become institutionalised by the State, I believe the time is right to create a collective organisation; self-empowerment of prisoners. A group and movement capable of reforming the prison system for all. A vote should be put to all prisoners for the right to representation, the right to a voice, the right to a union.

I read an article where the Labour MP Rachel Maskell said:
'On leaving prison, 50,000 prisoners released didn't get support in post-release supervision.'

In addition to that I read that more than 7,000 jobs and £900 million have been cut from the correctional operating budget since 2010 as a privatisation budget sweeps the UK.

Controlled drugs are dished out like sweets and this does nothing to address a prisoner's underlying problem.

62% of male and 70% of female prisoners have mental health problems compared to the general public. Legal aid cut, it goes on....

BH, UK



Smidín Gaeilge

Filíocht

Poetry

Filíocht	Fill-ee-oft	Poetry
Dánta	Dawn-tha	Poems
Dán	Dawn	Poem
File	Fill-e	Poet
Véarsa	Vair-sa	Verse/stanza
Soinéad	Son-aid	Sonnet
Veidhlín	Vi-leen	Violin
Dall	Dowel	Blind
Radharc	Rye-ark	Sight
Taistéal	Thash-tel	Travel
Dealbh	Dea-liv	Statue

File Antaine Ó Raifteíri

Anthony Raftery (1779 - 1835), the poet was born near Kiltimagh Co. Mayo. Blinded by smallpox in childhood and illiterate, Raftery, lived by playing his fiddle and performing his songs and poems in the mansions of the Anglo-Irish gentry. A poet of the people, his work deals with events of the time and reflect the views of the people of the area. Loud in his praise of those who helped him, his sharp tongue was used against those who incurred his wrath. He is best known for "Mise Raifteirí an File", "Contae Mhaigh Eo", and "Anuach Cuain" (a lament for those drowned at that place). He also wrote "Seanchas na Sceithe."



Rugadh *Antaine Ó Raifteíri* i gContae Mhaigheo. Chaill sé a radharc nuair a bhí sé óg. Thaistéal sé ó theach go teach ag seinm an fidil agus ag casadh amhráin in larthair na hÉireann.

Dealbh de Antaine Ó Raifteíri i Kiltimagh.

Mise Raifteirí an File

Mise Raifteirí, an File	Mish-eh Raftery on filla	I am Raftery, the poet
Lán dochas is grá	Lawn tho-cosh iss graw	Full of hope and love
Le súile gan solas	Le sue-le gan solas	With eyes without light
Ciúineas gan crá	Cue-nos gone craw	Silence without torment
Dul siar ar m'aistear	Dull sheer er mashter	Going back on my journey
Le solas mo chroí	Le solas mo kree	With the light of my heart
Fann agus tuisreach	Fawn awgus thir-shock	Weak and tired
Go deireadh mo shlí	Go derr-e mo shlee	Until the end of my way
Feachanois mé	Fay-awk anish may	Look at me now
M'aghaidh le bhalla	M-eye-ag le valla	Facing the wall
Ag seinm ceoil	Egg shen-im kyole	Playing music,
Do phocaí folamh	Dho folky folav	For empty pockets

RECENT EVENTS IN IRELAND



Rugby World Cup



Ireland captain Paul O'Connell and team-mates at Dublin Airport ahead of Ireland's departure for the 2015 Rugby World Cup.

1 cent and 2 cent coins are being phased out



Irish consumers will now receive their change rounded off to nearest 5 cent.



Inside detail of the green caravan below which won in the Arts & Crafts category.



Some of the wonderful artwork submitted for the 30th Anniversary Conference competition.