

St. Mel's Cathedral, Longford

# The Cathedral Circle

Since 1962



# Stay in to Win



Cathedral Circle' Golden Jubilee Publication

Stay in to Win

# 'The Cathedral Circle' Alive and Well

## Half a Century On

Fifty years ago a number of people gathered in Longford Parish to devise a fund raising system that would help meet the demands they faced. I'm sure they would have been amazed and proud if they could have known that their initiative would still be alive and well half a century on.

As we celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Cathedral Circle we remember with gratitude the many people who were associated with the draw in any way down through the years. We acknowledge and appreciate the many promoters, committee members and loyal customers who have ensured that the Cathedral Circle is now a respected and integral part of community life in our parish. In recognising the Circle's Golden Jubilee we salute all who keep it going today and wish it success for the next 50!

*Fr. Tom Healy*  
Administrator

14th April 2012

*COVER IMAGE: Jimmy Reilly, Sacristan of St. Mel's Cathedral spins the draw drum in the early days of the Cathedral Circle. The original drum was made at Longford Vocational School in the Woodwork class under the direction of the late Mr. Richard Bissett, woodwork teacher, ably assisted by his students. Sadly the long standing drum was lost in the Cathedral fire and has recently been replaced by a multi coloured modern replica - and the winners still tumble out.*



# 'The Cathedral Circle' An Inspired Name

The choice of name for the weekly draw for the Longford Parish, the Cathedral Circle, was inspired.

As a young priest in 1962 and not associated in any way with the parish then I can still recall this was the widely accepted throughout County Longford and, possibly, slightly envied by other parishes too. It was a good example of a commercially astute choice of brand name.

Fifty years on the name has a richer meaning. The Cathedral has acquired a wider 'circle of friends' as a result of its catastrophic destruction on Christmas Morning 2009. Some people who are total strangers to Longford know of our tragic loss and many of them have helped us.

Those who have been friends for the last half a century as well as new friends are continuing to help.

We are deeply grateful to all.

+ *Bishop Colm O'Reilly*

ABOVE: The winners in the first ever Cathedral Circle draw on Monday 15th January 1962. PHOTO ATTACHED: Rev. James Byrne, witnessed by Benny Reid, draws the first winning ticket.



First Prize: £30  
Jim Gormley,  
Gowna, Co. Cavan

Other prizewinners:

Mrs. Donnelly,  
Greenfield, Longford

Mrs. Drake,  
Main Street, Longford

Edward O Shea,  
Battery Road, Longford

Mrs. James Kane,  
Coolooney, Longford

Michael Reynolds,  
Corlea, Drumlish

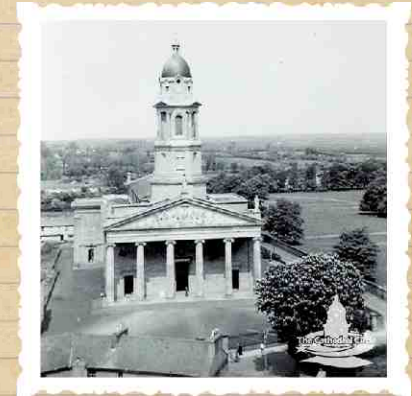
STAY IN TO WIN



*Stay in to Win*

# Proceeds FROM The Cathedral Circle

*A very significant contribution to parish funds*



Longford Parish is the second biggest parish in our diocese. As such it has a wide variety of pastoral outreaches that our parish team of priests, sisters, Pastoral Council and several parish committees are engaged in providing. Most nights see the Family Centre and Temperance Hall alive with young and old taking part in a wide variety

of spiritual, pastoral and recreational activities. It is always good to have the resources to maintain our parish buildings and to provide for the various needs of the parish.

The Cathedral Circle has made a very significant contribution to parish funds over it's 50 years in existence. It can be credited with providing a share of the funding required for the restoration of the Temperance Hall some years ago, for the new parish office and refurbishment of the Presbytery and indeed for much of the maintenance and upgrading that took place at St. Mel's Cathedral over the years and decades.

As we look forward to the restoration of St. Mel's it is evident that we will have to provide some monies to cover what falls outside the insurance claim. Again thankfully Cathedral Circle funds will be a useful source to help towards this requirement. As Longford parish looks to the future we will continue to have material and pastoral needs and we are hopeful that the success of the Cathedral Circle will continue for years and decades to come.



*ABOVE: Ladies of The Cathedral Circle: Mary Frances Harte, Guina O'Brien, Val Hourican, Phyllis Branigan, Jean Dennigan, Mary O'Hara and Nina Martin.*

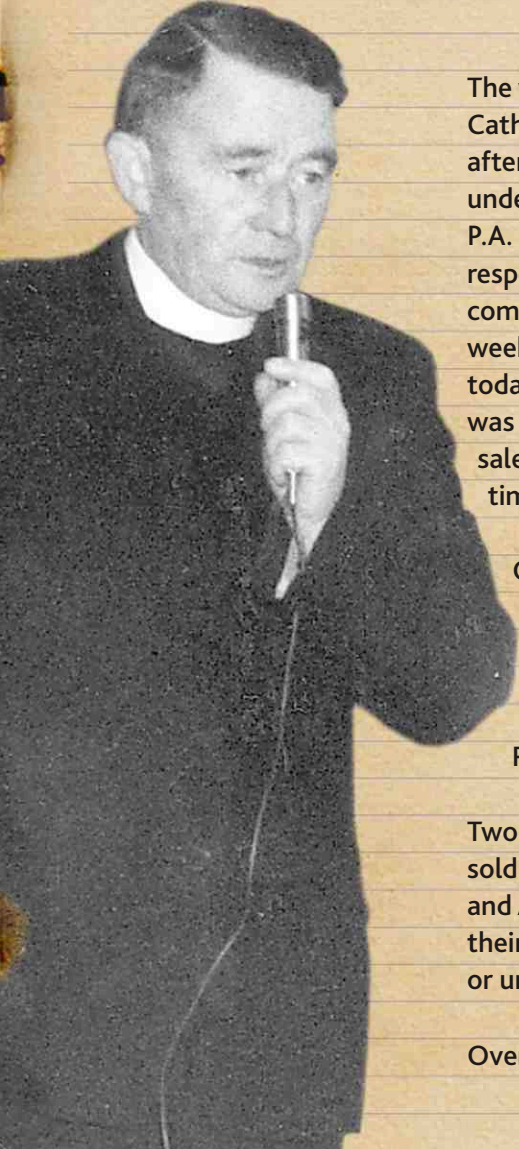
*TOP RIGHT: St. Mel's Cathedral in the 1960s. A rare view captured by John Kiernan from a crane located at St. Joseph's Convent.*

All parish financial matters are managed by the Parish Finance Committee and subject to audit by Diocesan auditors.

**The Cathedral Circle**  
St. Mel's Cathedral, Longford



## Celebrating Fifty Wonderful Years

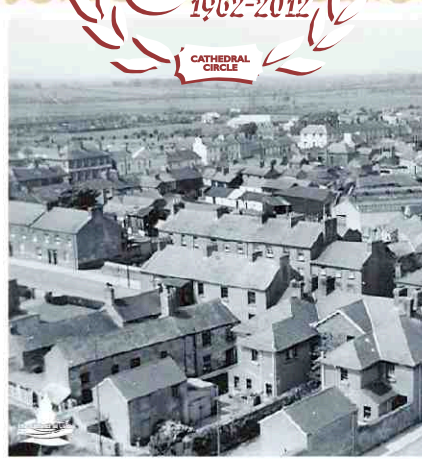


The venue of the draw may have changed but the Cathedral Circle is still going strong fifty years after that very first draw in January 1962, under the guise of then Administrator Rev. P.A. McGowan who was the man responsible for the establishment of the committee that oversaw the very first weekly draw which is still going strong today. Top prize for the draw at the time was just under fifty pounds, with tickets on sale for just one shilling - a bargain at the time!

Original members of the first committee were Martin J. Timlin, Terry McGeough, Paddy McNulty, Joe Kelly, Nina Martin, Phyllis Branigan, Peg O'Halloran, Val Hourican and Joan Reid.

Two notable hardworking volunteers who sold tickets for many many years, are Margaret O'Connor and Angela Greer, who is still to be seen at work today, and their hard work and dedication should never be forgotten or underestimated.

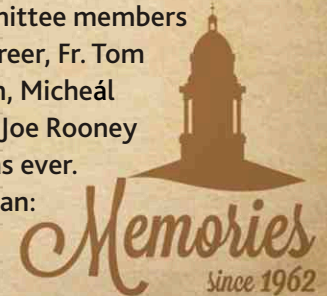
Over the decades the price of the tickets for the popular



*FAR LEFT: Rev. P. McGowan Adm. announces the weekly winners. ABOVE: John Kiernan's photograph of 1960s Longford town. Looking from Convent Road across to Lr. Main Street.*

draw has increased just four times, most notably by fifty pence, with the arrival of the National Lotto Draw, our biggest competitor, but it's popularity in the parish has never wavered and support in the community is as strong as ever with local businesses remains as supportive as it was in the very beginning. As well as providing a little fun and excitement into the lives of the local people the draw makes a significant contribution to parish finances which in turn have contributed to the restoration of important parish projects such as the renovation of the Temperance Hall. The parish committee and clergy are very grateful to the local people for their continued support in this area.

Current committee members consist of Gerard Fallon, Angela Greer, Fr. Tom Healy, Jackie Hughes, Joan Kiernan, Micheál McCreanor, Rose McCormack and Joe Rooney and the draw remains as popular as ever. Remember that all important slogan: 'STAY IN TO WIN'.



Stay in to Win

# Angela Greer

## Fifty Years a Selling!

RIGHT: An early image of Teffia Park with the Convent gardens in the foreground.

Photographed by John Kiernan. 1960s.



One woman at the forefront of the Cathedral Circle is Longford native Angela Greer who has been selling tickets for the draw since the very beginning the entire fifty years - and she has some very vivid memories of how it all began. 'I got involved after I was asked by the local priest at the time to sell tickets and I used to sell the lines in St. Joseph's Convent and door to door. Today I just sell them two days a week in the post office.'

Angela remembers a big win many years ago went to her neighbour Mrs. Sheridan, whose ticket was pulled out of the hat in the weekly draw, witnessed by committee members, 'She lived two doors down from me and won the top prize of thirty pounds which was equal to hundreds of pounds these days.' Today's top prize stands at €260.

So, five decades on, has the arrival of Monday Millions and the National Lottery pushed *The Cathedral Circle* out of place or is it still as popular as ever? Angela believes the weekly draw will survive though it has been affected

somewhat. 'An awful lot of people who supported it down through the years are now dead and gone,' she says sadly, 'some shops used to sell the tickets in the old days, such as Cassidy's and Corcoran's but they don't any more and we don't sell them door to door any more. I think the Lotto has knocked it out a bit and I don't think younger people support it as much as the older generation do but I think it will keep lasting and the community will back it for many years to come as people want to support the Cathedral and people are so sad after what happened and miss little things like not being able to go in and even light a candle.'

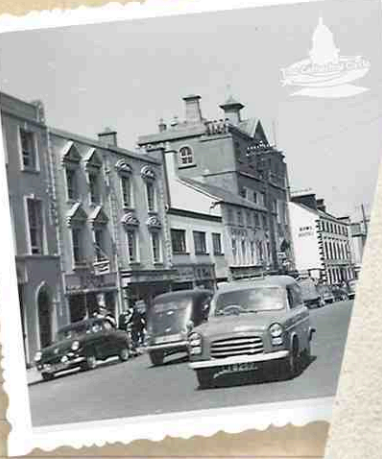
As for Angela and the familiar sight of her sitting in the post office selling tickets will she continue to be a part of the popular raffle? 'Well I didn't think I'd still be here fifty years later but I enjoy it and I get as much from it as I give and I have no plans to retire! I have nothing else to do!'

So how many tickets on average does Angela sell on a weekly basis. Cute and canny she replies with a wink. 'Ah, that's a top secret between myself and Fr. Healy!'



# Margaret O'Connor

RIGHT: Main Street,  
Longford in the  
1960s. Photographed  
by John Kiernan.



## Remembered Fondly

As we remember the story of the Cathedral Circle the name of Margaret O'Connor is worthy of special mention.

Margaret, from Main Street, was a great friend of the Circle and over many years gave very dedicated service to selling lines throughout the town. She was a familiar figure selling outside Providers or selling in the pubs in town and it has been said that a trip to Longford wasn't complete until you bought your circle line from Margaret.

Her commitment must stand as something of a record in community service. Margaret passed to her eternal reward in 2003.

We remember her fondly. May she rest in peace.

Cathedral Circle winners as announced in  
The Longford News Saturday 27th January 1962



### The Cathedral Circle Winners

1st Prize £30:  
GIRLIE LOUGHLIN,  
Dublin Street, Longford  
Promoter £4: Jim Loughlin

2nd Prize £5:  
CELINE CLARKE  
Promoter £1: Celine Clarke

3rd Prize £3:  
P. BROWNE,  
Main Street, Longford  
Promoter £1: Mary Kiernan c/o Waters

4th Prize £2:  
JACK McCOPPIN,  
1 Main Street, Longford  
Promoter £1:  
Kevin Dukè, 1 Main Street, Longford

5th Prize £1:  
JOHN FARRELLY,  
Cooleeney, Shroid, Longford  
Promoter 10/-  
Paul Gaffney, Main Street, Longford

6th Prize £1:  
MR. P. BRESLIN,  
Dublin Street, Longford  
Promoter 10/-  
Tom Farrell, Annaly Hotel, Longford

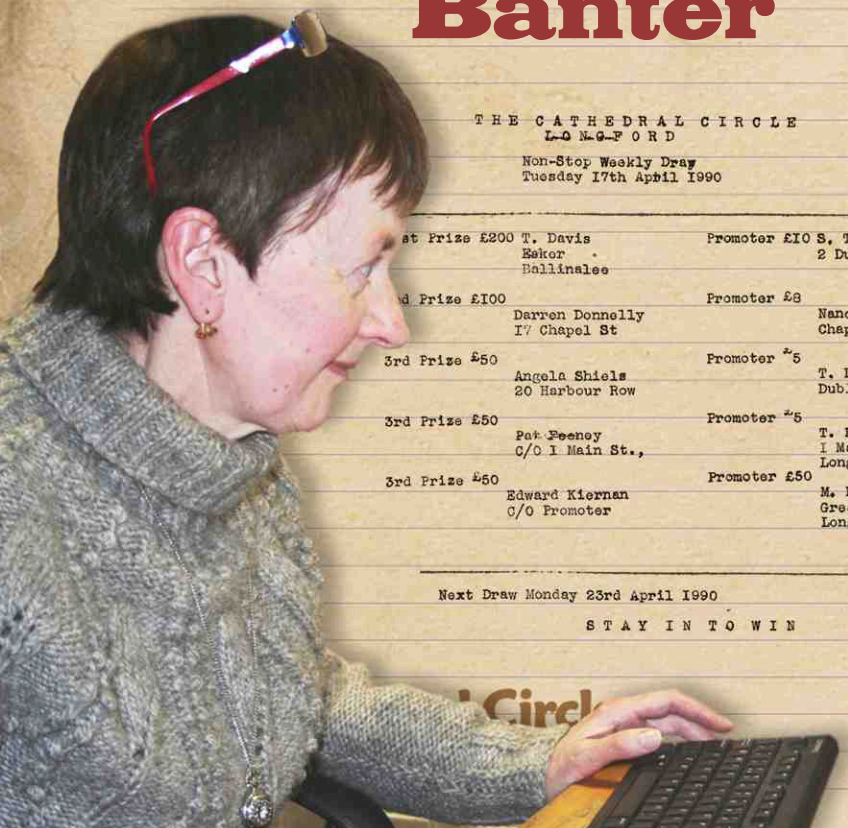


STAY IN TO WIN

Memories  
since 1962

Stay in to Win

# Amid the Friendly Banter



THE CATHEDRAL CIRCLE  
L-O N-G-F-O-R-D

Non-Stop Weekly Draw  
Tuesday 17th April 1990

1st Prize £200	T. Davis Baker Ballinalee	Promoter £10	S. Tiernan 2 Dublin St.,
2nd Prize £100	Darren Donnelly 17 Chapel St	Promoter £8	Nancy Oates Chapel St.,
3rd Prize £50	Angela Shields 20 Harbour Row	Promoter £5	T. Donlon Dublin Road
3rd Prize £50	Pat Feeney C/O I Main St.,	Promoter £5	T. Donegan 1 Main St., Longford.
3rd Prize £50	Edward Kiernan C/O Promoter	Promoter £50	M. Kiernan Great Water St., Longford.

Next Draw Monday 23rd April 1990

STAY IN TO WIN

I was invited to join the Cathedral Circle Committee by Fr. Chris Lynch in the 1970's, Nina Martin would have recommended me and I have been there ever since. Each Monday night Fr. Chris would arrive with a box of chocolates and amid some friendly banter we actually managed to get some work done. Mr. Timlin, Val Hourican and her pet dog 'Bunty' were familiar figures and John Murphy took care of the banking.

Results were typed on a trusting old Royal typewriter - even in those days it was an antique - how we would have loved a 'golfball' - but the printing of the results on the Gestetner was a nightmare! Rose Wyse worked her magic and at the end of the night we had results. Fr. Lynch did not countenance '*nom de plumes*'. I don't think he ever met 'Katie Daly' from the Greyhound Bar!

Hail, rain or shine, draws are held each Monday night for 51 weeks of the year. During that time one constant has been Micheál McCreanor - he has looked after all aspects of the draw for it's 50 years. Dedication like that is

some achievement. The Circle has produced some memorable characters - Margaret O'Connor had fantastic sales in those early years her contribution was phenomenal. Successive Parish Administrators have all had associations with the draw - Bishop Colm, Msgr. Noonan and Msgr. Earley.

During the refurbishment of the Temperance Hall we moved to the Cathedral Sacristy and there we continued to hold draws until that fateful Christmas 2009 when St. Mel's was destroyed by fire. Since then we have been re-homed in the Presbytery where faithfully draws are held on a Monday evening, with Joe, Jackie, Micheál, Gerard, Rose and Angela.

The Royal typewriter has been replaced by the latest technology - computers courtesy of Fr. Tom Healy. We have a new draw drum but it's not a patch on the earlier model. However, we are fortunate in dedicated people like Angela and in that the Silver Circle continues to prosper.

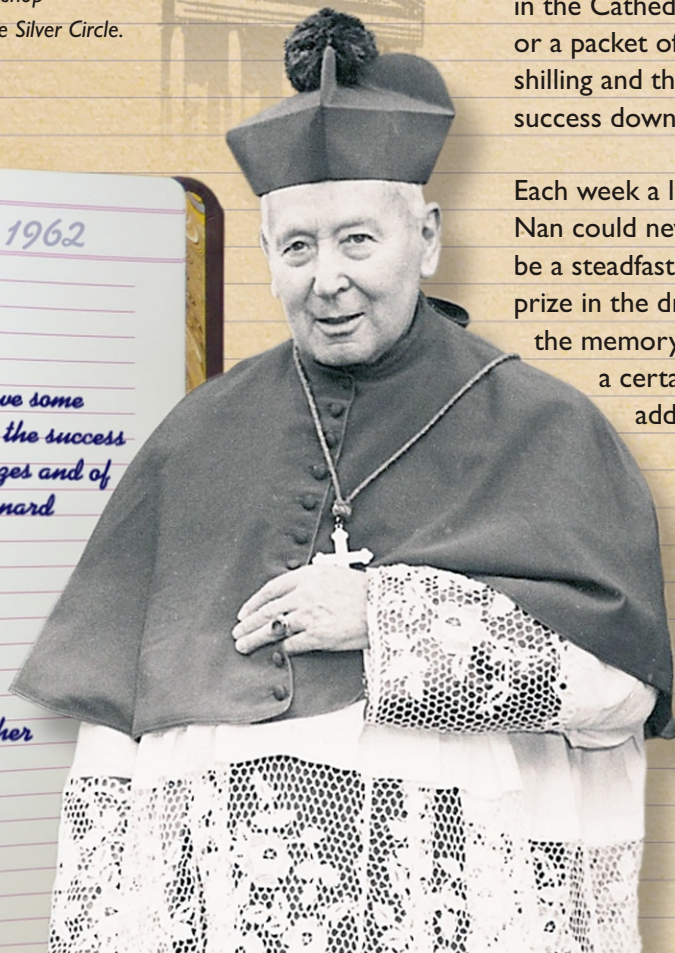
Joan Kiernan





# Bishop McNamee's Memories

In his diary for January 1962, Bishop  
James J. McNamee refers to the Silver Circle.



NOTES. 1962

Jan 19

*Fr. McGowan called to have some papers signed. Told me of the success of the first drawing of prizes and of his intention of seeing Leonard about the next step in the Cathedral improvements.*

Jan 23

*Loughlin, the photographer won the big prize.*

## Good Neighbours

To commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Cathedral Circle a great effort was made to contact people who might have stories worth relating of those early days. As my father, Tommy Donlon was one of the many early promoters I decided to contact Nan Igoe who had worked in our shop at the time. She remembers that buying a line in the Cathedral Circle draw was almost as automatic as buying the daily paper and or a packet of cigarettes. Week after week subscribers unflinching parted with their shilling and this loyalty is the cornerstone of the Circle's continued and ongoing success down to the present day.

Each week a lady by the name of Ms. Jones called in to buy her line but unfortunately Nan could never remember her address. She was not too pleased but continued to be a steadfast subscriber. In 1964 Nan had her own bit of good fortune, winning first prize in the draw just a few months before her wedding to Seamus and she treasures the memory to this day. And they settled in Lisavaddy which was also the address of a certain Ms. Jones. No doubt Nan had little trouble remembering Ms. Jones' address from there on!



Leo Donlon

LEFT: A sunny Ballymahon Street in the 1960s.  
Photographed by  
John Kiernan.

  
*Memories*  
since 1962

Stay in to Win

# 'That Was The Year That Was'



'Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive, But to be young was very heaven' - the words of William Wordsworth written one hundred and fifty years before 1962 but to many in the flower of youth it was the dawn of the swinging sixties. A band called 'The Beatles' beat as in rhythm not the insect beetle were making waves in Liverpool and considering making their first album. Mister Acker Bilk was top of the charts with the haunting instrumental 'Stranger On The Shore'.

To others 1962 was the year John F. Kennedy, Irish American President of the USA 'eyeballed the Cubans over the Bay of Pigs and they blinked', while his wife Jackie wowed America and the world with her sense of style and trendy pill-box hats.



1962 Ireland was on the up, Taoiseach Sean Lemass discussed the possibility of Ireland joining the Common Market while on a visit to Germany. On our new television station Gay Byrne presented the very first Late Late Show.

In sport Sonny Liston ko'd Floyd Patterson to win the world heavyweight boxing title. Stirling Moss, the racing driver, crashed at

**The Cathedral Circle**  
St. Mel's Cathedral, Longford

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# 19



FAR LEFT: *Donlon's Dandy Diner corner in the 1960s.*

LEFT: *Looking across to St. Mel's College with the two storey St. Michael's Boys School to the right.*

RIGHT: *Richmond Street, Longford.*

*Photographs by John Kiernan.*



110mph and survived. Rod Laver the Australian tennis ace won the Wimbledon final. And Kerry won the All-Ireland and Clonguish were crowned Longford Senior Champions.

It was a time of fervent Catholicism and in Rome a rotund happy faced Pope John 23rd threw open the windows of the Vatican declaring it was time to '*let in some fresh air into the church*'. He called the second Vatican Council which began on October 11th 1962 when bishops and cardinals from all over the world gathered for this momentous event that continued its deliberations almost three years.

1962 It was the year Marilyn Munroe died and Eleanor Roosevelt too. It was the year Andy Warhol exhibited paintings of Campbell's soup cans and dollar bills the first manifestation of '*Pop-Art*' American style.

And finally in December 1962 a new Saturday night show on the BBC was the cause of much public discussion 'for and against' as it lampooned church and state and had a very aggressive young presenter, one David Frost! It was called '*That Was the Week That Was*'!

BELOW: *Hi-tech 1962 Hoover Washing Machine.*



*Kitty Hughes*

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in to Win

62

Stay in to Win



# The Faces BEHIND The Circle

Picture the scene ... it's Winning Streak without Marty Whelan ... it's a regular Monday night in Longford Presbytery and the doorbell rings every five minutes as one by one committee members begin to arrive for the Cathedral Circle Draw. It's that time of week again and come hail, rain or shine, each week; this dedicated bunch of people will be here to oversee the weekly draw which has been going strong in Longford town for an unbelievable fifty years.

Sadly the original drum which used to contain those all important winning tickets was lost in the Christmas Day fire of 2009, but now there is a bright new colourful drum to symbolise new beginnings and it is now filled with lucky numbers just waiting to be picked out by a committee member. Five fortunate players will receive prizes ranging from €260 down to €70 - all for the price of just a euro a line.



As the hard working conscientious team automatically take up their respective roles behind the scenes, before the draw actually takes place, I take a few moments with them individually to have a chat about what the Cathedral Circle Draw means to them and why.

**Gerry Fallon** Gerry Fallon's association with the Cathedral Circle draw dates back to 1996 when he found himself taking over his brother's shop. He takes up the story. 'My involvement was because of my brother, who had a shop on Park Road and when he left it I leased it. When I took it over I decided to keep



LEFT: *Gerry Fallon, Rose Wyse, Fr. Tom Healy ADM, Joan Kiernan, Angela Greer, Joe Rooney and Jackie Hughes.*

**The Cathedral Circle**  
St. Mel's Cathedral, Longford

the draw going as there were a few cards left in the shop. I started going from door to door, introducing myself and selling tickets and people began to buy them and I'm still selling now. I start Friday and sell until Monday. I do like it but there's a lot of walking! I put in about twelve or thirteen hours exercise a week!' he exclaims. 'Sometimes what happens to me is the right people are not in and I have to take their name and go back another day, about three times sometimes!'

As for the draw's popularity down through the years Gerry admits that he has observed some noticeable changes. 'It's hard to know if it's still as popular as it always was. Since I've started to sell lines, I've noticed that a couple of people have dropped out because they get disheartened if they're not winning.'

However he remains cautiously optimistic of its potential longevity. 'I don't think the Circle has been affected by the Lotto because I think the price of a euro a line is very reasonable. If you buy just one line and you win €260 euro well it was well worth the money wasn't it?'

And anyway, he has a secret weapon in store ... sell lines to himself! 'I buy two or four lines myself every week and I ended up selling a

couple of big wins to myself. I won €260 one night and €130 another night so I'm fairly lucky myself. I won €70 another night. I'm going to continue in the Cathedral Circle for some time yet!'

### **'We always met on Monday nights - holidays or other commitments didn't come into it'**

**Joan Kiernan** Joan has been on the Cathedral Circle committee for a staggering thirty seven years, when back in 1974, then ADM of St. Mel's, Fr. Lynch, persuaded her to volunteer to become involved in the draw. They could never have imagined that it would still be going strong all these years later. 'At the time he was ADM, prior to Bishop Colm taking over the role', she tells me as she proudly goes on to say that unless there was a family emergency she never missed a weekly draw in over three decades. 'We always met on Monday nights - holidays or other commitments didn't come into it -we met every week without fail and I very rarely missed a night over the years!'

Joan shares the view of her fellow committee members that the Circle will withstand the competition of the National Lottery and continue to flourish in these busy times. 'We did have the usual worries about the lottery coming,' she admits, 'the usual ups and downs, but I believe that the local community have a special place for the draw in their hearts and they will always continue to support it, I think, well into the future'.

Joan clearly has a deep loyalty and affection for the weekly draw which has been such a large part of her life for so long. 'The prizes are better than your small lotto prizes and you get a better return on your money - we did think about what to do when the Lotto came in but we left it as it was and I think we did the right thing. We haven't had any hiccups and everything runs very smoothly because we run a tight ship.'



The new Circle draw drum

# Stay in to Win

So has she ever sailed home with a top prize herself? 'Oh sometimes, but it's embarrassing when you win!' she laughs. 'You get an awful lot of slagging!'

**Joe Rooney** Quiet and softly spoken, Joe has been in charge of the accounts of the Cathedral Circle since 1995, after being asked by one of the priests if he would like to be a part of the draw. He says he gets a tremendous amount of pleasure from the Monday night gathering, not least because he has made so many great long and lasting friendships down the years. 'I really do enjoy coming down here every Monday night,' he tells me. 'I do the accounts and get the money prepared for the bank. I think the Circle is still as popular as ever with the local community. Going back a few years we were thinking of



reducing the price to fifty cent but we decided to leave it to the one euro and it's still as popular as ever despite all that's available these days and the National Lottery. It also contributes to fantastic work in the community', he concludes.

**Micheál McCreanor** One of our founding members is Micheál McCreanor ... a man who has given decades of faithful service to the Draw on all his Monday nights collecting the tickets from the shops down the years. Micheál has been involved both as promoter and committee member since the Circle's foundation in 1962. He now arrives to the draw with a new friend his 'Walking-Stick' and looking rather aristocratic. We wish Micheál with his new friend many years of companionship so that he will continue to lead us each night into the future. Micheál can reflect now on his agile years and all the Tuesday mornings when he collected the Monday night's draw takings and deposited the bag of notes and coins to the bank and returned the deposit slip for the records. His many years and decades of commitment have been enormously generous and we extend our sincere gratitude for his unstinting work in the service of the parish community.

**Rose Wyse** As we speak it dawns on Rose that her links with the draw go back over thirty years and the realisation is a momentary shock! 'I was thinking about this and I think I'm nearly involved as long as Joan - definitely as far back as the nineteen seventies, which is a long time! Fr. Lynch was administrator at that time and he asked me to get involved. It was a wonderful way to get to know people and make friends when you were new to the Parish.'

Rose says that she's delighted that the draw is celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year and congratulates all the promoters for their commitment down the years and to all who support the draw and '*Stay in to Win*' every week.

And Rose's zest and love for her role in the draw continues to be as strong as ever. She

really enjoys the camaraderie and working with such a great bunch of people to raise funds for the parish; 'I'm going to continue for as long as the Lord spares me!'

**Jackie Hughes** 'I have been involved for nearly thirty years. It was the first time the draw was ever recorded in black and white, when we recorded the minutes and the accounts. We worked in three different venues - the Temperance Hall, the Sacristy and here, and in the early days people used to come in and drop in the bags. Mrs. Brennan from Harbour Row, she was a great contributor and Margaret O'Connor was also a great woman.'

I ask Jackie has he any thoughts of retirement? 'Ah no, I'm going to keep going for a while yet!' he offers.

*Audrey Healy*

## Cathedral Circle Promoters 2012

Mae Cheevers  
Clarke's Greyhound Bar  
Hughie Doyle  
Drumlsh PO  
Gerard Fallon

Angela Greer  
Joan Kiernan  
The Kiosk  
Lyon's Bar  
Micheál McCreanor

Pat Mollaghan (Donlon's)  
Christy Monaghan  
Michael O'Brien  
Rose Ann Reilly  
Evelyn Stephenson  
Carmel Ward  
Rose Wyse



## Some Former Committee Members

Phyllis Branigan	Terry McGeough
Mary Clarke	Paddy McNulty
Tommy Donlon	John Murphy
Tim Foley	Tommy Murphy
Dillon Gray	Guina O'Brien
Mary Frances Harte	Margaret O'Connor
Liam Hastings	Peg O'Halloran
Tom Hayden	Joan Reid
Val Hourican	Jimmy Reilly
Joe Kelly	Gertie Sheahan
Philo Kelly	Martin J. Timlin
Nina Martin	

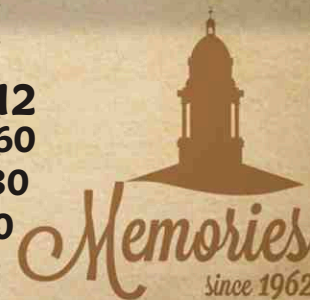
## Clergy associated with The Circle

Msgr. Pat Earley  
Fr. Tom Healy  
Fr. Chris Lynch  
Fr. Phonsie McGowan  
Msgr. Bernard Noonan  
Bishop Colm O'Reilly



## Draw Prizes 2012

1st Prize €260  
2nd Prize €130  
3rd 4th 5th Prize €70



# The Silver Circle

Since 1962

BACK ROW: (from left): Jimmy Farrell, Paddy Clabby, Benny Reid, Joe Kelly, Jimmy Reilly, John Kilemade MIDDLE ROW: Fr. J. Beirne, Brendan O'Meara, George O'Dea, John Fay, Terry McGeogh, Tim Foley, Martin Timlin, Paddy Mc Nulty, Manus O'Donnell, Fr. Mc Gowan. FRONT ROW: Mary O'Hara, Jean Dennegan, Nina Martin, Phyllis Branigan, Val Hourican, Mary Frances Harte, Guina O'Brien.



Fr. Phonsie McGowan, originally from Mohill, was appointed Administrator of Longford in succession to Fr. J.C. Wall in the summer of 1961. He quickly identified a number of pressing problems around St. Mel's Cathedral not least of which were the urgent roof repairs, a functioning modern central heating system and quite specialised redecoration throughout the building. There were other problems as well such as a Presbytery that was barely habitable, even by the post-war standards of the early sixties.

Fr. McGowan had great organisational skills. Throughout the autumn of 1961 he investigated several models of successful fund-raising schemes and eventually settled on that of the highly successful Silver Circle operating in the Parish of St. Peter and Paul on the Elphin diocese side of Athlone. A committee of 'promoters' was organised, quite male in its construct, and a fact-finding mission was undertaken to Athlone to see the concept in action and to be briefed by Fr. McGowan's counterpart there, retired Maynooth professor, Canon McCarthy - the then President of the Irish Vocational Education Association. Longford's Cathedral Circle was born with a team of about a dozen male 'promoters' and a corps of secretarial assistants.

Apart from this writer, then a very young teacher in St. Michael's Boys' School where his little pupils included Roger Timlin, John Joe Brennan, Tommy Sexton and Ronnie Kehoe to name but a very few, the founding Cathedral Circle committee included Martin Timlin, then Principal of the

school and Chairperson of Longford UDC; Joe Kelly; Paddy McNulty a successful draper in Geraldine Tce; Tim Foley, the County Engineer; Terry McGeough, a Department of Social Welfare executive; Liam Hastings, Schools Inspector and founder member of Longford Slashers a few years later. There were also two Cashier/Treasurers provided by the Bank of Ireland: George O'Dea and Ronnie Kerrigan. Secretarial and book-keeping services were provided, among many others, by Philo Kelly, Mary Frances

Harte, Peg O'Halloran, Nina Martin, Guina O'Brien and Gertie Sheahan. I apologise for omissions due entirely to decaying 'grey' cells!

Cards contained twelve 'lines' at one shilling apiece or ten shillings for a full card and the first prize was £30 which wasn't at all bad in the context that The Longford Leader cost four old pence that week, admission to Hanley's Staff Dance in the Cloudland, Rooskey cost six shillings or 18 Longford Leaders and a brand new Fiat 1100 from Brady's in Granard complete with bench seat, heater and demister cost a whopping £635 or about €800, the price of 300 gallons of heating oil to-day!

The first Longford Cathedral Circle draw took place in the Temperance Hall, Longford on Monday 15th January 1962 and the first prize of £30 was won by Jim Gormley from Gowna and was drawn by Fr. Jimmy Beirne, who sadly passed away only a very few weeks ago in Moate, Co. Westmeath.

*Grasta o Dhia air.*

*Benny Reid*

## 'The Cathedral Circle' Early Memories



Stay in to Win

**Paddy Drumm**  
**aka Katie Daly**

*Still lucky after all these years!*

A mere thirty years of age when he began selling Cathedral Circle tickets almost fifty years ago, a now sprightly Paddy Drumm from Teffia Park, Longford has fond memories of his association with the parish draw which he still holds dear today.

'I wasn't having much luck selling or buying tickets under my own name so I thought of the song Katie Daly and decided to sell them under that name and she was lucky for me!', he laughs as he reminisces for a while now while talking to me in the Presbytery.

'I used to work in Providers before working in Peter Clarke's bar where I sold the tickets and under the name 'Katie Daly' I had a bit of luck. I won six pence a few times and the Jackpot which was fifty pence'. Did this not cause problems when the cheques were made out to 'Katie Daly' and not Paddy Drumm I ask him? 'Oh no,' he assures me, 'the cheques were always cashed in Peter Clarke's and even the

Bank of Ireland would cash them!'. Looks like they were all part of the conspiracy then!

The weekly parish draw, continues Paddy, 'caused a lot of excitement in the town. Everyone used to purchase the tickets. A girl called Margaret O'Connor used to sell them at the time from her house and then in Main Street but she died in later years. I mainly sold them in Peter Clarke's and used to sell quite a lot of winners but money was good everywhere at that time.'

Does he think the draw is as popular today as it was in those days or has the advance of the National Lottery affected it negatively? 'It's not really as popular as it was at that time. The money today wouldn't be as exciting as today's Lotto, now you're talking about millions. At that time you also had the hospital sweepstake in aid of the Mater hospital - but where does the money from the Lotto go? Just to football clubs, not to charity.'

'But I think the local community still support the Cathedral Circle, Clarke's still sell the tickets as well as many other places. I'm too old now to sell them - I'm eighty years of age but I have great memories of selling them and I met some great characters along the way and they were always very happy!'

And I'm still lucky, I won €250 on my birthday three years ago so I'll keep playing!'

Name ..... *Katie Daly* .....  
Address ..... *c/o Greyhound Bar* .....



# Going the Full Circle 50

1962-2012

CATHEDRAL  
CIRCLE

**John Dolan, formerly of Keon Terrace was born the same week as the Cathedral Circle**

The front page of *The Leader* of Saturday 6th January 1962 covered it all. The big thaw was setting in after the big freeze, in the Congo, our soldiers were giving us cause for pride at Jadotville and the farmers were preparing to rally in Dublin. Beside a piece referring to the 'ever present threat of a devastating nuclear war' was a note announcing that District Justice Ó hUadhaigh had granted a licence for a proposed non-stop draw in aid of parochial funds. The proposing solicitor was P.J. Gearty who said the draw would be known as The Cathedral Circle and it was to commence on January 15th.

And there we have the birth announcement of the Cathedral Circle - within a couple of days of my own (17/01/62). We had grown up even more closely than I had imagined. The draws were held in the Temperance Hall on Monday nights and the results were probably the source of more joy than the results of the many election counts held there. It didn't have the glamour or scale of Saturdays' televised Lotto draws but the results arriving in Donlon's shop on a Monday night probably created more excitement - especially when Tommy or Rose won yet another seller's prize.

And its sellers gave it a personality. As well as the Donlons, Margaret O'Connor was one of the best. When I sold fruit and vegetables for Waddy Masterson on the Square, Margaret's invitation to buy a line was always taken up and helped to mark the passing of the week.

RIGHT: *John Dolan (on right) with big brother Tiernan on the steps of St. Joseph's Convent.*

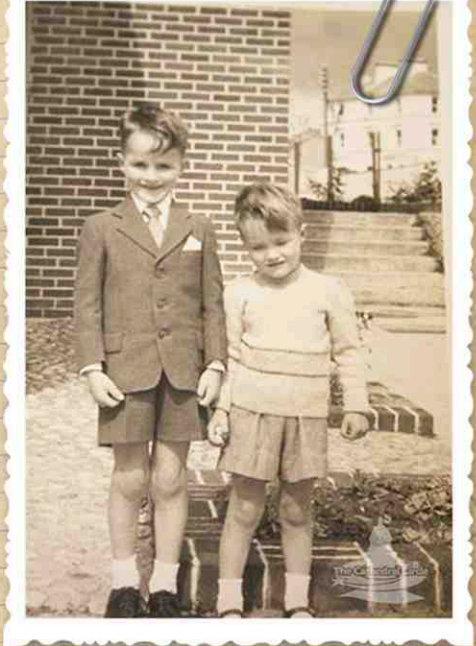
Later, I associate it with Angela Greer, a steady hand in a changing world. As one retailer might put it, it the Cathedral Circle is about real people and real results.

Although *The Leader* did refer to it as the Cathedral Circle, I vaguely remember it being once called the Silver Circle. A few years ago when scratching my head for Christmas present ideas, it provided a great solution - a year's subscription. This turned out to be an ideal emigrant's present in many ways - no postage or packaging, it works all year and makes another connection with home. It was also a great birthday present as the brothers progressed through the years.

I wonder who in 1962 imagined that it would still be going strong in 2012?

*John Dolan*

RIGHT: *A year's subscription to The Cathedral Circle - an ideal Christmas gift.*



*Stay in to Win*

# The Longford Leader

SATURDAY 13th JANUARY 1962

**“The Cathedral Circle”**

## Random Remarks

When we first heard of the Cathedral Circle we wondered what it was all about ... a small coterie to study art ... an exclusive little group bent on diagnosing the country's ills ...

Of course we were wrong. At the moment it is a small circle, but with membership open to all, it should in a short time embrace Longford's worthy citizens and those who visit the town on business or pleasure.

The aims and objects of the organising committee will have the good wishes and unstinted support of all those who have an interest in that vast Gothic pile - St. Mel's Cathedral. This majestic edifice - one of the

finest architectural structures in Ireland - is Longford's proudest possession and those who work and live within earshot of its sturdy and musical bells would be outraged if told it were in danger of falling into decline.

They would demand action ... instant action. The upkeep and maintenance of such a vast building is a big undertaking, for it is a constant battle against time and rising costs. And that is why the Cathedral Circle came into being.

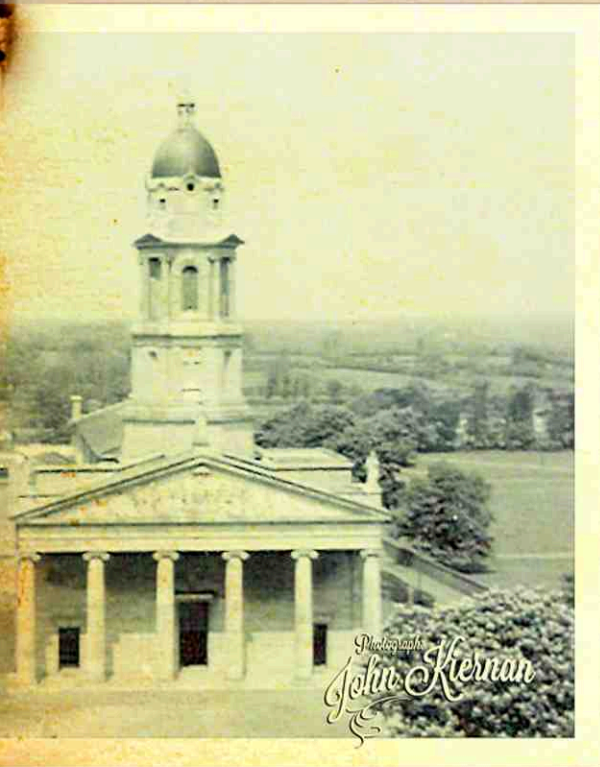
The intention of the organising committee, guided by the Administrator, Rev. P. A. McGowan, is to run a non-stop weekly draw and the proceeds of this will go towards paying the cost of much needed repairs to the Cathedral.



THIS MAJESTIC EDIFICE  
ARCHITECTURAL STRUC  
LONGFORD'S PROU

**The Cathedral Circle**  
St. Mel's Cathedral, Longford

The amount set aside for prizes each week amounts to fifty pounds.



ONE OF THE FINEST  
STRUCTURES IN IRELAND - IS  
JUDST POSSESSION

As it is, rather urgent repairs are necessary including repointing of the back wall. It is the intention to lay new mosaic floors in the men's and in the main porches, renovate the sanctuary floor and install a new heating system. These are only a few of the projects in mind not to mention other parochial plans including the erection of a new school at Melview.

Participation in this non-stop draw need only cost the subscriber one shilling a week while the amount set aside for prizes each week amounts to fifty pounds. The draw will be held in the Library of the Temperance Hall on each Monday night.

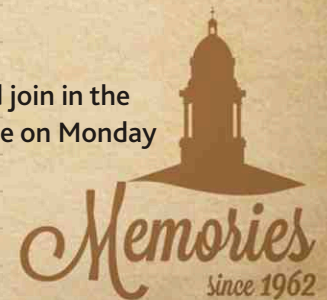
Here is an opportunity for a very small sum to lend your assistance to such a laudable undertaking while at the same time you may reap a rich dividend by winning one of the weekly prizes.



ABOVE: John Kiernan's skyhigh photograph of Longford town with The Temperance Hall in the foreground.

Join the Cathedral Circle today. In passing we might mention the generous action of a few men in the town. When they heard of the project, a quick collection was made and a sum in the region of one hundred pounds was sent to the chairman of the organising committee. It was a spontaneous and magnificent gesture and deeply and sincerely appreciated.

See a promoter to-day and join in the first draw which takes place on Monday next at 8.30 p.m. in the Temperance Hall.



*...in to Win*



LEFT: Jimmy Reilly spins the draw drum in the early days of The Circle observed by Fr. Beirne, Phyllis Branigan, Nina Martin and Fr. McGowan.



### **Evelyn Stephenson**

# **A Diligent Seller of 'The Circle'**

Well known dressmaker Evelyn Stephenson is seen here seated at her sewing machine in Farneyhoogan. She has been a promoter of the Cathedral Circle since it began in 1962 when she responded to Fr. McGowan's call for promoters. She has fond memories of many of the well known people associated with Circle over the last 50 years; people like Fr. McGowan, Fr. Lynch, Margaret O'Connor, Michéal McCreanor and Martin Timlin.

Over the years Evelyn has been a diligent seller of the Circle and has had many winners. Friends, family and even customers could always be sure of Evelyn's lucky streak rubbing off on them. In the early years Evelyn used to go to the draw in the Temperance Hall but she now eagerly awaits the draw results in The Longford Leader. A loyal member of the parish, Evelyn has always been happy to play her part in supporting St. Mel's Cathedral by promoting the Circle. She is looking forward to the completion of the restoration project and hopes to continue having winners for many years to come.

*Some promoters of The Cathedral Circle from over the years.*

- Black's Butchers**
- Jim Loughlin**
- John Freyne**
- May Cheevers**
- Joe Kelly**
- O'Brien's Shop**
- Europa Tavern**
- Fallon's Shop**
- Kelleher's**
- Nancy Oates**
- Clarke's Bar**
- Maureen Manicle**
- Imelda Toher**
- Fitzmaurice's**
- Farrell Bros**
- Lily McGuinness**
- Herterich's**
- Brendan Farrell**
- Gregg's**
- Donegan's Shop**
- Celine Clarke**
- Annaly Hotel**
- O'Brien's Butcher**
- Jacinta Duignan**
- Jenny Malone**
- John Joe Reilly's**
- Lyons' Bar**
- Lourda McGowan**
- Madge Kiernan**
- Corcoran's Chemist**
- Geraldine Kane**
- Kathleen Dowler**

# Cathedral Circle Golden Jubilee Celebrations

**Saturday 14th April 2012**

Mass at 7.30pm  
in St. Mel's Cathedral Centre  
Celebrated by Bishop Colm O'Reilly

- followed by -

**Hospitality in College Assembly Hall  
at 8.30pm**

**Launch of Commemorative Booklet  
Exhibition of Cathedral Circle Memories**

## Golden Jubilee Draws

**Normal Weekly Draw  
Double Prize Draw  
Ten Annual Subscriptions  
Golden Line: €1000**

## Looking Forward

As we celebrate the Cathedral Circle's 50th year, we would be delighted to source some new promoters. If any retail outlet or individual would like to support the draw by selling cards, we would be pleased to hear from you. If you feel you could assist to keep the Circle alive for the next 50 years please contact any committee member or the Presbytery.

## Thank You

*As we have researched the story of the Cathedral Circle for this booklet it has become apparent that very many shops, pubs, businesses and individuals have promoted the Cathedral Circle in it's 50 year history. It would be impossible for us to compile a comprehensive list of all. We would like to acknowledge and thank all who sold Circle lines for long or short periods and who thereby assisted the life of the parish since 1962. Your contribution is recognised and appreciated.*

## Acknowledgements

The Cathedral Circle Committee acknowledges the role of the following in the life of the circle over the years and for the olden Jubilee Celebration.

*Tiernan Dolan  
E.C. Gearty & Co  
Audrey Healy  
Des Mooney  
Parish Finance Committee  
Parish Staff  
RBK Auditors  
Noel Strange  
Temperance Hall Staff  
Turner Print Group*



*Stay in to Win*



*Memories*  
since 1962



A Golden Jubilee Celebration Publication  
Designed by Noel Strange Printed by Turner Print Group

**The Cathedral Circle**  
St. Mel's Cathedral, Longford