

THE COUNCIL OF THE IRISH CENTRE

51/52 Camden Square, London NW1 9XB

TWENTIETH ANNUAL REPORT

For the year
ending
31 Dec 1974

In introducing our 1973 Report we stated that 1973 was a year when definite decisions were taken and our hope was that the decisions were correct and that we had taken the right course. Now a year later, and a lot wiser thank God, we have no reason so far to regret the decision taken in 1973.

1974 has been a really outstanding year. The purchase of Hope House and the transfer of the Mens' Hostel has proved a tremendous success. Any fear that might have existed as to our ability to make a success of the new venture has been proved groundless. The mortgage repayments have been met and the administrative difficulties in the running of the Hostel for 100 men have not proved insuperable thanks to the competence of the Management. Fears were also expressed that with the transfer of the hostel from Camden Square the Welfare work done in the Centre would decline and that it would simply become a social centre. No such thing has happened; our 1974 Welfare Report shows that the volume of work done by the Welfare Office has actually increased not declined.

On the other hand, the transfer of the hostel meant an easing of pressure on kitchen facilities giving room for added functions, as is evident from the financial returns. Extra meeting rooms were also made available for the increasing number of organisations wishing to use the facilities of the Centre, all adding up to one of the most successful years yet in the history of the Centre.

1974 also saw the purchase of the British Railway Property adjoining Camden Square. The property is lease-hold with a 120 year's lease. This was thought necessary for the future development of the Centre itself. A project which must now be tackled.

Both these properties were bought through Irish Centre Hostels Ltd., and I think it is necessary here to give a clear indication of the connection between Irish Centre Hostels Ltd., and the Irish Centre itself. They are in fact one and the same thing, and must be kept that way. Irish Centre Hostels Ltd., is a committee of 15 each holding a £1 share. These members are elected, and are chosen from the Administrative Committee of the Irish Centre, and when they cease to be members of the Administrative Committee, the share certificates are returned, thus ensuring the vital connection and control of the Irish Centre Hostels Ltd., by the Irish Centre. This procedure was thought to have certain legal advantages.

During the year despite mounting difficulties due to the political situation, and when many of our people were living under a certain amount of stress, the Centre continued to provide a relaxed atmosphere for all the clientele both English and Irish. In fact, it can be stated that the Centre has much enhanced it's popularity with the local residents. The Tenants Association and the local Neighbourhood Association held numerous functions during the year, and all were loud in their praise of the atmosphere and co-operation they received. It is gratifying to know that the Centre is regarded as part of the local community and that our presence is looked upon as an extremely useful facility. Not a word of criticism or complaint was received.

I. SUMMARY OF WELFARE REPORT

A glance at the Welfare Report shows that there is little change in numbers or problems from the previous year. The numbers are up somewhat, 1,828 against 1,791 for the previous year and a somewhat higher proportion come from the urban areas. The problems remain - Finance, Accommodation and Employment.

One point worth noting is that this year we had 273 from the six Counties against 160 the previous year, no doubt indicating a deteriorating situation - will Ireland ever get relief?

This very scizable load of welfare work has been most efficiently dealt with by our two social welfare workers, Sr. Anne Marie and Sr. Joan, and both are due our congratulations. Sr. Joan is a newcomer to the Centre. We wish her every success. She has fitted in right from the start and brings a keen and refreshing approach to many of the problems. I have no doubt that many a young man will one day thank her for her kindness, patience and advice so expertly given. This year's Welfare Report is a credit to a professional work worth reading.

Nor can one omit our sincere thanks to the Welfare Committee - Dr. Morton, Mr. Raymond Hevey and Fr. Hackett. Constant and faithful to the weekly meetings, their help and guidance over the year has been much appreciated.

II. HOSTELS

On March 27th the new Mens' Hostel was officially blessed and opened - a day to be remembered in the life of the Centre. The Hostel quickly built up to it's full capacity and has since maintained it. Efficiently run by Fr. Carolan, assisted by Sr. Michael, a Mercy Nun from Waterford, it has proved an absolute Godsend to the Centre. Both are due our sincere thanks and appreciation. I would liketo put on record here my gratitude to the very many good people who took such a keen interest and gave such magnificent support to get this project under way. To the many County Associations and individuals who contributed so much I say "your labour has not been in vain and your generosity will never be forgotten".

It can be seen from the Finance section those who Covenanted so generously for the project, and it will also be seen that among several very generous donations, three counties contributed the sum of £1,000 each! These were Cavan, Clare and Monaghan. The Leitrim Association also contributed, but as this was since the end of the financial year, it will not appear until next year's Report. To each and everyone both large and small who have benefitted the Centre by their generous actions, a boundless thanks.

As you will notice from the Accounts, income under Hostel Accommodation has reduced from £14,200 in 1973 to £9,954 in 1974. This is because the returns for the Mens' Hostel have gone into a separate account, namely The Irish Centre Hostels Ltd., since April 1974. This account is also available. The fact that the Returns from the Hostel accommodation in the Irish Centre Account have not fallen more is a great tribute to Sr. Thecla in the Girls' Hostel. The key to success in the running of these Hostels is to make use of all available accommodation all the year round, and in this respect Sr. Thecla is certainly doing a fine job and deserves our appreciation and thanks.

III. IRISH CENTRE CLUB.

In 1974 the Irish Centre Club has continued to be the hard core or the hub around which the whole operation revolves. Despite very difficult times the Centre continues to attract and give satisfaction to all it's patrons. The Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights in the Douglas Hyde Lounge are still well supported. The cultural activities continue to flourish. The Paddy Créan School of Irish Dancing every Monday night attract a very large number of children. Tommy Maguire continues with the

ational Irish music classes, and anybody who was lucky enough
 be at this year's Royal Albert Hall Concert will realise the
 tremendous job he is doing. The performance of the Junior
 Ceilide Band that night both in the music and presentation, was
 just perfect. No wonder that at the various "Fleadh Ceoil" both
 in Ireland and England, his pupils continue to win the trophies.
 Tommy deserves our congratulations and we hope that the North
 London Branch of Comhaltas will continue to use the Centre for
 the promotion and preservation of our Irish cultural heritage.
 The Centre Boys Brass Band also performed with distinction at
 the Albert Hall Concert. A new teacher has taken over this Band
 and we look forward to their appearing at far more functions
 than in the past year.

This year's Junior Fleadh Cheoil was run very efficiently. Even
 though there was an increase in the number of competitors the
 programme was completed at a respectable hour. To the Irish Centre
 Club Committee we owe a deep debt of gratitude.

Week after week they run the Bingo and organise various dances
 and functions in aid of the Centre; operate the Door and generally
 supervise in the Douglas Hyde Lounge at the week-ends. Without
 their faithful and loyal service the Centre would indeed be im-
 possible to run. One of the highlights of the year was the OAP's
 Party - it was as usual a wonderful evening thoroughly enjoyed
 by all. A glance

A glance at the Income Returns on the Accounts will show that
 the Bar Gross Profits have increased from £27,771 to £32,689
 and Functions Receipts from £8,457 to £11,588. * This gives a clear
 indication of the amount of hard work put in by Michael and Norah
 Lahiffe and their staff. I would like to put on record my thanks
 and appreciation to Michael, Norah and all the staff for the
 assistance and co-operation given to me during my term of office
 in the Centre.

IV. FINANCE

The accounts show our liabilities have decreased by £7,170 to
 £29,007. Fixed Assets have decreased by £20,707 to £125,163
 due to the Sale of property at 1 North Villas, NW1, the proceeds
 of which is reflected in Current Assets.

It should be pointed out that Fixed Assets represent Capital
 Expenditure to date less depreciation, and bear no relation to
 the aggregate current market value of the properties.

In reviewing the reliability of our sources of revenue, it will
 be noted that the total received during the year from covenants,
 collections and donations, together with surplus on revenue
 account amounted to an overall surplus of £22,886. This was a
 major factor in the reduction of our liabilities.

Covenants:

	£	
Arthur Guinness & Co.	870	
Dempsey, J.,	240	
Beatty, T.,	200	
Burke, James	100	
Brunton, M.J.,	100	
Reilly, J.,	100	
Kennedy, L.,	50	
MacLua, B.,	50	
Sundry	32	
	£1,742	

Boroughs:

Hamden Borough Council	2,500	
Islington Borough Council	100	
Wensington & Chelsea,		
Royal Borough Council	100	£2,700

Donations:

	£	
Cavan Association	1,000	
Clare "	1,000	
Monaghan "	1,000	
Per Rev. P. Sherdian	600	
Sisters of the Holy Family	500	
St. Patrick's Day Bankers Orders	326	
Mayo Association	180	
Bank of Ireland	130	
Domleavy Bros.	100	
Fermanagh Association	100	
Armagh Association	100	
J.P.McHale	100	
Sundry Amounts	1,228	£6,364

Royal Albert Hall
(March 1974)

£1,074

We express our gratitude to all these contributors who have given us such valuable financial assistance during the year.

We also express our gratitude to our Auditors Messrs. C.F. Burton & Co., represented by Mr. T. Brennan.

To Mr. P.J. Keegan, our Honorary Accountant, an especial expression of thanks for his devoted and steadfast service to the Centre over the years. His guidance is one of the Centre's greatest assets due to his expertise and fidelity, and we must record our gratitude to him.

It may be noted that our overall surplus for the year is £22,886. Of this, £11,880 is shown on the first page of the Accounts and is due to the work of the priests at the Centre obtaining Covenants, Donations and making Appeals. The remaining £11,006 is Excess of Income over Expenditure as shown on the second page of the Accounts, and is the profit on the Hostel Accommodation, Bars, Catering, Functions, Entertainments, Subscriptions and Rents from properties.

A creditable result from all concerned.

CHANGES DURING THE YEAR

This year saw drastic changes in the Centre. Fr. Sheridan, that well-known popular and legendary figure who had given so much to the Centre for the past eight years has been changed to Birmingham. No doubt he will be missed, but then we must adjust and carry on, as in fact we are doing. We wish him well in his new appointment and by all accounts he seems to be going great guns. His place has been taken by Fr. Frank Ryan OMI., and we welcome him and wish him every success. Next comes Therese, our popular and very efficient Secretary, who has departed to take up a position nearer her home. We thank her for the faithful service she has given to the Centre and wish her happiness in her new position.

APPRECIATION

Our sincere thanks are due to all our patrons who have supported us so loyally during the past year. To all the volunteer girls who do the reception desk after hours and make possible a sixteen hour per day service in the Centre. To the Council of Irish Counties and all the County Associations and other Organisations who use the Centre and have contributed to the success of the various fundtions held in the Centre: The Xmas Bazaar, Summer Fair and the Albert Hall Concert. To the many volunteer workers who did such a magnificent job of work in redecorating the Kenndy Hall, repairing the floor, furniture, redecorating the public bar, the stairway to the Douglas Hyde Lounge. This band of volunteers not only saved the Club a lot of money but added greatly to the comforts of all our

Patrons. They are certainly due our thanks, and I make go apology for listing them by name. They are our Chairman, Mr. Martin Moroney and his wife Mrs. Tess Moroney, Mr. Luke Kennedy, Mr. & Mrs. Pat Hegarty, Mr. Martin Doyle, Michael and Norah Lahiffe, Mrs. Mary Hopkins, Con Crawley, Des McMahon, Mary Kenny, Maura Shonahan, John Liddy, Joe Davis, Bill and Una Cooper and Charlie Shanks. We can truly say that as long as the Centre has members such as these, the future is secure.

Personal Note.

This is my last report to the Council of the Irish Centre. As you know, I have been put on the transfer list. I do think that the past year, in spite of all our difficulties, has been one of the most successful years in the history of the Centre. The road does seem reasonably clear for further developments. While fully realising that there are great difficulties to be overcome, I have every faith in the ability of my successor, Fr. Cagney OMI., combined with your co-operation, to forge ahead and develop this unique outfit into one of the greatest of Irish Centres.

I wish Fr. Cagney every success, and I know he will have the active help of every member of the Irish Centre just as I have had for the past three and a half years. Something for which I must say a final and sincere 'Thank you'.