



icpo news

Issue Number 69

Published by the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas

Autumn 2014

Gerry Conlon

(01 March 1954—21 June 2014)

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Gerry Conlon. Gerry spent 15 years in prison for a crime he did not commit and following his release spent many years fighting injustice on behalf of others. In this edition of *ICPO News* those who worked with Gerry in his struggle to prove his innocence and in his fight for justice for others pay tribute to him.

Breda Power, ICPO London

Writing this tribute for Gerry Conlon proved very difficult for me. Knowing Gerry on a personal level as a friend and also a fellow campaigner against injustice, I was unsure which of Gerry's characteristics to speak of. After much thought and contemplation, I decided to write my tribute about the Gerry I knew best. The Gerry that sought to overcome the painful residue of his incarceration and struggled to be free for a long time after walking out of the Old Bailey that afternoon in October 1989.

The Gerry that was often haunted by having to watch his father die in prison for something he didn't do. The Gerry that struggled to come to terms with the suffering and sorrow endured by his mother Sarah and sisters Anne and Bridie.

Yet at the same time Gerry exhibited a profound strength and inner wisdom. He had a remarkable way of perceiving what was true. In response to all the hurt he focused much of his life searching for peace and justice. With heightened awareness and the capacity to feel the feelings of others he set about encouraging change. Gerry was mindful of hope and



despair in others and endeavoured to be there. Gerry was an inspiration to us all. He left us with a legacy to strive as he did for peace and justice for all.

Nuala Kelly, Former ICPO Coordinator

I was a student in Belfast at the time of the arrest of the Guildford Four and I recall an article in the Belfast Bulletin about Gerry's Dad Guiseppe, detailing the horror of his arrest when he went to visit his son in prison. Little did I think that I would be visiting the families and the guys still in prison 10 years later after I started working for ICPO. They were to remain in prison for up to seven more years even after campaigns built momentum for their release and vindication.

Gerry and the other prisoners were very aware of the work of ordinary people and workers, community and women's groups who kept the pressure on politicians, church personnel, lawyers, media and Trade Unions in Ireland, England, the US and globally with days of action, parades, meetings, petitions, events, hearings and many other ways of raising their cases.

I find it hard to think about Gerry without thinking also of the suffering of his mother Sarah, sisters Anne and Bridie and their extended family. They had not met formally with the families of the Birmingham Six, Annie Maguire, her family and friends and so, when invited by ICPO, they came to meetings in Clonard monastery with the support of Fr Gerry Reynolds and with advice from Frs Denis Faul, Ray Murray, Sr Sarah Clarke and Pax Christi members.

Continued on Page 3

The ICPO

It is estimated that at any one time there are over 1,000 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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The ICPO is greatly indebted to its funders for their generous support.



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

A Note From the Editor

All of us here in the ICPO were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Gerry Conlon in June. Gerry was one of the Guildford Four and spent 15 years in prison for a crime he did not commit, during which time he lost his father Guisepppe. Following his release Gerry spent many years fighting for those still in prison and highlighting injustices around the world. In this edition of the newsletter ICPO staff, past and present, pay tribute to the life and work of this inspiring man.

Congratulations to L.C. and F.K., winners of the Poetry and Short Story Writing in Prisons Overseas competitions at Listowel Writers' Week 2014. Thanks to all those who entered the competition this year- the standard of entries was very high as always. Applications for next year's competition will be sent out with the ICPO Christmas supplement.

Sadly, recent reports have shown a dramatic increase in the number of suicides in UK prisons in the past 12 months. In this edition of the newsletter Barrister Richard English examines mental health provision in UK prisons, while Terry Smith kindly shares his experience volunteering with the Listener and Buddy schemes.

This edition also includes an interesting piece by Bernie Martin about the benefit of setting realistic goals and a report from Brian Hanley on his recent trip to Australia to visit ICPO clients in Sydney, Perth and Darwin.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to our letters and poetry pages. As always, we are delighted to hear from you so please keep your contributions coming in. I would also like to thank our regular contributors- Eoin O'Mahony, author of the sports update, and Caitriona ní Bhaoill, author of Smídín Gaeilge. As always, we are very grateful to them for their contributions.

This is the last newsletter I will be involved in as I am due to move on from my position with the ICPO at the end of September. It has been a pleasure working with and getting to know so many of you over the past three years. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with the ICPO and have been inspired by the commitment and kindness demonstrated by the staff and volunteers in the London and Maynooth offices. I wish to thank them all for their support and friendship during my time here.

I wish all our clients and their families the very best for the future.

Joanna Joyce
Coordinator

The campaigns started to build in earnest then and Gerry always linked in through Anne with messages of challenge and support. To visit Gerry was a pleasure; he was bright, alert and driven in his desire to prove his and his father's innocence.

As Gareth said at his funeral, the victory was ultimately his.

I find it hard to believe that it is 25 years since Gerry and the other members of the Guildford Four were released, having served a grueling 15 years in various prisons in England. Gerry went through a very tough time since his release and yet, when I met him last December at a meeting to campaign for the release of Chelsea Manning (a 22 year old US military intelligence analyst sentenced to 25 years in a US military prison for leaking information about abuses of human rights on unarmed civilians by US soldiers in Iraq, 2009), he was as happy as he had been in many years. He was eloquent, passionate and incredibly moving. The years since his release had seen a growing maturity and synthesising of multiple experiences into the clearest expression of solidarity I have heard in years.

I was privileged to have heard him that day and to have had an opportunity to catch up on all that had happened in the intervening years. What a loss to his loving family and partner and to those concerned with human rights protections. He will be sorely missed. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

Sr Agnes Hunt, ICPO Maynooth

I came to know Gerry Conlon when he was serving time at Wormwood Scrubs in the 1980s and I was acting as the R.C. Chaplain's Assistant. I saw Gerry almost daily. It is difficult to describe the prison conditions under which Gerry was incarcerated.

The 1980s followed in the wake of a fearful riot that took place on 31 August, 1979. As a result, the prison

was stripped of all privileges that the prisoners enjoyed e.g. billiard tables and dining tables were removed, lock-up time was increased, every contact with the outside world was severely censored and the atmosphere was electric on the wings creating an eerie silence which was frightening.

It was the time when Wormwood Scrubs Prison was regarded by some sections of society as the "flag-ship of the prison service". By others, in the person of an enlightened governor, it was seen as the "penal dustbin" or the "sin-bin" of society.

Gerry Conlon's daily routine was subject to the conditions outlined above. He never attempted to explain to us that he was innocent. It wasn't necessary. We got to know the qualities of the man before us. Gerry was often frustrated at not being able to access easily the professional help he needed. There was no mention of his case in the media for many years. There was no one listening.

I cannot describe what it was like when Gerry's father, Guiseppe, came to be locked up with his son in the lifers' wing. Guiseppe was often too weak to leave his cell or walk to the prison hospital for treatment. Gerry could only look on.

What could we, chaplains, do in such a situation? Simply be available: to make phone calls to members of the Conlon family and relay a message, to arrange visits at different times from Bishop Edward Daly and Cardinal Cathal Daly to visit Gerry and friends. These visitors would bring news from home as well as shedding a ray of hope on what was then a hopeless situation. We would also visit Cardinal Basil Hume and his Secretary for an update on the progress of an appeal. Gerry was always appreciative of our efforts.

It is not possible for me to separate Gerry's plight from that of his father. When Guiseppe was admitted to Hammersmith Hospital next-door to

Wormwood Scrubs, Gerry would have to be escorted through a cordon of grim-faced police officers all the way to his dying father's bedside. I braved the cordon one day a few days before Guiseppe passed away. With the security presence, it was difficult to speak. Yet, Guiseppe raised his oxygen mask and said, "*I'm going to my grave an innocent man*". Gerry knew that this was true. For Gerry, the fight for justice had to go on but henceforth with added assistance from on high.

Michael Farrell, Solicitor

I represented Gerry Conlon in a number of libel cases after he was released and when elements in the right-wing media were still trying to suggest that the Guildford Four and the other victims of miscarriages of justice were really guilty. Gerry was deeply troubled and was battling with his own demons at the time - which wasn't helped by this persistent smear campaign - but no matter how difficult things were for him personally, he was always willing to fight for those who were still wrongly imprisoned.

A group of us from the ICPO and the Birmingham Six campaign went to an international human rights conference in Denmark in 1990 and Gerry was to be the key speaker at a big press conference. He went out on the town the night before, met up with some young Irish building workers and disappeared. In the morning there was no sign of him and we were all panicking. Then he rang the hotel. He had woken up with a severe hangover in an anonymous flat and had no idea where he was or even if he was in Denmark at all. His pals from the night before had gone out to work, leaving no instructions. But however he did it, Gerry turned up an hour later, a bit the worse for wear but just in time for the press conference where he made a powerful impression on the Danish and international press.

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?

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 Community Welfare 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 for more information on this.

Insurance Matters

When a family member returns to your home after his time in prison, it is very important to check that your insurance policies don't need to be changed to reflect this. Some policies (e.g. home and motor insurance) 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.

Family Day

An ICPO Family Information Day was held in Dublin in September. There was a great turn-out for this event and we were delighted to have three wonderful speakers on the day- Lauren O'Malley from NIACRO, Sarah Owen from Crosscare Migrant Project, and Bishop Eamonn Walsh, Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin.

Suggestions

This page is for you - the families. If you have any suggestions that you think might benefit other families - be it about visits, or maintaining contact with a loved one etc., please do share them with us and we will pass it along to all our other families here.

Brian Hanley
ICPO Maynooth

New ICPO Website Launched

The ICPO Maynooth office has launched a new website which contains useful information for prisoners, including factsheets on repatriation, deportation and preparing for release. The website also includes a section for families, with advice on planning a prison visit and stories from those with a loved one in prison overseas. Details of future family events will be posted in this section of the website. We would be delighted to receive your feedback on the website and if there is anything you would like to see added there please contact the Maynooth office to let us know. Please visit the new website at:

www.icpo.ie

Visit to Australia

In June I travelled to Australia to visit a number of ICPO clients and to meet the organisations and people who currently provide assistance to Irish prisoners and also those who might be willing to do so in the future. I was fortunate enough to receive funding for the trip from the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

My trip took me to Perth, Darwin, Sydney and Canberra. I met ten Irish men and women in detention, as well as representatives of local Irish welfare bureaus, diplomatic officials from the Embassy, Consulate and Honorary Consulate, prison chaplains and staff from various organisations working with prisoners throughout Australia.

The conditions of most of the prisons were comparable with what I've seen in other countries. None of the people I met complained about overcrowding or the food and few had any issues as regards access to exercise and education. That being said, I did encounter a number of issues that made things more challenging for prisoners and prison visitors alike. I have never encountered a system where the prisoners are moved with such frequency. Only one of the ten people I visited were in the same prison two weeks before I left Ireland to when I actually met them. This can make it difficult for people to settle into new routines and to establish themselves. It creates a further difficulty for those in Ireland wishing to communicate with them such as family members and the ICPO. Therefore, it is very important to notify family, ICPO or the Irish Embassy or Consulate if you are moved to another prison.

Another obvious difficulty in terms of maintaining contact with loved ones is the time difference and the cost of phone calls. Whilst it does take longer to send and receive messages, a letter is a lot cheaper and provides a supportive keepsake to be read and re-read whenever you need it. Many prisons don't permit newsletters (including the ICPO one) without



specific permission from prison authorities so this is something to keep an eye on also.

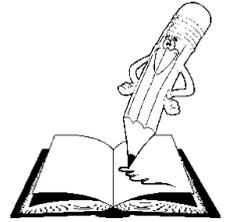
The number of Irish prisoners in Australia far exceeds previous ICPO figures. In January of this year the number of ICPO clients in Australia was four. However, we have since learned that in New South Wales alone, there are between twenty and thirty Irish-born inmates. Similarly, higher numbers are expected to be present in Western Australia owing to the large emigrant population now working there.

Another feature of the Australian system is the lengthy period of time prisoners spend waiting to go to trial. Interim court hearings are invariably done via video-link and we have heard complaints about the quality of these links on occasion. If you do experience such problems, it is vital you make your legal representative aware of these difficulties. Due process requires you to be able to keep up with proceedings and to know what is being discussed by the judge and your legal representatives.

I close by offering my sincere thanks to all those who took the time to meet with me whilst I was there. In particular, the ICPO clients who gave generously of their time and afforded me a warm welcome wherever I went.

Brian Hanley
ICPO Maynooth

Winner of Listowel Writers' Week Competition 2014



 **WINNER: Poetry**
Writing in Prisons Overseas

Potential

Why do so few see my true potential?

It feels as if I am continually fighting a losing battle. Fighting to be recognised for all I can be.

Fighting to be acknowledged for all I can offer. Fighting for my true place within society.

Why do people not see? Why are they blinded to reality?

Why do they insist on categorising me with an old-fashioned label? A label of limitations?

Can they truly not see? Or is it merely that they Choose not to see?

Do they choose to be blind in order to lessen their own insecurities? Their own feelings of worthlessness?

Are they blind to my potential purely through necessity? They need to be blind to their own lack of potential?

Is that really the state of the world I now exist within? A world in which each entity is permitted to be what the majority dictate? Is that why I am labelled as I am?!

I know I am versatile. I know I can be a tap shoe or a hat. A pen, pot or a flower vase. A goal post.

A goal!!!

I am a drum. A rattle. A fairy table. A teddy bear chair.

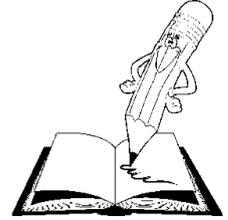
I am a soldier's canteen and a queen's chalice. Lost treasure. Found alien artefact.

I have such incredible potential. Such ability to raise a smile. To incite imaginations. And yet ...

And yet you call me a plastic beaker!!

L.C., UK

Winner of Listowel Writers' Week Competition 2014



**WINNER: Short Story
Writing in Prisons Overseas**

Baby Agnes

'Mum, why do you have a big belly?' Daniel asked his mother as he wrapped his little arms around her legs and tried to look over her bump.

'I've a big belly because there's a little person inside of me,' Daniel's mother told him as she stroked his hair.

'A little person's inside of you?' Daniel asked quite surprised. 'Wow, how did the little person get inside your belly mum, did you eat him?'

Daniel's mother laughed as she moved away from him and walked into the sitting room. There she lowered herself onto the sofa and kicked off her slippers. She raised her feet and placed them on the footrest. Young Daniel sat at his mother's side and she wrapped an arm around her son, pulling him close to her. Daniel always felt happy and safe when he was in his mother's arms. He rested his head on her breast and placed his small hand on top of her belly.

'Did you eat the little person, Mum?' Daniel asked again.

'No, I didn't eat a little person silly,' his mother said in her soft loving voice. 'The little person in my belly is a baby.'

'A baby?' Daniel asked, astonished.

'Yes, a baby,' his mother confirmed.

'How did a baby get into your belly?' Daniel asked.

'Why are you asking so many questions?' Daniel's mother asked him.

'Because I don't know how a baby got into your belly and if there's a baby in your belly how does it get out?' Daniel asked puzzled.

'Well the baby will come out of my belly when he or she is ready to come out and not before,' Daniel's mother told him.

'What if the baby doesn't want to come out?' Daniel asked. 'What if the baby wants to stay in

your belly?' Daniel persisted.

'Well, he or she won't want to stay in my belly because the baby will want to meet you and me and your father. Now why are you asking all of these questions?' Daniel's mother said to him.

'I want to know about the baby,' Daniel told her.

'Come on, you can help me make the tea before your father comes home. First of all, please put some more coal onto the fire then wash your hands for tea,' Daniel's mother asked him.

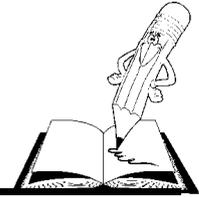
A few evenings later, young Daniel was awoken from his sleep with cries of pain in the family home. He lay awake in the darkness as he heard what sounded like painful screams from his mother. A tear ran down his cheeks and onto his pillow. He then heard the sound of a baby crying.

In the morning young Daniel got out of bed and stepped into the sitting room. He was met by his Aunt Catherine. He loved this woman; she was always so kind to him and Daniel thought that she spoke funny as she had a strong Donegal accent. Aunt Catherine told him that during the night the cries of his mother were due to the arrival of Baby Agnes.

Things changed in the family home after the arrival of Baby Agnes. Daniel was awoken most nights with the sound of the baby crying. During the day, he was allowed to hold Baby Agnes while he sat on the sofa beside the fire place whilst listening to the radio. He thought that his sister was the most beautiful baby in the world. When it was time for bed, he would kiss his sister on the head and hold her hand telling her that when she was big enough he would take her to play football with him. He told everyone that his sister smiled at him when he told her this.

Continued on next page

Selection of Entries for Listowel Writers' Week Competition 2014



Baby Agnes

Continued



Over the next few days, Daniel would find his mother and father were frequently sad. He would observe his mother as she held Baby Agnes and for

no reason at all she would begin to sob.

Agnes did not seem to cry so often now. She was quiet and asleep most of the time and Daniel wasn't permitted to hold her as often.

On the Thursday evening prior to going to bed Daniel went to see his little sister. He stretched on his tip toes, placing his hands on the side of her cot and peering over it. Agnes turned her little head to look at her brother. She moved her hand towards him and Daniel moved his hand towards her hand. Agnes's hand was open and Daniel placed his finger into it. Agnes's fingers closed over Daniel's finger, holding it tightly. She looked at her big brother in the eyes and he smiled lovingly at his four week old sister. Agnes released her grip on Daniel's finger but continued to look at him. Daniel told his sister that he would see her tomorrow.

After school the following day, Daniel played football with his friends. When the football game was over Daniel collected his jumper, which had been used as a goal post. He placed the football under his arm and walked out of the park. He stood at the side of the road as a horse and cart passed by, then, when the road was clear, he sprinted over to the other side. Daniel lived in an old tenement building with many flights of stairs. He began to climb the stairs and as he reached the final flight of steps, the front door of the flat opened. He looked up to see his father with tears in his red eyes carrying a little white box.

F.K., UK

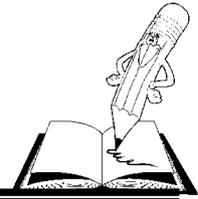


I'd Won

I saw him again today
With his only mate,
Shouting at the first year kids;
His language full of hate.
And then I saw him notice me,
Like a sniper zooming in,
But today would be different
For today I would win.
He lumbered over with clenched fists,
His mate trailed behind;
But today I wasn't trembling
For courage I did find.
He grabbed me by the collar
And threw me against a wall,
But today was very different-
Because today I didn't fall.
I looked into his beady eyes
And told him to his face,
'I forgive all you've done to me';
As my heart began to race.
His mate started running
When the bully lowered his head,
So I walked away smiling
Because no blood had been shed.
And what will tomorrow bring
When I walk through the gate?
Will the bully rage again?
His life so full of hate.
I do not know, I do not care,
I have no need to run,
I'll walk in with head held high
Knowing that I'd won.

Chris Foley

Selection of Entries for Listowel Writers' Week Competition 2014



Bah, Bah, Bah

Bah, Bah, Bah,
Goes the little sheep,
I count them jumping fences,
I can't sleep.

I squeeze my eyes real tense,
As one little sheep won't jump the fence,
I sway my head from side to side,
Hoping to persuade the sheep to dive.

Bah, Bah, Bah,
Goes the little sheep,
I count sheep running past,
I still can't sleep.

My mouth opens wide. 'Aghast',
One little sheep runs way too fast,
I sway my head from side to side,
Trying to force the sheep to slow or collide.

Bah, Bah, Bah,
Goes the little sheep,
I count them marching,
Again I can't sleep.

I start to laugh,
That stubborn sheep's,
Now having a bath.

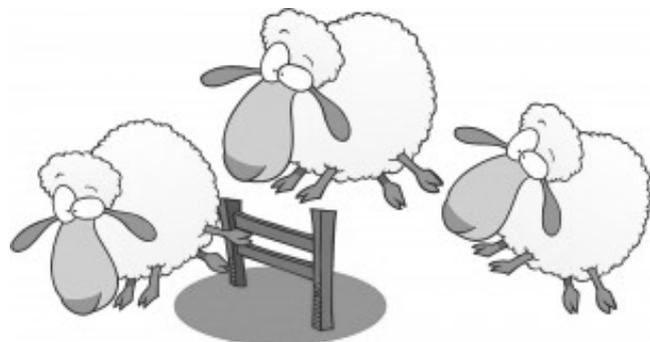
Bah, Bah, Bah,
Goes the little sheep,
I was dreaming,
What a great sleep!

S.W., UK

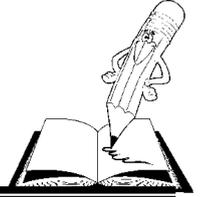
Lord of Sins

Sentenced on the 10th June
Not before the time of noon
I stood before the judge and said
I'm guilty your honour then he read
IPP now take him down
As he looked his face a frown
So off I went with the sound of keys
My head was gone not at ease
Off to prison here I go
Life's a bitch I know I know
Friends and family left behind
Suicide playing on my mind
But then I met a priest one day
Showed me a path to walk he said
Look after yourself and those around
Follow the 10 commandments and you'll be sound
So 4 long years has passed me by
1 more to go big sigh big sigh
So time to go back to family and friends
This is where my prison ends.

S.D., UK



Selection of Entries for Listowel Writers' Week Competition 2014



The Story of a Late Shift and the

It was Christmas Eve and all the family sat around the fire telling ghost stories. 'Come on Grandad, you must know a ghost story', prompted my grandchildren. 'Well there was one, it was some time ago, it was in the December of 1969. I was working on the railways as a signal engineer and I had just been told I would be working the late shift on Christmas Eve. No one ever liked working on a Christmas Eve and come to that nor did I, but I needed the overtime as I was getting married the following year and the money would come in very handy, so I could see no real problem in working over Christmas.

It was not long before Christmas rolled around and I was on stand-by at the signal engineers workshops in Stanmore. Helping me that night was a young apprentice engineer by the name of Stan Edwards and like most 17 year olds of that time, his mind was always on girls and fast cars, not always in that order. During the shift we were called out to a small station which had the reputation of being haunted, well at least the signal box was or so they said. The signal box was only manned during the day which meant we would have to call at the station masters office to pick-up the key. The snow had started to fall as we walked along the platform and the cold wind cut like a knife, but all Stan kept on about was 'was the station really haunted?' Well I could not miss the chance of winding Stan up. 'Of course it was', I told him, 'we are bound to see a ghost, everybody does.' I watched Stan's face turn white. In fact it was only legend and no more than that and it goes without saying no one had ever seen a thing.

We picked up the key and made our way over to the signal box which was a short distance from the station. It was a cold walk across the sidings but we were soon in the warmth of the signal box as Patrick, the signal man, had left the fire in the stove burning and a note in the log-book told us

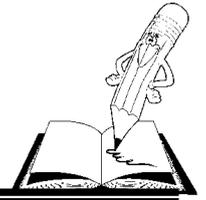
just what was wrong. The note read, 'The up sidings signal keeps flashing'. I could see the signal from where I was standing, the red light was flickering away in the dark.

Setting Stan some service work in the signal box I set out across the tracks to where the repeater box was that controlled the signal. It did not take me long to find the fault, the old cable which ran from the signal box to the repeater had broken down and needed replacing. Seeing as it was a short distance from the repeater to the box I thought I could change the cable without the help of Stan.

It had started to snow even harder by the time I started to walk back to the repeater box. I was somewhat happy with myself for rigging up a simple system for running off a new cable from a 300 yard drum by placing a broom handle through the middle of the drum and then balancing it between two chairs which would allow me to tape the new cable to the old one. By doing so I could pull the new cable through the conduit to the repeater where I was working. 'Simple', I thought, brushing the snow off my tool box.

All seemed to go well and to plan and it was not until the last few feet that the cable became hard to pull and it was becoming hard to pull anymore cable through. With snow falling even harder, I thought it would not hurt to give the cable a short sharp tug and it worked, suddenly the cable came free and I could pull the last few feet through that I needed to complete the connections. In fact, I was on the last four wires to connect when Stan passed where I was working like a bat out of hell. 'Now what's wrong', I thought, but there was nothing I could do but watch Stan vanish into a screen of falling snow. I worked as fast as I could to complete wiring up the repeater and I ran back to the signal box to complete the connections that would bring the signals back on line.

Selection of Entries for Listowel Writers' Week Competition 2014



Signal Box at Little Binging

When I arrived back at the signal box, I found that my sharp pull had dislodged the cable drum and it had rolled over and lodged itself into the old signal frame work which had once controlled all the old signal arms and points. Not only had it rolled into the old frame work but it had pushed free one of the old levers and it had moved over under its own weight and the metal rim of the drum was shorting out an open junction box and it was sparking down to earth. I quickly removed the cable drum to a safe place and closed the junction box lid. It did not take long to clear up the chairs and complete the termination of the new cable. I plugged my telephone handset into the mainframe and called the main signal box at Much Bending in the Marsh to let them know that the work was complete and normal work could start once more.

I removed my telephone but not until I had asked if they had seen Stan but they had not, which worried me a bit. The next thing I did was to push the old arm back into place and replace the safe locking bar which stopped any of the levers from moving. I also put a new pad lock to make sure they would not be able to move again. I really had nothing to worry about, for as I closed the lower door and turned the key to lock the door, Stan walked up the path looking a little sheepish.

'Come, let's go upstairs and have a cup of tea, I'm bloody cold' I said. We were back in the warm box in moments and while I made the tea Stan started to explain what had taken place and which had spooked him so badly. He went on to say that while he was working changing bulbs, the old bell on the wall rang without warning. I looked up to see he was pointing to the old dome bell which had been left in place and which had been out of service since the new system had been installed. 'Not only that,' he went on to say, 'the old train on line telegraph moved and to really put the topping on it all, one of the large levers

moved down into the position for danger, that was it, I was not hanging around in a place that was haunted'. I had to smile for now it was my turn to feel sheepish. 'Look Stan, it was not a ghost it was me. Sorry mate to put the wind up you', and I explained just what had taken place - that my pulling on the jammed cable drum had freed the lever which allowed it to move on its own. Not only that, the rim of the cable drum had shorted out the open junction box which had made all the old equipment which dated back to the age of steam railways jump back into action.

We both ended up in fits of laughter as we sat in front of the open stove, drinking our tea. By the time I had cleared up, Stan finished replacing the last of the bulbs and I handed him the new padlock key to place in the key safe. I made a note in the log in regard to what work had taken place. I left out the part about Stan's fast exit out of the signal box. Just as we stepped out of the box, the Church bells were striking midnight, we both wished each other a merry Christmas and walked back up the platform towards the station's car park, where our van was parked. Somehow, we didn't mind about the falling snow or the bitter wind that was blowing even harder, we just felt good inside. It was Christmas and we felt like kids again as we kicked up the snow as we walked and talked about the night's events. We did have a few more calls that night but no ghosts.

You see there was one thing I never did tell Stan - you see the bell that had rang that night was no longer connected. The signal cable had been cut off from the junction box and rolled up and hung on a hook high in the motor room, it was covered by years and years of dust, spider's webs and a label dated 1923. There was no way the bell could have rung that night. I never did tell Stan, but what would you have done in my place?

F.C.G., UK

Take Care of Yourself

Many prisoners overseas face significant difficulties and experience feelings of isolation and anxiety. Figures released by the UK Ministry of Justice show a 69% rise in suicides in prisons throughout England and Wales. According to these figures, in the 12 months to March 2014 the number of self-inflicted deaths in prisons rose by 36 to 88, the highest level since 2005. The ICPO is extremely concerned by this and we would ask anyone who is having difficulty coping to please tell someone. Reach out to your family and friends within the prison or speak to someone in the medical or chaplaincy departments. Most importantly, please remember that you are not alone and that there are people here to help and support you.

If you need help or support please contact us at ICPO, Columba Centre, Maynooth, Co. Kildare or ICPO, 50-52 Camden Square, London NW1 9XB.

There are other organisations that can also assist you if you're suffering from anxiety or depression.

Samaritans provide support in almost every prison in the UK. Their services include:

1. *Listener Schemes* - Samaritan volunteers select and train prisoners to offer confidential emotional support to their fellow inmates.
2. *Telephone Support* - All prisons should have direct lines to a local branch or the national number.
3. *Writing a Letter* - Where prisoners find it difficult to use the telephone or are uncomfortable talking face to face with Listeners or Samaritans, they can write a letter. Samaritans offers a freepost service, so there is no need to buy a stamp. Write to them at: Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK, Chris, PO Box 9090, Stirling, FK8 2SA.

Advice from a Prison Listener

To All ICPO Readers,

Hello my friends, my name is Terry and I'm a lifer prisoner. When I first came into prison I lost everything. I had no contact with my family except one sister by letter. What did I expect I let them down, I also let myself down.

I never got many letters and I never got visits because the prison I was in was such a long way from home. I was down, felt lonely and slowly the depression was setting in. Being lonely, down and depressed is not a nice place to be. It's hard to ask for help because you feel no one wants to know or cares.

Fear not, there are people all round you that are willing to listen and help you at any time. I joined the Listener group, the Buddys and I'm a mentor. Every day I see prisoners like myself. I listen to them and ask 'how can I help?'. Sometimes I walk around the wing and I talk to lads that don't have many friends and before I know it that lad is thanking me for having a chat. I don't want thanks, I want lads to feel they can talk to a listener and ask for help, without feeling judged. Listeners are not there to judge you or to talk about you even to officers! We sign a compact that says we will not share any information that we speak of with clients and we uphold that compact.

So please note we are there to help you as much as we can and I urge you please do ask for help. If not from a listener then please do ask an officer, a Buddy, a Mentor, a friend, a member of the chaplaincy, a medical nurse- one of us will listen or help. Speaking to someone is a step forward, take that step now and help yourself. Please.

Yours sincerely,
Terry Smith
Prison Listener

Mental Health in UK Prisons

"Prisoners are entitled to the same level of health care as that provided in society at large. Those who are sick, addicted, mentally ill or disabled should be treated... to the same standards demanded within the National Health Service." (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 1996).

While it is generally acknowledged that health care in prisons has improved, a 2008 report found that while spending on mental health provision in prisons was higher per head, than in the general population, it was only about a third of what was needed to provide an equivalent standard of care.¹

A person with a mental health problem is more likely to be in prison than a person who is well. According to the Prison Reform Trust 26% of women and 16% of men, received treatment for their mental health in the year before they were imprisoned. Up to 90% of prisoners have some form of mental health problem², a large number suffer from a psychotic disorder, 14% of female and 7% of male prisoners, a rate which is 23 and 14 times that of the general population. Rates for personality disorder, depression and substance dependency are similarly much higher in prisons than outside.

According to a study published in *The Lancet* 5 - 6% of male inmates, 20 - 24% of female prisoners self harm every year. There is a clear link between self-harm and suicide where the rates remain high; five times higher amongst male prisoners and 20 times higher in women's prisons than in the general population³.

In 2013, 63% of those sentenced to serve a sentence for public protection (IPP) had served their tariff but remained in prison⁴. Rates of mental illness are higher amongst IPP prisoners; 10% are receiving mental health treatment while 20% are on medication for their mental health. There is evidence that IPP prisoners with mental health problems may be denied access to programmes because they are considered unsuitable⁵.

In 2009 Lord Bradley published his report, reviewing the support offered to people with mental health problems and learning difficulties who were in the criminal justice system. In June 2014 the Centre for Mental Health published *The Bradley Report, five years on*. The introduction of mental health teams to provide specialist, secondary care in prisons represents progress. Initial screening on reception needs to be improved and, many of those suffering from common mental health problems and who would have received help from primary care outside prison, may not receive sufficient timely support. Although there have been improvements these are patchy and there

remains no national plan for prison mental health services.

Practical Help

1. Prisoners who were on a Care Programme Approach before being sent to prison should tell prison staff so that care can be provided in prison.
2. Prisoners can ask to see a doctor by making a 'general application'.
3. Help with stress, anxiety, self-harm and suicidal thoughts amongst other things may be available from the 'in reach team'; this will be arranged by the doctor.
4. A doctor specialising in mental health, a psychiatrist, will visit the prison once a week.
5. Prisoners who are too unwell to be in prison may be transferred to hospital.

A (Very) Brief Introduction to the Mental Health Act

Part Three of the Mental Health Act 2003 applies to those accused or convicted of a criminal offence, and who are or may be suffering from a mental disorder which means a disorder or disability of the mind.

Sections 35 and 36 allow the court to send an unconvicted prisoner to a psychiatric hospital for reports and treatment for not more than three months per section. Reports from a psychiatrist are required before this can be done.

Section 37 deals with those convicted of an imprisonable offence. Where the court is satisfied the Defendant suffers from a mental disorder of a "nature or degree", which means it appropriate for him or her to be sent to hospital for treatment, as opposed to any other type of disposal, a "hospital order" can be made. If it is combined with a "restriction order", section 41, release from hospital will only be allowed by a mental health tribunal or the Secretary of State.

Section 45A is rarely used. It is known as a hybrid order and allows the court to impose a hospital order and a prison sentence. The Defendant goes to hospital and when/if well enough to be released from hospital is transferred to prison to serve the rest of the sentence. The sentence begins when passed by the court, not when returned to prison.

Sections 47, 48 and 49. Transfers to hospital. Where a prisoner, who need not be convicted, is so unwell they can be transferred to a psychiatric hospital for treatment.

Richard English

¹ *Short Changed, spending on prison mental health care*; Centre for Mental Health, 2008

² *Mental Health care and the criminal justice system*; Centre for Mental Health, 2011

³ Hawton et al, *Self-harm in prisons in England and Wales*, *The Lancet* Vol 383 page 1147; 29 March 2014

⁴ Prison Reform Trust

⁵ *Short Changed*, Centre for Mental Health, 2008

Update from ICPO London Office

The poet John Keats called Autumn the season of mist and mellow fruitfulness. Well, it's been a wonderful summer, weather-wise, so let's hope now for some of that mellow fruitfulness!

The volume of work here in the London office continues to grow! The daily haul of casework, letters and phonecalls keeps everyone busy. **Breda Power** looks after the London prisons while her sister, **Lizzie**, our main caseworker, deals with the follow-up casework resulting from visits nationwide. We are ably helped by **Russ Harland**, and volunteer helpers **Sr Moira Keane** and **Sr Marie Power**. Without their help life would be even more hectic here!

Our prison visitors' team comprising **Kathy Walsh** (Holloway), **Sr Agnes Miller** (Bronzefield), and **Sara Thompson** (Send), looks after the prisons in the Greater London area, while **Sr Maureen McNally** (Guys Marsh), **Jayne O'Connor** (Channings Wood, Exeter and Dartmoor), and **Sally Murphy** (Altcourse, Liverpool, Kirkham, Kennet and Styal), all work in the regions. **Fr Gerry McFlynn** also visits prisons in those areas not covered by the volunteers. In addition, **Noeleen Curran** from the Irish Embassy, also visits prisoners throughout the country and liaises with our office in respect of follow-up casework. **Declan Ganly**, our IT expert, ensures that the whole ICPO project runs smoothly and efficiently. Because we have such a small team of workers and volunteers, answering letters and taking phone calls can be very time-consuming. So, again, we would ask you to be patient with us and not expect a quick response to letters, etc.

Repatriation

This continues to move at a very slow pace. The criteria are still the same: strong family ties (parents, spouses and children) all resident in Ireland. Moreover, a straightforward application can take between 18 months and 2 years to process. As for **Transfers to Northern Ireland**, the three prisons there, Maghaberry, Magilligan and Hydebank (Female and YOI), are nearly always full with priority given to prisoners who have current addresses in Northern Ireland.

Deportation and TERS

Irish prisoners CANNOT BE DEPORTED because of a POLITICAL agreement between the British and Irish governments dating back to February 2007. Furthermore, as a consequence of that agreement, Irish prisoners cannot benefit from TERS (Tariff Expiry and Release Scheme).

Some Reflections:

The prison situation in England and Wales continues to cause concern. The cuts imposed by government on the Prison Service are having a detrimental effect on the quality of service and even the safety of prisoners and staff in many establishments. Travelling around the country I'm constantly struck by the low morale among officers, chaplains and other staff caused by these cuts and the serious reduction in the staff-prisoner ratio. While the good news is that crime is down by 60% in the UK

since 1995, the bad news is that the prison population has risen 68% in the same period.

This continuing rise in the prison population is mainly being driven by an 11% increase in remand prisoners, but those sentenced are also facing longer terms. The number of sex offenders is now nearly 11,000, with eight designated prisons holding the majority of them. Also, there are more than 5,000 prisoners serving the now abolished indeterminate sentence for public protection (IPP), of whom 70% have already passed their "tariff" date!

A rising tide of violence inside prisons across England and Wales has been revealed by official figures showing serious assaults soaring by 30%, three murders in the past 12 months and a 69% rise in suicides to the highest level for nine years. Prison governors have repeatedly warned that prisons have been struggling to cope with a record population of more than 85,000 in increasingly crowded conditions while implementing budget cuts of up to 24% over the past three years. It would appear that some are losing the fight, with nearly a quarter of the 126 prisons officially given poor performance ratings.

Probation

These prison ratings contrast sharply with those for the performance of the 35 probation trusts across England and Wales, which were all rated "good or exceptional" in their last year of operation. However, these were all abolished in June past and now 70% of their workload is to transfer to community and rehabilitation companies, many of them privately run.

There is some evidence that the whole **privatisation programme** is running into trouble because some of the companies involved are struggling to make a profit. Recently, the contractor A4e withdrew from a £17m deal to educate and train prisoners in 12 London boroughs because the project did not yield sufficient profits!

Tough on Crime

I think it was Tony Blair who first coined the phrase "tough on crime". We need to be tough on crime, he said, and tough on the causes of crime. Tough was the watchword. Since his time in office we have had tough policing, tough sentences from tough judges working to tough rules rushed through parliament by successive home secretaries. And with a General Election looming in May 2015, one can expect to hear a lot more from politicians about being "tough".

Sadly, there has been an increase in the incidences of **self-harm and suicide** as a direct result of this tough approach to crime and punishment. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, Nick Hardwick, said recently that overcrowding and staff shortages have become so acute that ever more inmates are attempting suicide. It will be interesting to see how these (and other) issues are dealt with in the coming months.

Fr Gerry McFlynn

Gerry McFlynn, ICPO London

In the history of the British Criminal Justice system, few people can be said to have been more of an agent for change than the late Gerry Conlon. The story of his arrest, interrogation, torture and forced confession at the hands of the police and his subsequent ill-treatment over many years in high security prisons before eventual acquittal, are all well known. What is not so well known, perhaps, is that Gerry Conlon served two life sentences, the second of which commenced on the day he walked "free" from prison.

The truth is that all these traumatic experiences combined to ensure that Gerry would never be able to lead a normal life. I only met with Gerry Conlon once, when the ICPO invited him to present a special award to his solicitor, Gareth Peirce, at our AGM some years ago. I remember the anger and emotion in his voice as he spoke about the difference her coming into his life made and the work she had to do to get him released. He was warm and generous in his praise of all she had done for him and of what she was now doing on behalf of Muslim prisoners - the "new Irish" in the British Criminal Justice system.

In the years following his release, while battling depression and the demons of his prison experience, Gerry proved himself to be a tireless campaigner for the falsely accused including aboriginal people in Australia, the Guantanamo inmates and those wrongly accused in US prisons. He also campaigned against the death penalty, presenting himself as living proof of the need for its abolition. He never forgot that the trial judge had told him that he would have had him hanged if that power had been available to him.

It required enormous courage and strength of character to battle through such a life but Gerry Conlon had these qualities in abundance even though the struggle cost him dearly. In

Biblical parlance, it is given to those who suffer in the cause of right to have their names writ large in the Book of Life, while those responsible for their suffering scarcely merit a footnote. Gerry Conlon's name is now writ large in that Book for all time.

Russel Harland, ICPO London

Having moved to London from Belfast over three years ago, I started working with the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas. You could say Gerry Conlon was a name already firmly ensconced in my mind. For obvious reasons. Gerry Conlon is the ultimate symbol of resistance. The personified rejection of the injustices enforced upon people of the six counties and further afield. Yet perhaps that's just an abstraction.

Our work with the ICPO has given us an awareness of what prisoners go through. We get to witness first-hand the conditions in which they exist. We get to hear their stories and are trusted with their deep anxieties and regrets. They are people to us.

I was fortunate enough to be introduced to Gerry by a colleague at a fundraising event for victims of torture in the London Irish Centre. However it was more like a reunion. A who's who of the Irish innocent and those who fought for their release. It was an enlightening experience. I watched figments of an adolescent imagination become real people regaling in joyous camaraderie. Gerry of course was in the midst, with his energy, wit and sense of the unfinished. I guess in another time of my life I would have been awestruck. But when you've become privy to the intimate secrets of those who spend time in prison you understand it's no Hollywood movie, particularly I guess for the innocent.

I'm thankful I got to meet Gerry and learn he was obviously more than a representation, he was a real person. Which has only enhanced his standing in my eyes as an inspirational figure.



In memory of Gerry Conlon

Tortured innocent people never confess to crimes
It never rains but it pours,
Santa Claus is real
The Pope's a **protestant**
The titanic couldn't sink
The world's **flat** and in the middle of the universe
Elvis is alive and well
Only the guilty confess to crimes

Tortured innocent people **never** confess to crimes
I shot the Kennedy's, and JR, Rasputin, oh and MLK, and Bob Ouko, it was me
Black people are inferior
The holocaust never happened
There were wmd's in Iraq, never in Cuba
Evolution is a myth
America is the land of the free,
The streets of London are paved with gold
Only the **guilty** confess to crimes

Tortured innocent people never confess to crimes
Stand up and **fight** the liars and the coverers,
the torturers and the hiders,
the bullies and their helpers,
the cheats and the real evil doers
Shame the wrongdoers and the story mongers
Let go of the **secrets** and the lies,
accept the bitter truth
It will set you innocent and free - like Gerry Conlon.

Declan Ganly
ICPO London

Setting Goals

Believe
in yourself
**YOU ARE Braver
THAN YOU
Believe
Stronger
THAN YOU
SEEM AND
Smarter
THAN YOU
THINK**

I want to write about setting goals, not the dramatic Dempsey or Messi goals from the World Cup but personal goals. Goals which will ultimately make you feel better. This is going to take a bit of work on your part and it is totally up to you whether you will accomplish them or not, but if you do see it through it will be an achievement and

something positive in your life.

I myself have just started on this journey and my two goals are fairly simple:

1. To take a walk every day;
2. To write my journal every day.

Taking a walk every day will help with my sore knee. I have recently been diagnosed with arthritis and exercise helps with the mobility of the joint. It will also help me shed a few pounds which will be an added bonus. This everyday goal will help with the bigger goal - to make my knee feel better and to feel healthier and fitter myself.

I have kept a journal for many years. I try to write it every day but frequently I fall behind and have to write up for several days gone by. This is not the way to keep a journal, you must write every day when it is fresh in your mind. A lady from my home town has kept a journal for all of 50 years. I recently asked her about them and if she had kept them all, she laughingly told me that she had to destroy some of them because they held information that she would not want people to see after she died.

Journaling has a positive impact on your mental well-being; writing about anger, sadness and emotional feelings makes them less intensive.

When your thoughts and feelings are all jumbled up, sitting down to write about them helps to sort them out. Writing honestly about yourself every day will help you know yourself better and be aware of what makes you feel happy or what makes you feel down. If you decide your goal is to journal every day then start with what is manageable to you 5, 10 or 20 minutes, whatever feels right. Write honestly, don't worry about punctuation but just write what comes to you.



For those who may not want to write a journal your goal might be to do 10 press ups or planks or jumps or lunges, or 10 of all of them. This simple goal, taking a few minutes every day, will see you fitter and stronger and your mind and body in better shape.

If there is someone in your life who knows how to press your buttons and makes you angry, maybe your daily goal might be to not let them influence you. Many people are like garbage trucks- they keep filling up and filling up with garbage and when they are full they have to dump it. If you let them they will dump it on you. Ignore them and get on with your life; don't take their garbage with you into your life.

However difficult or simple your goal might be if you do it every day then you will see a difference. Some days it may be difficult to find motivation but if you think about the bigger goal and what it will be like when you achieve it then it will be easier to keep going. The most important thing is to set a realistic goal and stick to it each day. Let me know how you are doing!

**Bernie Martin
ICPO Maynooth**



Sports

By Eoin O'Mahony

Gaelic Games

In the football semi finals, Kerry had to meet Mayo twice after the first one in Croke Park ended in a draw at 1-15 apiece. It was a dramatic and close affair with Mayo the early leaders. However, Kerry pulled quick points back and a late point to secure the replay in Limerick. That replay itself went to extra time and a closer game of football has not been played for many a year. The tension in the smaller arena was palpable as the referee took some flack for giving too much extra time. Kerry won it in the end by a close three points but the Mayo men once again came away empty handed.

The other semi final saw most neutral's favourites, Dublin, against Donegal, a team which seemed to have been riding its luck to this point. With seemingly one hand on the Sam Maguire, Jim Gavin's Dubs have been unbeatable in both league and championship in recent times. However, Donegal snuck up on the Dubs on this occasion and bided their time to halt the blue march to the final. And they achieved that in spectacular fashion: the Dubs looked worn out in the second half of an exciting game.

So Kerry and Donegal met in the All Ireland Finals making it yellow and green all the way and Kerry were the worthy winners on the day.

In the hurling final, Kilkenny return to face Tipperary in a game that is now becoming an annual fixture of little importance other than who has the skill on the day.



A happy Kerry supporter!

Soccer

Dundalk have continued their good run of form and with only a handful of games to go, look like the team to take the title. They're on 60 points after 26 games, six points ahead of Cork City who have been chasing the Louth team since the summer break ended. Meanwhile, Bohs have not been as lucky, sitting fourth from bottom with the weakest teams in Bray, UCD and Athlone Town under them. It has by no means been a signal year for the League of Ireland. While the gates have remained steady, a series of strange decisions by match officials before games has meant games being called off and floodlights breaking down. The English and Scottish leagues continue to dominate news coverage of soccer.

The season in England is barely a month old already but the bigger teams like Arsenal and Manchester City are already plotting near-lossless seasons. Manchester United is continuing to rebuild with a new higher profile manager in Louis van Gaal. The Dutchman took his national team to the semis of the World Cup in Brazil. Arsenal have bought a few new players to secure some more prestigious trophies but the gap between the top half dozen teams and the others is now so obvious as to make the league less enjoyable than it used to be.

Internationally, the Republic of Ireland team faces Georgia in their opening Euro 2016 qualifier and the manager, Martin O'Neil, is keen to open with a win. Georgia are somewhat of a bogey team in opening games with both Brian Kerr's and Trapattoni's tenures both stumbling against the former Soviet republic. The Boys in Green beat Oman in a recent friendly in Dublin in front of a tiny crowd but a win is a win and even Shay Given has come out of retirement to give the squad a morale boost.



Your Letters



A Day in My Life

I wake up to a world that belongs to everyone else. It's a world I should not be in. It's about 8.05am. The loudspeaker says out loud 'unlock A wing'. Doors are opened, the turning of the keys and bolts sliding back. No breakfast to pick up as it is given out the night before! I make my bed that I reluctantly get out of. I smoke a roll up as I groan to myself 'here we go again.' It's hell. Then I get my tea bags or coffee and milk and sweeteners and put them in a plastic bag. I put them into my coat pocket then I go down the stairwells to go to work. I wait 'til about 8.30 or 8.40am, then my name is ticked off on the wing work board.

I go to education in ICT computers class. I'm on level 1. I don't do it for fun, this world is theirs, I try my best, I am a Lifer without a release date. I'm over tariff by well over four years but life goes on. I finish at about 11.30am. It's back to the wing to get my plate and bowl for dinner time- bread, a packet of soup and one item of a cooked food or noodles packed, hot water needed for the dinner, snacks- a fruit or Penguin bar and back up again then unlock at about 12.30 to 1.45pm, then it's back to work again to wait in the que 'til about 2.15, then it's education again. At 4.30pm I get back to the wing, bang up again 'til 4.55pm, almost 5.00 then it's tea time again, plate and bowl in hand. As the portions are getting smaller I feel like Oliver Twist, chips, peas and whatever I have chosen on my menu slip from one to five. Prison food will never be the same as it was when I first came to this prison in 1998. Then it's the medical queue, ID cards on arm or around your neck. Let me check and see your ID!

Life in prison is very sad. It's all designed to drive you mad. Everything now that you need is defined with an application form or a request complaint. You would be fed up if you could not read or write! They have others to deal with this. Only 1 ½ hours to clean your cell out and get water in your flasks,

then it's nearly 6.30, bang up time is here again. Bang go the keys and bolts 'til the morning starts again. My time alone is my treasure zone. I can paint, draw, write poems and books. The cell has become my haven, the time I spend alone. The outside world don't know or care about me. I then do all the things that need doing in my cell. As I go to bed I think of all the dread that the next day may bring with it. I am only existing for me not them as their worlds are different from mine. I am innocent of this crime but who cares, they all say that? This is one day in my life, is it like yours?

The night man looks through the door then I know it's getting late. It's past 8.30 or later than that. I switch off the TV and hit the sack. Tomorrow will be back just like today. It's never any other way. Rules remain until they are changed. I cannot do as I like, the only time I get away from the rules is when the rules say a prisoner is entitled to eight hours sleep. Lock-up is a godsend to me. In my cell I can do as I like. It's a single cell. Just like me, hate is forgotten. I switch off the light, I go to bed, it's just another day in my life that I will forget. Bring on my freedom, that's all I need to know, as I count sheep there will be another one in tomorrow. Just wait and see. The world is full of prisoners in a system called Justice. No one really cares about the scars the prison system leaves on the minds of the guilty or innocent. I know and so do you. We suffer for the chosen few, no legal aid to help us get out. We are not needed. We are just forgotten about. It reminds me of Michael Jackson's 'one day in your life'. What life? It's just a miserable existence, the unseen abuse. Now I will go to sleep, may I have good dreams, that's all I can do! Time finished 9.58pm.

Patrick J. Ryan, UK



Your Letters



Transfer to Northern Ireland

Some six years ago, through a combination of alcohol, substance abuse and poor decision making, I made what can only be described as monolithic acts of criminality. This subsequently led to my arrest and then incarceration. As I had never broken the law or been in conflict with the authorities I found the experience debilitating and terrifying, to say the least.

My life, world and creature comforts, that I had taken for granted all began to crumble before me. Before I could assess the gravity of both the situation or my environment I found myself enclosed within a six by eight concrete box, cold alone and afraid. Most who read this will recollect that harrowing experience of hearing that steel reinforced cell door as it bolts shut for the first time. Some with perhaps more familiarity than others, but all I'm sure with the ineffable experience of anxiety and the uncertainty of what lies ahead.

As much of my beliefs and courage waned, I was fortunate to have the support and counsel of good people along the way. This encouragement helped me tackle the underlying reason for coming to prison and establish productive means to spend my time. As I had been living in England for 18 years prior to prison I felt it paramount I make some decisive changes to my future to ensure my lifestyle would not promote a repeat of the condition that led to my offence.

One and perhaps the most significant of these changes, was to return home to my birthplace and retrace the identity I once knew. This decision did not come lightly as it meant a significant reduction in the time spent with my daughter, who had now become a teenager. In addition to this, as I had been away from home for such a long time, I was unsure whether I would be accepted. Or find my

feet as it were. It has always been my intention to return home, I guess I never imagined it would be in this capacity.

After serious deliberation and re-assurance from close family members I took the decision to research what was involved to transfer. The first step I made was to place a formal request some two years ago with my external and internal probation manager.

This was discussed at length with the various facilities inside the prison and reports were generated. On the conclusion of these reports a dossier was then sent to the regulatory authorities in N. Ireland. Where upon receipt a home survey and local searches were conducted.

During this time I had maintained a regular balance of study for a degree and intra prison activities, such as safer custody and educational assignment. This not only whiled the time away but gave me personal objectives and stimuli to engage with.

Then after 17 months had passed since my original application, I received word that my application had tentatively been accepted and I would be returning home. This was met with an array of mixed emotions and questions. All more urgent now that a transfer was imminent.

On Sunday 31st March I was informed I would leave Norwich the following day. From there I spent the next two days between transfer van and prison until I eventually reached Manchester Airport, upon which I flew home.

I was met by a very efficient member of airport security that escorted me through more back doors and alleys that I ever knew existed in Aldergrove Airport. After a brief interlude in another transfer



Your Letters



Transfer to Northern Ireland

Continued

van I arrived at Maghaberry. There I was met by a smile and a real person, someone who looked as though they had been at it all day but still found time to be polite.

I moved to the induction wing and began the ritualistic formalities of understanding the manner of a new regime. Not to mention a language tempo which I had almost forgotten. After a short period of acclimatisation and periods of lengthy cell time I was offered a position as an orderly within the Care and Supervision Unit (CSU). As with any prison jobs I embraced it and immersed myself in the work aspect of the role. But this was to be interrupted by something I had not experienced for a very long period of time. A concern or interest and genuine interaction, I had almost forgotten. Staff were friendly and spoke to me like I mattered. I recoiled on numerous occasions as I had to re-affirm and still remind myself of my position or where I stood in the hierarchy. Each person that worker I encountered could not have been friendlier or more personable if they had been paid to do so.

I receive regular visits from my family and have not long received a visit from my daughter. I still train regularly and eat well as the food is so much more protein or meat based then the UK HMP budgets would allow.

Do I think it a good move to return home? I still have a further 8 months before I can be considered for release and even then I expect my journey will only really unfold. But where I sit now, I can only say an incontestable yes. Not because of the bricks and mortar, let's face it's not because of N Ireland's weather, it's possibly the only country that rains eight days a week. But because the people are as unique as the landscape. Each with their nuances and mannerisms that produce characters that are the envy of the world.

K.W.

*(*Note from Editor- as there are limited places in the three prisons in Northern Ireland priority for transfers is usually given to those who have a current address there.)*

Have you read a good book lately?



RECOMMEND A BOOK

Have you read a book recently that you thought was good and was one that others would enjoy? Then let ICPO know. Write to us with the name of the book and a short sentence or two saying what the book is about.

REVIEW A BOOK

Alternatively, you might like to submit your own book review for the newsletter. It doesn't have to be a long piece just simply your views on the book and a little information on the story and what you liked and didn't like.

Post your recommendations or review to:

ICPO, Columba Centre, Maynooth, Co Kildare, Ireland.



The Shamrock and Easter Lily Fair

The rose she is a wondrous flower
Of beauty beyond compare;
A rainbow of softest pastel colours;
Perfumed scents upon the air.
But take you care, full caution keep;
Of dire danger too I must warn.
Hidden stings that sly rose oft reveals
With cruel and treacherous thorn.



The thistle is a most sturdy flower,
A wild and rugged beauty true;
In untamed highland blooms it fairly still
Where once freemen flourished too.
Alas now though their brave calling seldom
In the glens ever given sound,
The thistle lies scattered; as ancient tears
Forlorn upon that hallowed ground.

The daffodil flowers with beauty rare,
Golden herald of dawning spring.
Soaring delight of colour freshly bright,
A joyous song the birds do sing.
But it is a beauty all too soon fading,
Lost to all but memory,
Forever caught between winters cold winds
And the warmth of summers yet to be.

But not for one of these pretty flowers
Can I in truth claim to care,
For my heart it belongs to the shamrock
And the Easter Lily fair.
For the shamrock it is Ireland's flower,
Beloved emblem of our nation's pride;
And the Easter Lily serves to remind
Of those who for her cause lived and died.



So claim not any flower to be sweetest,
Or wonder of beauty rare;
Lest it be that dear auld shamrock
And the Easter Lily fair.

James Finn



Smídín Gaeilge

Cúigí na hÉireann (*Coo-gee nu Hair-on*)

Provinces of Ireland

Cúige Uladh	<i>Coo-ige Oll-a</i>	Ulster
Cúige Laighean	<i>Coo-ige Lie-in</i>	Leinster
Cúige Mumhan	<i>Coo-ige Moon</i>	Munster
Cúige Chonnacht	<i>Coo-ige Cunn-ockt</i>	Connacht

'Séard is brí le 'Cúige' ná 1/5. Cúig chúige a bhí ann ar dtús in Éireann fadó ach an cúige is lú, cúige na Mí, (áit go raibh cónaí ar an Rí- An Ríogacht a ghlaotar air) tógadh isteach i gcúige Laighean é. Tá na cúigí ceangailte le grúpaí áirithe contaethe inniu.

The Irish word for Province is 'Cúige' which means one fifth. Originally there were 5 provinces in Ireland. The 5th and smallest Province was Co. Meath (where the King lived- hence the term 'the Royal County'), which was merged with Leinster. The Counties are divided into Provinces.

Cúige Uladh (*Coo-ige Oll-a*) Ulster

Dún na nGall	<i>Doon na ngal</i>	Donegal
Tír Eoghain	<i>Teer-Owen</i>	Tyrone
Fear Manach	<i>Far-Manock</i>	Fermanagh
Doire	<i>Dira</i>	Derry
Ard Mhacha	<i>Ord Vaca</i>	Armagh
An Cabhán	<i>Caw-vawn</i>	Cavan
Aontroim	<i>Ayn-trum</i>	Antrim
An Dún	<i>On Doon</i>	Down
Muineachán	<i>Mween-okawn</i>	Monaghan

Cúige Laighean (*Coo-ige Lie-in*) Leinster

Lú	<i>Loo</i>	Louth
An Mhí	<i>On Vi</i>	Meath
Laois	<i>Leesh</i>	Laois
Uibh Fhailí	<i>Uv Awla</i>	Offaly
An Iarmhí	<i>On Ear-vi</i>	Westmeath
Cill Mhantáin	<i>Kill Vantawn</i>	Wicklow
Loch Garman	<i>Lock Garmawn</i>	Wexford-
Cill Chainnigh	<i>Kill C-yan-ee</i>	Kilkenny
Baile Átha Cliath	<i>Ball-ya Aw- Clee a</i>	Dublin-
Ceatharlach	<i>Ca-her-lock</i>	Carlow
Cill Dara	<i>Kill Dara</i>	Kildare
An Longfort	<i>Lung-fort</i>	Longford

Cúige Mumhan (*Coo-ige Moon*) Munster

Port Láirge	<i>Port-Law-rga</i>	Waterford
Ciarraí	<i>Ceer-ee</i>	Kerry
Corcaigh	<i>Curk-ee</i>	Cork
An Clár	<i>On Clawr</i>	Clare
Luimneach	<i>Lim-nock</i>	Limerick
Tiobraid Árann	<i>Tib-rad- Awran</i>	Tipperary

Cúige Chonnacht (*Coo-ige Cunn-ockt*) Connacht

Gaillimh	<i>Gall-iv</i>	Galway
Ros Comáin	<i>Ros- Camawn</i>	Roscommon
Maigh Eo	<i>Mwee Oh</i>	Mayo
Liatroim	<i>Lee-trum</i>	Leitrim
Sligeach	<i>Shlig-ock</i>	Sligo



challenge yourself!

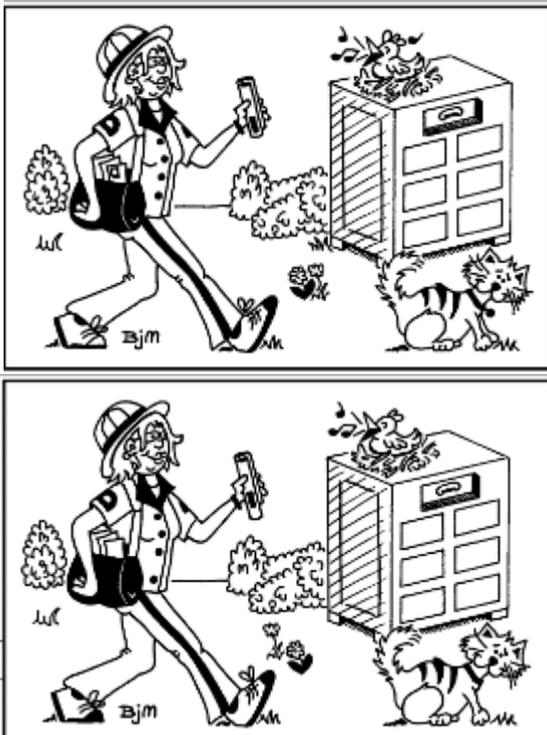
Lábra focal (Wordsearch)

Aimsigh na contaetha i gCúige Laighean

- An Mhí Cill Chainnigh
- An Longfort Cill Dara
- An Lú Cill Mhantáin
- An Mhí Laois
- Baile Atha Cliath Loch Garman
- Ceatharlach Úi Bhfáilí

H N H C W T K V U U J Z J H F
 T T Z A K U H G M L X N X G L
 A D A Ú S S N W Z U I V R I L
 T F P I I M Z T V Á N Y W N O
 K D H M L B A Í T A J T U N C
 A G L P O C H N C L C Q M I H
 R S G N E M A F L X W I B A G
 A S T D N H Í H H Ú F N J H A
 D H Z A M T K H T A F M Z C R
 L Y F L X P Q W M Á I Z O L M
 L I L A O I S I M R E L Q L A
 I I Q C F N E A A P A L Í I N
 C E A T H A R L A C H I I C S
 T R O F G N O L N A K I N A R
 R K U Z Y A Z T X R S N P A B

Can you Spot 12 Differences between these two pictures?



SUDOKU

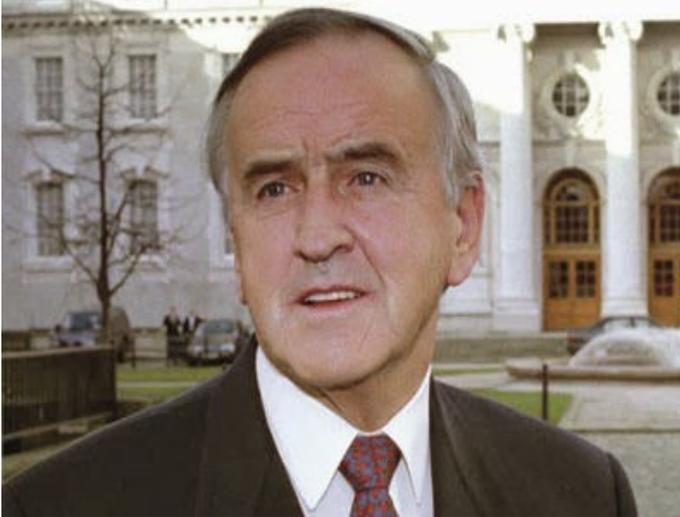
	1	4	6				7	5
5		2	3	7				
				1	9		4	
8	7			6	3			1
			8	2	7			
6			1	9			8	7
	5		9	3				
				5	6	8		4
2	8				1	5	9	

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 every 3 x 3 square.

Answers to Spot the Difference. 1. Front leg of cat missing. 2. Musical note by bird missing. 3. Stamp on letter in bag missing. 4. Tag on cat's collar missing. 5. Cat's whisker missing. 6. Feather on bird's head missing. 7. Grass by mailbox leg missing. 8. Toe on left shoe coloured in. 9. One flower moved. 10. Bottom button on shirt moved down. 11. Right shoe lace moved. 12. Rolled up paper is longer.



RECENT EVENTS IN IRELAND



Former Taoiseach Albert Reynolds passed away on 21st August, aged 81. He was first elected to the Dáil in 1977 and served as Taoiseach in two separate terms between 1992 and 1994.

Mr Reynolds was credited with making significant progress in bringing about the peace process in Northern Ireland.

Hundreds of politicians, dignitaries and business figures paid their respects at a State funeral in Dublin.

Kerry win Football All Ireland



In September Kerry won their 37th All-Ireland Senior Football Championship



Listowel Writers' Week 2014

The 43rd Listowel Writers' Week Festival was held in May. Bernie Martin from the ICPO Maynooth office travelled to Listowel to accept the Writing in Prisons Overseas prizes on behalf of the winners. Listowel is the birthplace of prominent Irish writer John B Keane. A statue of Keane (pictured right) was unveiled in Listowel in 2007.

