

Parish

www.longfordparish.com



Review

YEAR ENDING 2010

THE BELLS OF OLD ST. MEL'S is the name of the recently released single by the Busy Fingers Band. The song is a lively upbeat number which includes choruses with children from Stonepark and Drumlish schools. CD's are being sold in aid of St. Mel's Cathedral Restoration Reserve Fund at €5.00 each in local outlets. Thank you to Busy Fingers for their generosity and goodwill.



FLANCARE FAMILY DAY: All roads led to Flancare Park on the 9th of May as Longford Town FC hosted a parish family day out in aid of the cathedral restoration reserve fund. Crowds many in the familiar red and black, attended Mass there at 1pm celebrated by Bishop Colm and afterwards the stand and sidelines rocked to the sounds of country music stars from near and far. See page 5



CONFIRMATION and FIRST HOLY COMMUNION IN ST. MEL'S CATHEDRAL CENTRE



Growing up in the Cathedral Parish

— Tommy Vaughan remembers —

When I asked directions to Tommy Vaughan's home everyone said to look for the neat hedges and lovely clipped armchairs and sure enough there they were surrounding a delightful garden in front of his home in the townland of Derryharrow. Tommy has lived here all his long life of 95 years which makes him one of the oldest people in our parish.

Born on 10th May 1915 Tommy went to Melview school 'just across the fields' where Master Kilemade, Miss Griffin and Miss Newman taught. "Oh! we got great training in Religious instruction especially for First Holy Communion and Confirmation" says Tommy. "Every day a full half hour and every Sunday all the children were 'kept in' by all the masters after Mass for half an hour for catechism". He mentioned Masters Matthews, Timlin and McKenna. "You went to your own Master for instruction". "Is there any Religious instruction at all in the schools now?" he wondered. At Confirmation he took the pledge and kept it from that day to this "I never broke it and me and Rosie (his sister) got our gold Pioneer pins."

Those were hard but happy times. The Vaughans were farmers and everyone took a hand with the work. It was his mother who first started making the lovely shapes in the hedge and Rose continued this lovely craft. Sadly Rose died recently RIP. "Oh sure people were happier long ago, no lock on the door in the daytime and neighbours dropped in. We have good neighbours here."

Tommy went to Mass in St. Mel's Cathedral where he also served Mass for several years. Fr.



95-year-old Tommy Vaughan pictured at home in Derryharrow.

Flynn taught a crowd of us to serve. I remember Fr. Gray and Fr. Pinkman too. There were seven or eight in a team including several fellows from the town. Tommy Bartley showed me the 'move-

ments', only two did duty and you waited your turn till you knew exactly what to do. Jimmy Reilly, the sacristan, showed us how to lay out the priest's surplice or the alb "leave it open like a boat", he said

and "lay the cord zig zag beside it with the tassle in its place. Everything had to be exactly exact."

"That fire was shocking. I don't go out so often now but Seamus brings me in the car. I listen to

Mass on the radio and Fr. Healy calls in every first Friday. Oh I remember midnight Mass in the Cathedral it would be packed out. The altar was beautiful with candles and brasses and I always admired it at Christmas.

Christmas? We looked forward to that – it's everyday now! says Tommy. My mother cooked a goose. We kept geese and a gander every year and she fattened about 30 geese for the Christmas market. They were sold before Christmas. Times were hard and often the price of turkeys and geese dropped and you were lucky to maybe get five shilling for a goose. How much is it now? €60 or more! And during the Economic War cattle couldn't be sold at all, maybe a £1 for a heifer calf – for its skin. People couldn't afford a vet if an animal was sick. But neighbours John and Charlie Duignan were great men with sick animals. Sometimes men got a fortnight's work with the Council. People were glad to get even a little. Everyone 'joined' for mowing and ploughing because you needed two horses for this work and it was a big thing to feed two horses so you 'joined' with a neighbour explained Tommy. 'All those people are surely in Heaven for they lived a frugal life, Lord rest them'.

And what about Santa? Very small, compared to what they get now it was just a token.

Tommy loved to céili especially at Nertney's where they told stories of times long ago like the Master whose salary was so low that he earned a bit extra measuring land

Continued on page 9 -->

Parish Review 2010



Take Heart!

'Oh my friend, it's not what they take away from you that counts. It's what you do with what you have left that matters' — Hubert Humphrey.

Last Christmas a fire took away our beloved Cathedral. Its flames shook us to the core. But all that day we talked of what it stood for, what it had meant to us. Wasn't it the most religious Christmas day in every home for decades? 'Enkindle in us the fire of your love' we often pray and so it did... good neighbourliness and support came flowing in abundance. God was present to us in the warmth of the response of people at home and abroad to this calamity.

It's been a trying year in our parish but also one of togetherness. So, coupled with the economic uncertainty threatening to engulf our nation as the year ends, it is important that we value what we have. Through the pages of our Parish Review take heart as you read of all the volunteers, the good people and good deeds happening all around our parish in Longford. Maybe you'll become more involved too. May your spirits be lifted as we face into 2011 a new year with its hopes dreams and aspirations. Let 'heart speak unto heart' because time flies but don't forget you're the pilot.

Parish Review Committee:

Tom Chapman, Deirdre Dalton, Tiernan Dolan, Leo Donlon, Fr Tom Healy, Kitty Hughes, Sive McGuinness.

Parish Reviews

The Parish Review was first published in 1990 and ran for the next five years. Its aim was to highlight the good work of the many voluntary organisations in our Parish. It was revived last year and the publication came in for much praise. Unfortunately the fire in St. Mel's Cathedral on Christmas Day destroyed our copies of previous publications so we ask you to look in the attic and dust off the book shelves to see have you any edition from 1990-1995.



Members of Longford Pastoral Council. Back row, Tommy Dolan, Therese O'Shea, Anita Mollaghan, Stefan Macko, Colm Dardis, Fr. Merlyn Kenny, Fr. Nigel Charles, Tony Gillhooly, Christine Treacy, Bernie Mulligan, Kevin Victory, Fr. Brendan O'Sullivan. Front row: Deirdre Dalton, Colette Skelly, Sr. Angela Clarkson, Fr. Tom Healy and Teresa Neville.

Longford Pastoral Council

A Pastoral Council is a group of people who work together for the good of the parish. It is partnership in action at parish level. Our Pastoral Council comprises of the priests in the parish, and a number of parishioners who can give some time to the working life of the parish on a regular basis. Members of the Pastoral Council assist for a number of years and new members are co-opted at intervals ensuring new ideas and outlook. Our meetings always start with a prayer and from there we work towards enriching the spirit of the parish through discussion, practical assistance and commitment to whatever task is in hand.

We meet twice a month - each month having its own agenda - Advent, Lent, Parish Visitation, Station Masses, Easter, First Confession, First Holy Com-

munion, Confirmation, Eucharistic Procession, Cemetery Sunday to name a few. We also work towards developing new programmes which might benefit the parish community. All these require some planning and arranging and this is where we can help. Everyone brings his/her own strengths and skills to the group and each one of us brings something through our own associations within the parish, helping our Pastoral Council reach directly or indirectly into the homes of the parish.

The people of the Parish of Templemichael and Ballymacormack are the life force of the parish and we provide the link. As members of the Pastoral Council we would hope to provide the stepping stones to future plans and events in the parish.

PARISH INFORMATION

MASS TIMES

St. Mel's College Chapel

Weekdays: 8.00am, 10.00am

Advent/Lent/November/ December: 7.30pm

Cathedral Centre

Sundays: 7.30pm (vigil), 8.00am, 10.00am, 11.30am, 1.00pm

Parish Churches

Shrold: 10.30am

Curry: 9.30am

Killashree: Friday 7.30pm, Sunday 10.30am

Clondra: Tuesday 7.30pm, Sunday 8.00pm

Holy Days

St. Patrick's Day & Christmas Day:

All Masses as per usual Sunday Schedule

Epiphany, Assumption, Immaculate Conception,

All Saints: 7.30pm (vigil), 8.00am, 10.00am, 1.00pm, 7.30pm

(No Mass in Curry or Shrold)

BAPTISMS

(4 weeks notice)

1st, 3rd, 5th Weekends: Sunday 1.45pm

2nd & 4th Weekends: Saturday 2.00pm

Book at Parish Office (043 3346465)

CONFESSIONS

Saturdays: 10.30-1pm, 6.30-7.30pm,

Eve of Holy Days/First Fridays: 12.00-1.00pm, 7.00pm-8.00pm

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

St. Mel's Cathedral Presbytery 043 3346465

Email: stmelcathedral@eircom.net

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

St. Emer's 043 3341188

Gaelscoil an Longfoirt 043 3341360

St. Joseph's 043 3345700

St. Michael's 043 3345536

Melview 043 3346197

Stonepark 043 3346036

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Scoil Mhuire 043 3346608

St. Mel's 043 3346469

Templemichael College 043 3345424

St. Christopher's 043 3341769

ACCORD Marriage Support Service: 043 47222

(11.30am - 1.30pm)

Alcohol & Drugs Service: 043 3350988

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA):

Health Care Centre: Mon, Wed, Sat at 9.00pm

Family Centre: Tues & Fri 1pm, Sunday 11.30am

CURA: 090 6474272/1850 622626

Club '89: Family Centre, Tuesday, 2.30pm-4.30pm

Family Centre: 043 3346827

Longford Casualty: 043 3350142

Longford Gardaí: 0433346741 / 999

Longford Mental Health Services: 043 3346992

Money, Advice & Budgeting Service (MABS): 043 3347705

MIDOC: 1850 302702

Mullingar Hospital: 044 9340221

St. Joseph's Care Centre: 043 3346211

Samaritans: 090 6473133

Social Services: 043 3350114

SVP Thrift Shop: 043 3346074

Temperance Hall: 043 3349548

Tony reflects on his journey to priesthood

My name is Tony Gilhooly. I come from Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim. I attended Drumshanbo Primary School and afterwards received my secondary education in Drumshanbo Vocational School. After completing Leaving Cert I decided to go into the workplace rather than continue with education despite having obtained a V.E.C. Scholarship. I joined the staff of C.S. Laird, a local jam manufacturer until its closure in 1991. I then joined the staff of Leitrim County Council and worked in Motor Tax and Revenue for some years.

During my life I always had a keen interest in the Mass, Liturgy and Scripture. I attended daily Mass regularly from the time I was a teenager and was involved in many parish activities. During this time I occasionally thought of becoming a priest but I used to think it couldn't be for me. After the death of my mother in 2006 having experienced the wonderful help of the hospital chaplains and the local Parish Priest Fr. Burke I gave the idea of priesthood some serious thought.

The notion of priesthood became much clearer in my mind at this stage so I decided to explore it. I went on pilgrimage to Lourdes in May 2007 and prayed quietly about having a vocation. When I returned I spoke about the matter of a vocation to the priesthood to Fr. Burke. I joined St. Patrick's College Maynooth and began my studies in August 2007. The training programme for priesthood known as *formation* consists of four areas: spiritual, pastoral, academic and human formation.

The academic course comprises of two years study of philosophy, a year of pastoral study and three years theology. I have completed a course in philosophy and arts and studied theology last year. I am presently undertaking a diploma in Pastoral Theology.

During this course I spend two days in Maynooth and the remainder of the week is spent on Parish Placement. My placement is in Longford Parish. I reside in the Cathedral Presbytery and work in close association with the parish team.



Tony Gilhooly.

I have become involved in the various parish activities since I joined the parish team at the end of September. My placement concludes at Easter time. I have become involved in the meetings of the parish team where the various issues are discussed. I run the "Do this in Memory" programme for the First Holy Communion class at St. Emer's school. This involves taking one class a week in the school and also working with the parents. I prepare and deliver scripture reflections at both week-day and Sunday Masses regularly. I read and help with the distribution of Holy Communion as required. I have had the opportunity to accompany the priests on parish visitation.

I have edited the parish newsletter which involves supplying editorial comment on the Sunday readings. Sr. Angela Clarkson, parish sister has introduced me to the work of a baptismal team and has generously shared her wealth of experience in various aspects of parish life. I am gaining valuable experience from working with and observing them in their day to day roles.

The whole area of Pastoral Ministry is vast and varied and I am gaining great experience from the parish clergy - namely Fr. Tom Healy, Adm.; Fr. Merlyn Kenny, C.C.; Fr. Brendan O'Sullivan, C.C.; Fr. Nigel Charles, C.C. and Fr. Pdraig Kel-

liher, C.C. I have the opportunity to see each Pastoral Minister bringing his/her unique style to each pastoral encounter. This is all made possible by the unfailing co-operation of the parish team, for which I am most grateful.

It is great to become part of parish life with all its facets and having the opportunity to meet the people who come together for the successful running of the parish. This includes the office secretary, the housekeeping staff, grounds keeper, sacristan and the many volunteers who give of their time for the betterment of the parish.

During my time in the parish I am gaining vast experience in all areas of formation. There is a wide range of work in your parish so if any one wishes to volunteer they could find something fulfilling and rewarding just by taking an active role in the life of the parish. I want to express my sincere gratitude to the priests and people of the parish who are leaving no stone unturned in supporting me on my journey to priesthood.

Christmas Reflection

Lord, in this Holy Season of prayer and song and laughter, we praise you for the great wonders you have sent us; for shining star and angel's song, for infant's cry in lowly manger. We praise You for the Word made Flesh in a little Child. We behold His glory, bathed in it's radiance.

*Hail and blessed be the hour and moment
In which the Son of God was born of the most pure Virgin Mary,
At midnight in Bethlehem, In the piercing cold.
In that hour, I beseech Thee, O my God,
To hear my prayer and grant my desires, Amen.*



*"The people who walked in darkness
Have seen a great light;
Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom
A light has shone"
Isaiah 9:1*

**St. Mel's Cathedral
2010 Christmas greetings
from the Pastoral Team
of Longford Parish**

Dear Friends,

We wish you and your family a very happy Christmas remembering in particular those who cannot come home, all who mourn, the sick and the lonely. Our prayer is for the Lord's Blessing to come upon you in a most special way during this holy season. We take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation of your continued support for our parish throughout the past year.

With every good wish,

The Parish Pastoral Team:
Fr. Nigel Charles, Sr. Angela Clarkson, Deirdre Dalton, Colm Dardis, Tommy Dolan, Fr. Tom Healy, Fr. Pdraig Kelliher, Fr. Merlyn Kenny, Stefan Macko, Anita Mollaghan, Bernie Mulligan, Teresa Neville, Therese O'Shea, Fr. Brendan O'Sullivan, Colette Skelly, Christine Treacy, Kevin Victory

*"The maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel."
Isaiah 7: 14*

Parish Facts 2009

Baptisms 176
First Holy Communions 148
Confirmations 153
Marriages 33
Deaths 79



Intergenerational Project – elderly and youth: bridging the age gap our way

The present Transition Year Class from Mean Scoil Mhuire have started visiting the residents of St. Joseph's Care Centre every Wednesday afternoon. This year's groups are carrying on the strong links that have been built up by previous Transition Year Classes. The Wednesday afternoon visits are giving the younger generation a chance to take time to chat and get to know the residents and likewise it is giving the older generation a chance to pass on their life stories to the younger generation. The students have been enthralled by the amazing adven-

tures and talents of the residents from flying airplanes over Africa to playing various musical instruments and learning Spanish from a fluent speaker! The girls are looking forward to the annual St. Joseph's Christmas concert where they will get an opportunity to put their entertainment skills to the test!

So another year has brought more opportunities for a new set of students to experience the friendship and mutual respect that different generations can have for one another and we say long may it last.



Mean Scoil Mhuire Transition Year Class 2010-2011 and their teacher Ms. Killian pictured at a preparatory workshop in St. Joseph's Care Centre, September, 2010.

21 years at the Family Centre

Mrs Maureen O'Rourke



For the past 21 years Mrs Maureen O'Rourke has been the keystone in the Family Centre.

If ever you go to a meeting, a course or even a coffee morning in the Family Centre there's one person sure to be there to welcome you and that's Mrs Maureen O'Rourke. For the past 21 years she has been the keystone, the heart and energy source of all the groups and organisations that need a place to meet, talk, discuss, plan and promote. From childcare to theology Maureen takes the bookings sets up an appropriate meeting room with the heat on and a welcome cup of tea.

I met Maureen in her busy office where she works every morning from ten to twelve and every evening from six looking after the needs of the many organisations that use The Family Centre. And is she busy? When I tried to have a chat there with her about her work the phone rang and rang and she cheerfully talked and noted each request. Does it ever stop I wondered. She smiled and said 'Ah sure it is busy I suppose'.

Back in 1989 when Fr Pat Earley Adm set up Teallach Iosa and Maureen started work there, one of the first groups set up by Fr Hugh Turbitt was Club 89. Even back then it was quite busy. There were many Pre Marriage courses dur-

ing the year and it was the venue for the Pastoral Council meetings. Other groups include the Legion of Mary and the Pioneers. The AA meets four days a week and CASA, the National Parents Council and Older Persons' Network. One of the groups dear to Maureen's heart is the children who attend the Rainbows course. It's lovely to see the children settle in and make friends'.

But all really appreciate the warm efficient way Maureen runs the centre, as Sr Angela said 'she's way ahead of you and she knows exactly what is needed and has it done without you ever having to ask'. Maureen misses the Cathedral and indeed for several weeks the Family Centre was closed while the building was being made safe following the fire. It was a busy time as she tried to get alternative accommodation for the many groups booked in. The Friday Coffee morning after 10 a.m. Mass is now held in St Mel's college.

Does she get time off? Well the Centre closes for the month of August and also for a short break at Christmas and Easter. But fair weather or fine Maureen is always there first in the morning and last to turn out the light at night.



Longford Credit Union Ltd.

Longford Credit Union

"Not for profit, not for charity, but for service"

This is the ethos of the Credit Union Movement. Longford Credit Union is in existence for the past 40 years and has embodied this ideal in all its dealings with its members. In doing so, it has been a force for good in all sections of the community.

The Credit Union is a financial institution *with a difference*. Involved in Longford Credit Union, and its sub-office in Edgeworthstown, are over 30 volunteers who meet weekly and monthly to serve on the Board of Directors, and numerous other committees. There are over 500 Credit Unions in Ireland, and with an average of 25 volunteers per branch, that results in a total of approx. 12,500 volunteers working wholeheartedly for the members of their respective communities.

The standard of living in today's Longford is light years away from the Longford of 1969. Then, people saved in shillings and borrowed in pounds for such basic essentials as cookers, washing-machines, fridges, First Communions, fuel, etc. These loans were paid off and another item ear-marked. In an era before credit cards, the Credit Union provided a lifeline to many people who simply had no other way of borrowing money.

Longford Credit Union is proud to sponsor Co Longford School's Soccer League, Backstage Theatre and a number of smaller local initiatives. We have also been involved with local Car Dealers since the introduction of our popular Car Draws in 1998.

The Credit Union's commitment to young people also extends to our annual Poster Competition and Schools Quiz. In addition, a free draw is held for our young members every two months.

Longford Credit Union appreciates the commitment of its Manager, Staff, Board of Directors, members of Edgeworthstown sub-office, and various committees. We pay tribute to past Credit Union personnel and those who are no longer with us. Long may the Credit Union tradition continue.

Unique echoes from St Mel's Cathedral

Songs that were recorded in St Mel's Cathedral in the months before it perished in the flames last year have been put together on a unique CD.

'Cathedral Echoes' is the title of the new recording put together by St Mel's Cathedral Folk Group, who play at the monthly holy hour, now held in St Mel's Cathedral Centre on the last Saturday of each month.

"It's a project that grew out of the holy hour, which we started a number of years ago, and that has bonded

a lot of them and drawn the group together," explained Fr Brendan O'Sullivan, the director of the group.

"It is important for me to have music for every liturgy that we can because it enhances everything so much. The music has helped us to develop the holy hour," he added, with close to 400 now attending the monthly hour of reflection.

The location of the recording, says Fr Brendan, is what's makes the CD all the more special.

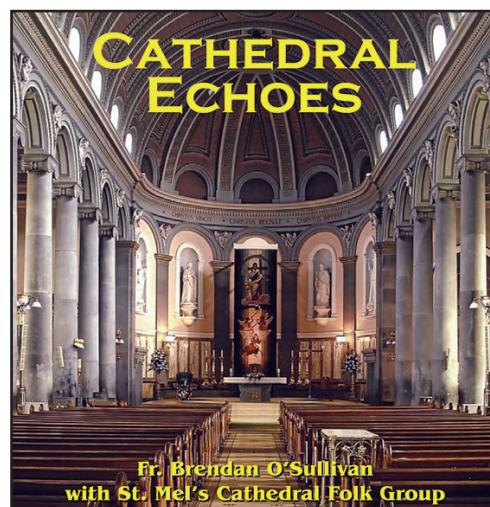
"This was recorded in the cathedral; that's what's kind of precious about it. Paul (Gurney, Real World Studios) brought the equipment in (to the cathedral). We had done it before Christmas, but then with the way things went with the cathedral, we didn't get time to complete it until now," said Fr O'Sullivan.

With 17 in the group, the variety of vocalists and musicians (accordion, banjo, saxophone, keyboards and guitar) provide a unique sound on the CD, particularly given where it was recorded.

"There's a nice mix; there's a kind of a traditional Celtic mix to it," he said. "The acoustics in the cathedral are fantastic and that's something that we miss hugely from a choir point of view."

"The talent in the group is very good; they are all good musicians and good singers, which you can hear on the CD."

"The sanctuary in the cathedral is where we practiced every Monday night for about two and a half hours. The sanctuary is where we recorded it and that's where we get the front cover from. It's kind of precious to us. And that's where we get the name from as well – it kind of echoes of times past," he explained.



The cover of 'Cathedral Echoes'

Funds raised through sales of the CD will go towards the Cenacolo Community in Knock, Co Mayo and the St Mel's Cathedral Restoration Fund.

The CD is available from the Cathedral Presbytery during office hours (Mon to Fri 9am – 5.30pm – 043 3346465) and Fuschia Design, Dublin Street, and also in Knock Book Store, Knock, Co Mayo.



Tommy Cowan selling Cathedral Folk Group CDs.



Longford Branch Alzheimer Society – caring for people with dementia



Photograph shows P. J. Quinn presenting a cheque to Jo Canning Chairperson, B. Dunne, Co-ordinator and Marie McMullen, Administrator from a recent fundraising event that P.J. undertook for the Alzheimer Society Longford branch.

The Longford Branch of the Alzheimer Society of Ireland was founded in 1994 to work for and on behalf of people with dementia and their carers, to ensure they have necessary supports and services to enable them to maximise quality of life, respecting the needs, rights, and dignity of the individual. Our aim therefore within the Longford area is the provision of dementia specific care and carers supports.

Our services include a Home Care Service with trained home care workers who care for people with Alzheimer's disease at home. This care is person centered which means that it is tailored to meet the needs of the individual.

We provide a Day Care Service which consists of a full day in a local nursing home and it gives essential respite to those families caring for their loved one at home. Transport is provided to and from the day care. This runs from Monday to Friday. A Day Care Service also runs on a Saturday 9.30 to 4.00.

We also provide a Respite Service where the person

with dementia will go for one weeks respite to a local nursing home which gives the main carer a complete break from caring for their loved one. This respite is essential for both the client and the main carer.

We also provide Family Training Days for families who are striving to come to terms with this illness. The information and knowledge about this illness gained from these training days is invaluable to family members. Presently we are hoping to restart our Carers Support Group in a new format to better meet the needs of carers who are trying to cope with this illness.

The Society operates a National Helpline No Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm. Here you can talk to someone who understands, get information and find out about services and supports that are available to someone who is caring for a loved one with dementia. The Helpline number is 1800 341 341 or you may go online at www.alzheimer.ie

Anybody who wishes to avail of the above services may contact Breda or Marie at 043 3348402 / 3347221 or 086 3802183 or Samantha at 086 6078584.



Pictured are Cathedral Circle Committee: Back row: Jackie Hughes, Joe Rooney, Rose Wyse, Joan Kiernan. Front Row: Michael McCreanor, Jerry Fallon and Angela Greer

Stay in to win

The Cathedral Silver Circle

Like all the other consequences of the Cathedral Fire on Christmas morning the Cathedral Circle draw team had all their paraphernalia lost in the fire because for the past number of years it was stored there, including the draw drum that had been used since the draw was launched in 1962 by the late Fr. Francis McGowan, Adm. and the circle committee.

The draw drum was becoming somewhat of an antique that was rolled each Monday evening by Micheál McCreanor having taking part in 2,390 draws over the past forty seven years, not to mention outside draws when it was borrowed by other town organisations. Substantially built of softwood by a local carpenter, it had no renovation except painting and a set of new castors.

Also lost were the record books for the past ten years that recorded each week's takings from the circle promoter including the names of deceased promoters, Mrs. Brennan who collected from her neighbours around Harbour Row for years and Margaret O'Connor who collected on the Main Street around Provider's corner for decades. Also John Joe Reilly's, he was a constant promoter until he retired from business on No1 Main Street.

On the 4th of January 2010 the draw was held in a new venue and as usual the promoters continued to deliver the weekly contributions collected from our constant patrons. Prizes were won as far away as Carrigallen in Co. Leitrim due to our roving promoter Rose Anne Reilly who meets patrons at various bingo sessions.

Promoter Jerry Fallon has gone from strength to strength in his weekly door to door collection mainly in Teffia Park and the surrounding areas and at the Monday night Dog Track meetings.

Angela Greer carried out her daily collection both in the Post Office and in Hazelwood shopping centre and many of her weekly patrons were very lucky. Angela also arranged for a special *Cathedral Fire Restoration* collection with the permission of the Davis family in the Hazewood Shopping Centre one Saturday last spring. That was a huge success. A few of us went along to help and not alone got a cash contribution from the passing shoppers, but some promised that later they would arrange to hold a collection in their own area for the cause. One shopper told us in great detail about seeing great architecture on the continent when she was given a trip of a life time by her daughter on the Orient Express Train.

To all the promoters for their constant attention selling lines, either over the counter or otherwise, thank you. And to all the other passing supporters who take the time to make their contribution each week a special *Go raibh míle maith agaibh!*



Cemetery Sunday – one of the most solemn days of the year as we remember our deceased relatives and friends.

Remembering our deceased

Cemetery Sunday is a very special day in August which seems to be growing in popularity with each passing year. Popularity doesn't seem to be the correct word and yet, in a peculiar way, it does fit. Whilst November still remains the traditional month for remembering our deceased family and friends, that Sunday at the end of autumn seems to be a perfect time for the entire community to gather in Ballymacormack for the blessing of the graves.

During the days and long evenings leading up to the Sunday, the graveyard becomes a hive of activity with weeding,

planting, watering and cleaning of the various plots. Though a quiet and restful spot, it's seldom empty. It's always a spot for a knowing nod or a supportive chat.

On the day itself, Ballymacormack heaves with visitors from all over the land and beyond. For many families, the occasion is second only to Christmas for a family get-together.

Flowers are placed on the graves, prayers said and memories shared. It's encouraging to see so many young people stand with a quiet dignity at the graves of grandparents but heartbreaking when it's

at the grave of another young person who, maybe died tragically.

I dreaded my own first Cemetery Sunday because I simply didn't know what to expect. I was still raw and vulnerable. But seeing so many present, who had obviously been through similar experiences was a welcome and unexpected comfort.

Cemetery Sunday is a day that really shows the positive power of the community, something which is, thank God, alive and well in Longford. Of course, it can be a sad day but at the same time it's a very special day.



Children's Mass: a great success

The parish now hosts a Children's Mass each month, usually on the last Sunday of the month, which is always advertised in the Newsletter in the weeks leading up to it. Children in any class in primary school are welcome to attend as activities are tailored to their age. It has gone from strength to strength since it began last March.

The children are led out at the start of the readings and come back in later during the Mass. The children are instructed by a team of lay people who have crèche and teaching experience. Children are brought to a room within the same building where they engage in religious activities related to that Sunday's Gospel while their parents attend the Mass. So please just come along with your child to 10am Sunday Mass on the days advertised.



Leaders of activities at the Children's Mass: Amanda Murray, Serena Yorke, Shona Matthews and Sr. Angela Clarkson

Newsletter Review 2009

January

It was two weeks into January before our newsletter appeared, echoing the shock and dismay of the community at the awful fire that engulfed our beloved St Mel's Cathedral on Christmas morning. Alongside that great loss was a wonderful togetherness, support and care for our priests and Bishop Colm which was a source of strength and comfort to them at this difficult time. Mass was celebrated in the Temperance Hall while St Mel's College Chapel and Sports Hall were being made ready for daily and Sunday masses by the Pastoral Council and an enthusiastic team of talented volunteers. There was sadness too at the news of the death of our former Bishop, Cardinal Cahal Daly. The Church Unity Service was on 21st in St John's Church of Ireland with homily by Bishop Tony Farquhar. It was time to renew your membership of the Cathedral Circle. Parish funerals took place mostly in St Mary's Church in Newtownforbes. Perpetual Adoration resumed in the College Chapel and the monthly Holy Hour there on the 31st united us all in prayer.

February

Favourite feast days brought people to Mass in great numbers; St Brigid, Candlemas, St Blaise and St Mel; where week day Masses were now in the College Chapel while Ash Wednesday saw the Temperance Hall thronged for masses to mark the beginning of Lent.

Longford prayer group met in St Josephs. The Family Centre which had been closed because of the fire was declared safe and re opened for the Rainbows programme. There was a seven minute feature on the Cathedral on RTE television. Parishioners were very generous in their response to the Haiti appeal for help for victims of the terrible earthquake. Saturday 20th we moved for Sunday masses to the beautifully designed Cathedral Centre located in St Mel's College Sports Hall.

Stewards were there to guide motorists in the new parking areas and after Mass willing helpers restored the centre for use by the students during the week.

March

Lenten programmes on the Gospel of St Luke, Cry of the Earth, Christian meditation and Console as well as station masses all continue in our parish. St Patrick's Day celebrations lifted our spirits as we continued to gaze through the railings at the Cathedral now surrounded by scaffolding, storage cabins and 'no entry' signs while tall cranes carry workmen over its roofless walls. A special newsletter was published updating us on the work in progress which can also be followed on our parish website.

The Holy Father, Pope Benedict sent a pastoral letter to the Catholics of Ireland concerning the deeply disturbing abuse of children by some members of the Church. Reminding us of 'the rock from which you were hewn' (Is.51:1) he said that 'historically the Catholics of Ireland have proved a force for good at home and abroad'. (Pg 7) The first children's mass was on 28th at 10am. Good news! As the threat of swine flu eased the suspension of the sign of peace at mass was lifted.

April

We had beautiful ceremonies in St Mel's Cathedral

Friday Coffee Mornings

On Friday mornings from September to June a dedicated group of parishioners ensure a warm welcome for all who care to chat for a while over a cup of tea and biscuits after the 10am Mass. The venue used to be the Family Centre – now it takes place in the Pastoral Centre at the College which you can get to via the main door at the front of the building. Part of our faith is to support one another so it's a nice touch to come together socially after time spent in prayer. You are most welcome to join us. Sincere thanks to the committee and especially Tony Murphy who ensure the cuppa is ready when we arrive.



Plenty of chat at the weekly Coffee Morning



centre for Holy week especially the Good Friday drama of the Lord's Passion. On Easter Sunday the choir lifted our spirits with joyful Alleluias.

The tidy town national clean-up day saw volunteers make a clean sweep of Longford and the citizens information service launched a new 'free-fone information line'. It was enrolment time for new pupils in all our national schools. World day of prayer on 25th reminded us to pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. There was a progress report on the work at the Cathedral and news of a parish family day in Flancare Park organised by the town football club.

May

All roads led to Flancare Park on the 9th as Longford Town FC hosted a parish family day out in aid of the Cathedral restoration reserve fund. Crowds many in the familiar red and black, attended Mass there at 1pm celebrated by Bishop Colm and afterwards the stand and sidelines rocked to the sounds of country music stars from near and far. Over €12,000 was collected and we thank the organisers and artistes for a great day out. Pilgrimage season again and St Padre Pio group went to Holy Cross Abbey in Tipperary.

There was a one day retreat in Lough Derg and the Bishop led the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes. Pioneer jubilarians received gold and silver awards at a special Mass. On the parish website you could read a presentation by Danny Donohoe OSG about the fire and emergency works at the Cathedral.

June

The annual Corpus Christi procession gathered in the shadow of the Cathedral. Accompanied by the pipe band and led by Bishop Colm the Blessed Sacrament was carried under a new canopy through the streets. Many newspapers carried Tiernan Dolan's poignant photo of the procession with the roofless Cathedral in the background. Young people attended the Knock Summer festival of prayer, music and reflection. Fr Nigel led a pilgrimage to Lough Derg. Longford Library organised a beautiful exhibition on St Mel's Cathedral, exploring its early history and reflecting on the tragic fire. The exhibition continued over the summer in the library. Fr Paul Kangkai from Nigeria joined our parish for the summer. At the half way in our year the priests warmly thanked all those who had assisted in the many works necessary since the fire. Thank you also to those who contributed to the tax relief scheme.

July

On Friday the 11th the feast of the Sacred Heart Bishop Colm celebrated a special Mass marking the end of the The Year of the Priest.

At Mass we now have an adapted ciborium with a pyx to hold very low gluten hosts for those who have the coeliac condition. St Vincent de Paul appealed for volunteers to work in their Thrift shop, in St Martin's community centre and with St Mel's visitation conference. There is a lovely walkway to

Mass in the college down the tree lined avenue and lights are being installed for extra safety in the late evenings. Photos of the damage to our Cathedral, more visible after the cleanup, were on the website taken by Fr. Padraig Kelliher and Tiernan Dolan Emergency work on the Cathedral continues with the completion of a temporary steel roof which can be seen rising above the town.

August

There's a holiday atmosphere about helped by the good weather. Students received their leaving cert results and college places. Free buses brought parish youth to Clonmacnois to experience the Catholic faith and meet friends. Others went to Medjugorje with Fr. Vincent Connaughton. On Cemetery Sunday families gathered in great numbers in Ballymacormack for the annual Mass and blessing of the graves. In town visitors flocked for the 'fáille' festival and athletes from home and abroad participated in the 9th annual marathon organised by a very energetic team led by Fr McGovern and Liam Fenelon. On the 29th the people of the parish generously donated €12,780 to the Pakistan flood appeal.

September

Back to school and back to work! The children's mass was hosted again on the 26th with help from teachers and parents. Bishop Colm led the annual diocesan pilgrimage to Our Lady's shrine at Knock. Knock Marriage Bureau reminded us of its intro-

duction service. Busy Fingers Band released a new single The Bells of Old St Mels written by Mel Crowe and James Gorham and featuring children from Stonepark and Drumlisk schools. All the proceeds go the restoration reserve fund for the Cathedral. Prayers were offered for the safe rescue of 33 miners trapped underground in Chile. The flower club reminded us of the joy of flower arranging and the VEC commenced courses for parents in child development and homework. Longford Slashers GAA team are county champions. Well done to captain, team and all concerned!

October

The month of the Holy Rosary and there were public Rosaries on the Market Square, on the green in Springlawn and at Lana Aoihbhinn. There was a ceilí in the Temperance Hall in aid of Meals on Wheels. We welcomed clerical student Tony Gilhooley from Drumshanbo who will be with us for a pastoral year. Early booking for the Accord preparation for marriage course called – Marriage a Journey not a Destination – was advised. There was an invitation to visit a Catholic Cell group in the parish. On Mission Sunday we were reminded to pray for and support our missionaries. The update on the Cathedral told us that it is hoped to announce the design team to plan the reconstruction very soon. And hearts were lifted by the happy ending to the plight of the 33 miners trapped underground in Chile when all were rescued after 69 days and we, like each of them, gave thanks to God.

November

Masses on 1st and 2nd returned to the Temperance Hall to accommodate the large congregations. There was guided prayer on Thursday evenings after the evening Mass in the college chapel during the month. Station Masses were held in the rural areas of our parish. There is much talk and many are worried about the financial crisis in our country. Special Christmas cards designed by Tiernan Dolan and students from St Mel's College featuring photos of the Cathedral in the winter snow of last year are in such demand that they have gone to a second printing. On Sunday the 28th we had a special bereavement ceremony. And the Bishop announced that the peal of the Cathedral bells would soon be heard ringing out again over the town, a symbol of continuity and hope as we look forward to the restoration of our Cathedral. Members of the Parish Review team are busy writing up and recording the events of the year in our parish.

December

Writing this as we go to print there are a lot of special activities planned in the lead up to Christmas. The Cathedral Folk Group with Fr Brendan are launching a new CD of music and reflection on the 2nd. We have an International Mass – 'Many Nations, One People' – on the 4th and a special youth Mass on the 11th. There will be a Christmas choral celebration with the County Choir on the 12th and a service of Reconciliation on the 18th. The Legion of Mary will sponsor an evening for young people with author John Pridmore. An all-night vigil of prayer for our nation at this time of grave financial crisis is planned for 7th. As we near the great feast of Christmas and the first anniversary of the great fire in our Cathedral it is planned to have a star shine from the spire and to welcome back the sound of the bells of St Mel's while the special committee will announce the design team to plan its restoration. Signs of hope at the end of 2010 an unforgettable year!



Highlights of the year at St. Christopher's Services

The official opening of the Sylvia Dawson Hall was held in early May was a very joyous occasion, and was performed by Stephen Kealy, Director of Psychology, Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, Moore Abbey. There was a great "turn-out" of family and friends of Mrs. Dawson which is testament to the very high esteem in which she is held within the organisation and further a-field. The newly formed St. Christopher's Choir performed at the Official Opening and we also reprised a short sketch called Charlie Chaplin which is a mime performed by three service users.

On November 4th we had the honour of a visit to Leamore Park of President Mary McAleese and her husband Dr. Martin McAleese, and although the weather could hardly have been worse the President's Address and walk-about in the Sylvia Dawson Hall certainly brightened up the day for all those present.

For Valentine's Day a very successful "strictly come dancing" competition was organized by the advocacy group. The competition was adjudicated by external judges - Mr. & Mrs. Eugene Prunty.

St. Christopher's Art Exhibition was launched by Mr. Eddie Ward, Project Manager, H.S.E., in the Atrium Gallery at the Backstage Theatre.

A small number of service users formed an advocacy group. They got involved in planning and organising social events during the year. They conducted their own meeting and put forward proposals to the management committee during the year. All fundraising proceeds went to subsidising "a two-night away trip" to Petersburg, which they thoroughly enjoyed.

Many trainees have availed of training and activities outside the Centre during the year. Some participated in computer, horticulture and cookery in mainstream adult education services.

A successful card making enterprise has commenced with invitations for weddings, christenings and birthdays being made to order. Greeting cards are now on sale in Blooms Florist, Longford.

On June 21st a group of thirteen service users travelled to Cork to perform in the All Ireland Performing Arts Festival and entered in the Drama and Singing sections. Thirteen service users participated in a short drama piece called "Anything to declare" and did us proud with a fantastic performance in the beautiful Firkin Crane Theatre in Cork.

The singing section was held in Cork City Hall with Rosaleen Maguire (last years winner) opening the competition with her winning song accompanied by full orchestra. Jesse Farrell performed "My Irish Molly" brilliantly in the competition that had an audience of one thousand people approximately. The trip to Cork was a wonderful experience for all who took part.

For the month of October a project took place with the service users from the Sewing Unit which was funded by the H.S.E. Health Promotion Unit. Two artists from Sligo worked with the service users to create two seven feet tall witches. The witches took "pride of place" alongside the ten foot tall skeleton created by the Woodwork and Knitting Unit last year for the "Dead of Nite" parade as part of the town's Halloween Festival. Shannonside aired their morning shows from our services in October. Members of Management, Executive, Leisure Buddies and the Art Programme were interviewed as part of preparation for the Halloween Festival in the town.

Special thanks!

We have many, many friends and services who support us within the local communities. We extend a sincere thanks to all of them.

This year we lost our esteemed former chairperson and member of management Mr. Michael Kelly, R.I.P., who devoted many years to the services. We extend our sympathies to his family and to members of the Association who died during the year, relatives of service users and staff attached to the services. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh an anam dílis.*

ATTACKED AT MASS

Normally you'd associate being at Mass as being in a safe, secure place. Mass provides a space from the helter skelter of the hustle and bustle of everyday life. At least, that's the theory.

However, on Wednesday September 13th, 1961 a group of Irish UN troops will never forget their 7.30 am Mass when they were attacked by a large force of heavily armed Katangan troops backed up by European mercenaries. Irish troops, many of whom were from Longford, were serving on their first ever overseas mission in the Congo. Little did they realise that that Mass was to be their last few minutes of peace before all hell broke loose in what was later to be called the Siege of Jadotville.

Never since and never before did Irish troops come under such sustained attack. Amongst those standing brave was Annaly Park man, Michael Tighe.

For four long, hot, torturing days there was to be no respite for the beleaguered garrison, ringed now completely by the Katangans. More reinforcements were brought in against them and their rations grew lower by the day.

The dust rose as the mortar shells burst around them. Whatever water they saved before the attacks, quickly became putrid. Flies swarmed all over the place. The firing was so heavy by day and



Michael Tighe, Annaly Park was one of the heroes in the "Siege of Jadotville". He served an incredible three tours of duty in the Congo between 1960 and 1964. He is pictured here with two members of the Katangan army.

night that it was impossible for food to be cooked properly. Michael Tighe recalls eating the "Jadotville Stew" which had anything and everything!

And as if the mortars and machine gun fire wasn't bad enough, on Thursday the exhausted and parched men had to endure being fired on from the guns and rockets of a Fouga Magister jet fighter. Again, this was the first and only time

that Irish troops had come under such attack. The jet fighter returned to spray the men's positions on the Thursday and Friday.

The attacks continued throughout the nights which gave the men no rest at all. Michael Tighe recalls thinking about the comforts of home but within seconds mortars were exploding all round him which soon brought him back to his dreadful

and nightmarish reality.

Lips tightened and weary eyes narrowed and unshaven faces became even more scraggy. In the end they were fighting as if by instinct.

Twice, reinforcements tried and failed to get through. All the time the men were aware of the real threat of cannibalism if things got badly out of control. The figures spoke for themselves, 150 Irish

men were totally surrounded by a force of between 3 and 4,000 Katangans and white mercenaries.

With no hope of help from reinforcements and with fresh water supplies, food and ammunition gone, their situation was truly desperate. The officer in charge Comdt Quinlan, knew that further fighting would result in the deaths of the 150 brave men under his command, and so decided to surrender honourably.

Following the Siege of Jadotville, the soldiers were held hostage from September 18th - October 25th 1961 but that's another story for another day. Amazingly, when they returned home, many were treated as cowards for not fighting to the bitter end. Eventually at a ceremony earlier in the summer to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the deployment of the first Irish troops to the Congo, the Taoiseach, Brian Cowan acknowledged the true heroism and bravery of these men for the first time.

Other Longford men who served in the Congo 50 years ago were Vincent Forde, Danny Conway, Paddy Devlin, John Ryan, S. Dowler, Jim Mannion, RIP, D. Flaherty, RIP, J Mc Monagle.

Longford Historical Society will host a lecture on "The fighting Irish in the Congo: The Longford Connection" by Tiernan Dolan in The Longford Arms Hotel on Thursday January 27th 2011. All welcome.

Prayer For The Church In Ireland - Pope Benedict XVI

*God of our fathers,
renew us in the faith which is our life and salvation,
the hope which promises forgiveness and interior renewal,
the charity which purifies and opens our hearts
to love you, and in you, each of our brothers and sisters.*

*Lord Jesus Christ,
may the Church in Ireland renew her age-old
commitment
to the education of our young people in the way of truth
and goodness,
holiness and generous service to society.*

*Holy Spirit, comforter, advocate and guide,
inspire a new springtime of holiness and apostolic zeal
for the Church in Ireland.*

*May our sorrow and our tears,
our sincere effort to redress past wrongs,
and our firm purpose of amendment
bear an abundant harvest of grace
for the deepening of the faith
in our families, parishes, schools and communities,
for the spiritual progress of Irish society,
and the growth of charity, justice, joy and peace
within the whole human family.*

*To you, Triune God,
confident in the loving protection of Mary,
Queen of Ireland, our Mother,
and of Saint Patrick, Saint Brigid and all the saints,
do we entrust ourselves, our children,
and the needs of the Church in Ireland.*

Amen.



Inspirational Christian Quotes and Sayings

I cannot imagine how the clockwork of the universe can exist without a clockmaker.
~ Voltaire

Faith is a living and unshakable confidence. A belief in God so assured that a man would die a thousand deaths for its sake.
~ Martin Luther

The spirit of Christmas needs to be superseded by the Spirit of Christ. The spirit of Christmas is annual; the Spirit of Christ is eternal. The spirit of Christmas is sentimental; the Spirit of Christ is supernatural. The spirit of Christmas is a human product; the Spirit of Christ is a divine person. That makes all the difference in the world.
~ Stuart Briscoe

It is a great consolation for me to remember that the Lord, to whom I had drawn near in humble and child-like faith, has suffered and died for me, and that He will look on me in love and compassion.
~ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Your talent is God's gift to you. What you do with it is your gift back to God.
~ Leo Buscaglia



Words from Bishop Colm O'Reilly

"A house is not just four walls and a roof. While this expression is a cliché it is also very true. For families houses are homes. St Mel's Cathedral is not just four walls and a roof (a temporary roof) either. It is Home to the entire Parish community. Since it was ruined by fire last Christmas I believe we never wanted to think of it as it is but how it will be. A friend wrote to me after the fire to offer his sympathy. He said in reference to my words to the media on Christmas Day that he was glad that I could say it would be restored "even", as he put it, "before the fire had finished its work". I would have found it unthinkable to say anything other than what I said.

As I look at the outside of the Cathedral now, I begin to think of its interior not as it is but as it will look when splendidly restored. When planning work begins, it will not initially get much publicity but will, nonetheless, be a giant step on the journey back to full restoration. I feel personally excited by this and I hope that this prospect

will lift the hearts of Longford people in advance of Christmas.

I know that many people become anxious and tense when they have to wait for something greatly desired. The same applies to a community. But both individuals and communities can wait in a different frame of mind. Waiting in patience can help us to appreciate what we wait for all the more. The great artist, Michelangelo, who created magnificent frescoes in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican painted the prophets who foretold the coming of Christ. On faces from different periods in history he showed growth in awareness of the wonder of what was to come as the centuries passed. The Advent Season in which we await the coming of Christ is the Church's invitation to wait in hope and wonder for Him. I hope that some of that Advent spirit can also continue as we await the restoration of our Cathedral.

The year coming to its end began as if it would be a

real annus horribilis, a dreadful year, because of the fire that had happened on Christmas Day. We were more apprehensive than we wanted to admit. But the first year of waiting has gone well. Forced to face adversity we have learned to make the most of what we have. We have warm and welcoming places for Sunday and weekday masses at St Mel's College. We have a warm welcome too in the neighbouring Parish of Newtownforbes for liturgies such as weddings and funerals.

It is now quite inevitable that, with the coming of Christmas, the first anniversary of the horrendous destroying fire, we will be gripped by a painful nostalgia for what has been lost last Christmas in Longford. Human life knows tears and laughter, nights of fear and dawns of hope. Psalm 29 says "tears come with the night but joy comes with the dawn". It is my hope and prayer that all of us will experience the dawn of new hope at Christmas.

+Colm O'Reilly.

Meet the parish team of St. Mel's Cathedral

A year to remember

Fr. Thomas Healy, Adm.

As I write these few lines we have just come through a very turbulent week in our country. The economic situation is causing much hardship and bringing real anxiety for many people about their futures. The end of 2010 will go down in history as the time of the IMF and a time when a new realisation of the perilous state of the nation's finances dawned upon us.

Similarly for Longford people the end of 2009 and start of 2010 will forever be remembered as a time of huge upheaval with the Cathedral fire and its fallout. Obviously elsewhere in this publication much has been recorded about the aftermath of the fire at St. Mel's last Christmas Day.

Inevitably our world was torn asunder at that time. To see the beautiful Cathedral which had been at heart of the parish community for 170 years succumb to flames was a tremendous shock to the people of this community and far beyond.

However, as I look back on the year it strikes me that while our beautiful centre of worship has been greatly damaged and we are faced with a huge restoration project the parish community is perhaps united more than ever. And the privilege and challenges of trying to live the Gospel in our time and place continued.

Again at the risk of repeating words written elsewhere in this paper I will never forget the outpouring of goodwill and support in the wake of the Cathedral fire. I recall endless letters phone calls, texts and emails from people expressing their sympathies and also offering their assistance. When it came to arranging the alternative facilities at the College there was a great outpouring of generosity of time and talent - for all of that we are very grateful.

The usual cycle of parish life took place and some particular memories stand out:

- The very moving Easter ceremonies especially the Passion Drama played out by young people from our secondary schools.
- The warm gratefulness of the chapel at St. Mel's College inviting us to pause and pray in the midst of our busy lives.
- Our privilege as priests to be part of people lives on the joyful days of Baptisms and Weddings as well as the sad days of laying loved ones to rest.
- The constant welcome and hospitality afforded to us on our visits to the homes of the parish.
- Cemetery Sunday, Corpus Christi, and the recent Bereavement Ceremony at the Cathedral Centre.
- The Sacramental days of joy as our young people celebrated their First Holy Communion and Confirmations.
- The welcome afforded to and the involvement of Fr. Paul Kangkai on his summer stint with us and to student Tong Gilhooley on his year of placement in our parish.
- The generous involvement of Pastoral Team Members on our frequent meetings as we try to respond to the pastoral needs of our community.

As this year draws to a close we are very aware of people's fears and anxieties. We pray that our celebration of the Christmas season may bring some joy and restore our faith that in the coming of God among us as a little baby we are assured of God's love and care for us and that we are held always safe in the palm of His hands.

A time of great hope and joy

Sr. Angela Clarkson

Advent 2009 was a time of great hope and joy. I rejoined in the publication of The Parish Review after

a long absence. Christmas Eve Midnight Mass never seemed so wonderful. As I welcomed people at the door their enthusiasm and faith was palpable. The Cathedral itself, ablaze with lights, flowers and ringing with organ tones and the singing of the choir, seemed alive. All this turned to ashes on Christmas morning as we looked at the skeleton of what was in the words of one parishioner "our pride and joy." For me it was devastation. The reality soon hit home. My workplace, the Family Centre, was unsafe to use. When would Rainbows, ACCORD and the many other groups be able to meet, not to mention having a suitable place of worship? Never again will I doubt that the Church is the people of God. People were energised, and a wealth of generosity, ingenuity and sheer genius sprung into life. On the 8th February the Family Centre reopened much to the relief of many people especially the parents and participants of the Rainbows Programme.

March 31st saw the birth of a long-held dream with the introduction of the Children's Mass. Life for me in Parish and Family Ministry is varied and wonderfully life-giving: from the joy of visiting parents and their new-born children, to sharing the grief of the bereaved, to the camaraderie of the Friday Coffee Mornings and much more.

Thanks to all who have helped with accommodation when we needed it, to the staffs in the Presbytery and Family Centre and to the many volunteers with whom I am privileged to work.

Silent Night, Holy Night

Fr. Brendan O'Sullivan C.C.

The echoes of last Christmas will be etched in my memory forever. From the beauty of an Advent preparation for the birth of Jesus in the crib space of our hearts, captured very well in the beautiful celebration of our Christmas Vigil on Christmas Eve. This was a time of family, a time of joy, a time of community. Leaving the Cathedral that night with the warmth of Christmas wishes, little did I ever think it would be my last time in St. Mel's Cathedral that was.

The expectancy of a normal Christmas morning changed in the early hours. I was called first by the Garda. I called Fr. Healy on the internal phone we had no idea what was facing us. As we made our way to the back of the cathedral it was too much to take in. The fire took control of our beautiful Cathedral. We watched the prayer room and museum fall, rather after rather into ashes. Suddenly our beautiful St. Mel's Cathedral was lit up from inside. The stain glass windows illuminated in the most beautiful colours that sparkled in the snow. Then the beautiful coloured glass shattered before our eyes. Could this possibly be happening? All that we held as beautiful, precious, historic, vanishing before our eyes. Happy Christmas!!!

Yet it was Christmas morning and Mass is the focus of our Christmas celebration so alternative arrangements had to be made quickly. I went to the Convent where we were warmly and kindly welcomed by the sisters, with my brother, Michael and friend Darren. We filled a box with what I thought we needed for Christmas morning Mass. We set up a table in our Temperance Hall. The cathedral choir sang carols as the people gathered, our Cathedral continued to smoulder. From that moment the birth of Christ came into our hearts and the sharing of prayer continued into the spirit and life of our community. Now we realised that church is more than the building. It is the spirit of love and prayer that emerged from the people in our community. All ages participated. Thank you to all for sharing the journey with us and allowing us to grow and continue our ministry in support and love. As we continue the



Pictured are the Parish team, back row, left to right, Fr. Merlyn Kenny, C.C.; Fr. Padraig Kelliher, C.C.; and Fr. Nigel Charles. Front row, Sr. Angela Clarkson, Parish Sister; Fr. Thomas Healy, Adm. and Fr. Brendan O'Sullivan, C.C.

work in our parish under the guidance of St. Mel... as soon as I walked into the college chapel I saw it as a place where we could pray and have a good reflective space for adoration. It has been an eventful, busy but joyful year... our Holy Hour has grown from strength with our young adults, we have been greatly supported by many in our community, we have just launched a new CD with our folk group. Cathedral Echoes. Life continues... and a wealth of generosity, ingenuity and sheer genius sprung into life. On the 8th February the Family Centre reopened much to the relief of many people especially the parents and participants of the Rainbows Programme.

March 31st saw the birth of a long-held dream with the introduction of the Children's Mass. Life for me in Parish and Family Ministry is varied and wonderfully life-giving: from the joy of visiting parents and their new-born children, to sharing the grief of the bereaved, to the camaraderie of the Friday Coffee Mornings and much more.

Thanks to all who have helped with accommodation when we needed it, to the staffs in the Presbytery and Family Centre and to the many volunteers with whom I am privileged to work.

Life of faith in the parish

Fr. Padraig Kelliher

As you look at the skyline of the town four spires pierce the horizon: the Cathedral bell tower, the spires of the Convent Chapel and St. John's Church, and lastly the most recent addition which rises desolately from the empty Shopping Centre running along the Camlin River. In many ways the latter stands testament to the times of economic crisis which have defined 2010 for people here in Longford and all across Ireland. Amidst the backdrop of public redundancies and hidden personal struggles the life of faith in the parish carries us all forward and provides a refuge in turbulent times. The great ingenuity of the many people who came together from all disciplines to prepare our two new places of worship at St. Mel's College was a great sign of what people united with purpose can achieve.

My own year as a priest in Longford parish was one made fulfilling by the warmth and sincerity of the people whom I met at various moments in the course of the year. In May I travelled to Milan with parishioners from the Parish Cell prayer group to whom

I provide a reflection on CD related to the following Sunday's Gospel for their fortnightly meetings. Over the last year I helped with giving a course on the Gospel of St. Luke to people in parishes in Longford and Leitrim. I enjoy the friendship of the members of Longford Prayer Group at St. Joseph's Hospital at our monthly Mass and on retreat days away together. With the help of dedicated local people the beautiful St. Anne's Church at Curry was further enhanced by an upgrading of the heating and lighting systems in recent months. Developments this year in the infrastructure at Stonepark NS are good news for pupils, parents and staff and a fitting addition to the long tradition of great education there. I always appreciate the warmth of welcome and seeing the great talents of the children and adults at St. Christopher's on the Battery Road.

I help out in the preparation for the monthly Children's Mass which began last March and is an important step in assisting the participation of families with young children at our Sunday Masses. Currently I also meet weekly with two people who are interested in being baptised into the Catholic Church. I try to keep developments at the Cathedral updated on the parish website along with the most recent photographs of work inside and outside St. Mel's. The faithful people who serve us so well as Readers and Eucharistic Ministers in the parish hear from me throughout the year with updated rotas and special requests. When time allows I head south to recharge the batteries with my family on the Dingle peninsula in Co. Kerry. And so a word of thanks to all at the presbytery and in the parish and diocese for your goodness and kindness, and may I wish the people of Longford and Killashee & Clondra God's blessing this Christmas and hope undimmed for 2011.

A Thought on the year just ending

Fr. Meryln Kenny

Eleven months after the great fire, the one topic of conversation still sure to arise on pastoral visitation is "the Cathedral". I have never experienced anywhere else so much affection for what could be termed a mere building. And surely that's precisely the point - St. Mel's Cathedral is so much more than just a construction of stone. This grand old edifice resonates with emotions, memories, stories, histories. In effect,

it is as if it has stored in its very bricks and mortar precious remembrances of key life moments for so many people from town and diocese over the past 150 years. I have listened to treasured personal histories of Baptisms, Weddings, First Communion, Funerals, Missions and Midnight Masses. Just as fondly remembered are anecdotes of fevered petitions offered by means of a short visit and a lighted candle for departed loved ones, incurable conditions and generally "all hope lost except for the Lord" situations. A constant refrain remains, "It's a terrible loss to us, Father", and so surely it is.

As "bricks and mortar" of a more recent kind have collapsed in spectacular fashion, exposing a flirtation with a rather soul-less if extravagant existence, perhaps, St. Mel's Cathedral, even in ruins, has become a rather poignant sermon in action for us. Is it not a case of that old adage, "One never misses something precious till it's gone"? What is that "something precious" if not the living soul of a people - a tradition of profound significance stretching back well into the century before last. Dare I say that the "great loss" I hear mentioned over and over again is referring not merely to the grandeur of the building with its ornate intricacies and regal atmosphere, but rather to the recollection by its people, in the shock of its demise, of a much neglected spiritual realm. Though darkly veiled by the coarseness of our modern frenetic escapism, the beating heart of the soul of our community has been shown to be still very much alive. A sign of the times, a prophetic message the Cathedral may be. As it rises from the ashes in the years ahead may it be accompanied by a similar restoration and renewal of the eternal temple of the soul of its people.

A privilege to be with families

Fr. Nigel Charles

This time last year none of us thought that in the New Year our parish would have to find a new place to Worship. In the early of 2010 that is what dominated parish life. The generosity, commitment and time that were given by so many lifted all our spirits. The end result is that we have a beautiful college chapel where we celebrate weekday Mass and the cathedral centre for weekend Masses. It gives an intimacy and Pray fullness that is different from the cathedral. During the day as people pray before the Blessed Sacrament, I get a strong feeling that Jesus is looking down on us with great love and care during these challenging times.

Parish life is about relationship, our relationship to God, to each other and to ourselves. The key to all these relationship is giving time to them. Our time in prayer will always bless those we meet. Trying to get to know people is always a challenge. I find house to house visitation can give you a valuable introduction to people in our parish. Caring for the sick and housebound is a beautiful ministry and our first Friday calls give us the opportunity to bring Jesus Christ to others.

It's always a privilege to be with families at times of Baptism, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation. These are grace filled moments as much for the Priest as anyone else. Working with our Teachers as they as they help the children prepare for the Sacraments are a great privilege. We also try and encourage more family involvement in these Sacrament through programs like "Do this in memory"

During the year the people of our community responded with great generosity to the suffering of the people of Haiti and Pakistan. Now that we have settled into our new place of Worship, it is very clear that God continue to do great thing for us.



The final steps on a Pilgrim's Journey – January 5th, 2010

The snows of January glistened in the headlights as we set out before dawn on the long journey to Armagh for the funeral of Cardinal Cahal B. Daly. Approaching the city, the tall slender twin spires of St Patrick's Cathedral were visible above the snowy streets.

Around us were people arriving from all parts including Sisters of Mercy from Granard and priests from Longford and all over the diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois, Albert Reynolds, John Hume, John Bruton, the President and the Taoiseach, representatives of the Queen, political leaders from all sides and hundreds of people from Armagh and far beyond, all there to pay tribute to the life and work of Cardinal Cahal B. Daly. Stewards and police directed us to the main door of the Cathedral where ushers warmly welcomed us, showed us to our seats and gave us the Mass booklet with the Cardinal's red hat, coat of arms and motto *Jesus Christus Heriot Hodie* on the cover.

Before the altar, Priests stood in honour guard by the coffin, on which rested his red berretta, book of the Scriptures and the crucifix. Close by sat his family and close friends. The Cathedral looked magnificent and doubly so as I tried to blank out the inferno of our own St Mel's just a few days before. The atmosphere was one of warmth and solemnity, of unity and peace. As the aisles filled you had a



● L to R - Back Row Pat Farrell, Peadar O'Donnell, Fr. Tom Healy, Sr. Angela Bracken, Gerry Meenaghan and Leo Donlon L to R - Front Row Kitty Hughes, Sean Maguire, Cardinal Cahal Daly and Sr. Berchmans. Inset - Peter Walsh and Tom Chapman - two members of group who were unable to travel on the day.

great sense of an all Ireland gathering, for truly he was Primate of All Ireland and representatives from all Ireland and beyond had come to walk the last 'Steps of his Pilgrim Journey' here in Armagh.

As the choir sang Be thou my Vision the great procession began, white

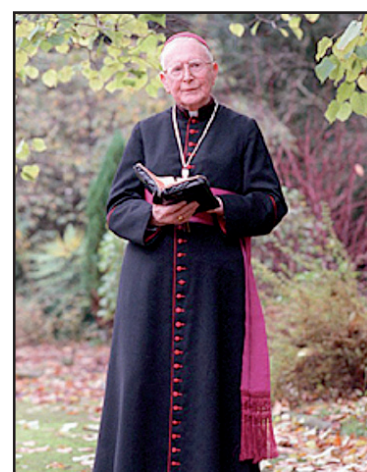
surpliced priests, monks, bishops and archbishops, leaders of many churches and finally the Cardinals. Chief celebrant was Cardinal Sean Brady his successor, who had lost a dear friend and mentor. 'We come here to day to say farewell to Cardinal Cahal Daly, first and foremost a man of faith, a

man of prayer, a man of God'. As the Mass continued reminders of Cardinals Daly's life's work flooded back; Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois, developer of *The Children of God* programme for primary schools, founder of *Christus Rex*, Bishop of Down and Connor, Cardinal of Armagh and all Ireland, teacher, writer, scholar and tireless promoter of peace.

Bishop Colm O'Reilly was one of the chief concelebrants, his nephew Fr Brian Daly read the Gospel and Dennis Glennon represented our diocese at the offertory procession. A special tribute was read from Pope Benedict. Approaching the altar to receive Holy Communion we were able to pause briefly at his coffin. Then after the final prayers the great procession wound its way out of the church into the chill January air. They carried his coffin shoulder high round the icy path he had so often trod during his years there. His family followed along with hundreds of priests, bishops and dignitaries.

We gathered under the trees in the strong winter sunshine as they gently laid him to rest in the snow covered earth beside his predecessor Cardinal O'Fiach. Then in one final salute the whole host of his brother priests sang *Salve Regina*, the traditional funeral hymn for priests.

Handshakes of sympathy then with Cardinal Daly's sorrowing fam-



The late Cardinal Cahal B Daly.

ily and a warm embrace from his tearful aide James Donnelly. It was time to go home. In the crowd we became separated and found ourselves almost at Ara Coeli. As we doubled back we met Cardinal Brady who warmly shook hands and bade us welcome to dinner. But a look at the sky and the icy roads counselled otherwise. Driving out the gates in slow convoy and noting the many LD cars, we saw Tommie Gorman interviewing John Hume for TV. We had been part of history. Ni bheidh a léithéid ann arís. Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord. Amen.

Reflections on an anniversary

As we approach the first anniversary of the fire that destroyed so much of the fabric of St. Mel's Cathedral on Christmas day, 2009 our thoughts turn to another first anniversary – that of the death of a man who was inextricably linked with the cathedral, Cardinal Cahal Daly, Archbishop Emeritus of Armagh.

On 16th July, 1967 Rev. Cahal Brendan Daly, a priest of the diocese of Down and Connor, and a philosophy lecturer in Queen's University, Belfast, was ordained bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois. St. Mel's was to be his Cathedral for the next fifteen years.

Early in 1972 Bishop Daly set out on the long and sometimes painful journey that culminated in 1977 with the reordering of the Cathedral sanctuary in accordance with the liturgical renewal of the second Vatican Council: "This" he states in his memoir "was the highlight of my involvement in the building and reconstruction of churches". In the years that followed, Bishop Daly, in his capacity as chairman of The National Advisory Committee on Sacred Art and Architecture, and in his thirty years as a bishop in three different dioceses, made a major contribution to church architecture in Ireland.

In the late summer and early autumn of 1979 Bishop Daly was heavily involved in all aspects of the preparations for the visit of Pope John Paul II to Ireland, often shuttling over and back to Rome on a weekly basis. He was overjoyed when it was decided that the Pope would visit Clonmacnois to honour the great monastic and missionary tradition of the early Irish church. The bishop has written movingly about this historic event:

"I shall never forget the scene of the Pope kneeling in prayer before the altar in the new sanctuary in Clonmacnois, and the symbolism of his holding in his hand the thousand

year old crozier of St. Mel, younger contemporary of St. Patrick and first bishop of Ardagh.

Today, a small bronze plaque marks this spot. It states simply "Pope John Paul II prayed here. September 30th 1979".

Saying "no" never came easy to Bishop Daly. He had heavy commitments on behalf of the Irish Episcopal Conference at National and International level. He was much in demand as a speaker at conferences at home and abroad and all the while he was dedicated to his work as bishop in the forty one parishes in his far flung diocese.

His ever growing workload must have been a contributory factor in the heart attack that he suffered on the 4th February, 1982. He refers to this as "his longest day" and the journey by car to St. Vincent's Hospital in Dublin as "the most anxious journey of my life". While still in the early stages of his recovery the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Alibrandi conveyed to him that it was the Holy Father's wish that he should be Bishop of Down and Connor. His response – "God's will be done". Following eight fruitful years in his native diocese "ministering in the midst of conflict" he had once again to respond to God's call. In December 1990 he was installed as Archbishop of Armagh and the following year was named Cardinal Primate of All Ireland.

Throughout the fourteen years in his two Northern dioceses Cardinal Daly kept in close contact with his first diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois. He visited his father's native parish of Keadue every year; the priests, religious and lay groups remained on his mailing list, and in his thoughts and prayers, especially at times of bereavement.

Following his retirement in 1996 the Cardinal set about putting his papers in order, he published his book

"Memories and Reflections : Footsteps On My Pilgrim Journey" and many other works on prayer, spirituality and ecology.

During the severe winter of 2009 Cardinal Daly, now in his ninety third year, developed what was to be his final illness. He was hospitalised but rallied sufficiently to return to his home in Belfast under the watchful eye of his long-time personal carer James Donnelly.

The ailing cardinal was deeply affected by the news that filtered through from Longford on Christmas

day, 2009. It was left to Bishop Colm O'Reilly to acquaint him with the full scale of the disaster. Bishop Colm, in a letter to the people of his diocese in January 2010 touched upon his last painful telephone conversation with his venerable predecessor: "I say with sadness that hearing the full extent of the damage done left him shattered. There is every likelihood that this may have hastened his end"

Cardinal Cahal Daly died on 31st December 2009, six days after the destruction by fire of his first Cathedral of St. Mel.

Fr. Seán Casey.



Longford Victim Support was founded in 1998. It is a community based voluntary organisation. We give free and confidential help to victims of crime, their family, friends and anyone else affected. We give information, emotional support and practical help. You don't have to report a crime to the police to get our help and can get support at any time, whether it be immediately after the crime or much later. We are not a government agency or part of the police.

This service will not cost you anything and confidentiality is guaranteed.

Volunteers

We are not professionals nor are we counsellors but we are a listening service for those who wish to tell their story or need our assistance.

How can we be contacted?

Our number is **043 33 47422** or you may contact your local Garda Station who will assist you and where our number will be made available to you or your local Guard will make contact with us for you with your permission. Alternatively, you can contact **The National Crime Victims Helpline TEXT 085 1337711** or **The National Helpline number is 1850 211407**. They in turn will refer on to the nearest branch

Effects of Crime

Court Support Service

In the event where they must attend court, we can help them through this process as well. Very often going to court can be as traumatic as the original crime itself.

Families of Murder Victims Service

Some of our members have also had further training in dealing with families of Murder victims, which unfortunately we hear about now every day of the week.

We are also available to give talks to groups about what we do and some helpful hints on crime prevention

Work of Human Hands

Out of every misfortune there comes an opportunity

"Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart, and wait for the LORD"
(Psalm 27:14).

These words inspired the craftsman of Duignan's, (Irish Contract Seating) in Dromod to transform the carbonised and charred wood of one of the Cathedral rafters into a cross. This cross now stands at the entrance to the new Cathedral Centre, a tall and strong symbol of our faith in God.





Growing up in the Cathedral Parish

Continued from page 1 -> for sale or conacre. He had 'chains' and could mark out the exact measure of any bit of land and he got a little money for that and he mended clocks too! Tommy's mother knitted home-spun cardigans from wool spun by Mrs. Connell. She was a spinner in Fr. Conefrey's time. There were lots of musicians too, John Canning and Maggie-Anne played the fiddle Tommy their brother made spinning wheels. A suit of clothes did a man for years and years. You would wear it to Mass, take it off immediately you came home and put on the working clothes. He recalled his mother, who came from Bornacoola, tell of a man who got a great coat from America and it was borrowed and worn to every marriage and funeral in that area for years!!

There were lots of skills and crafts too, John McGee was a great creel maker. You got a shilling for a creel of turnips at the market and a creel held fifty turnips. Tommy smiled as he recalled the excitement threshing when John Reynolds and the big horses arrived pulling the threshing machine and the craft of John Clarke thatching a roof and topping it off with bobbins of golden straw. "They looked very well sure no one can thatch at all now". At night the men walked a path through the fields along the Camlin to James Bracken's house in Kiltybegs for a game of cards. But life did change and improve. He recalled buying his first tractor in Smiths in Cavan and Jack Stewart came along to advise him. It cost £200 and he later recalled buying a haymaker machine. Tommy often

went to Dublin on the old steam train. And in more recent times he and his sister Rose went on tours to Scotland and England with the Historical Society. "Ah, they were lovely and very interesting," smiled Tommy.

The grandfather clock chimed. Time to go. No! Not before I had a cup of tea with himself and Peter. Lily his Yorkshire terrier got excited. As I was leaving he showed me a prayer card. 'Bishop Colm gave me that when he called here one day. A grand man, sure you'd never think he was a bishop at all, says Tommy.

What a lovely visit I had. Good health and many more happy years to you Tommy in your lovely home in Derryharrow.

— In conversation with Kitty Hughes.

CANON SEAN O'ROURKE R.I.P.

REFLECTION



Canon Sean died in Athlone this summer at the wonderful age of 97 years. The news of his passing was greeted with sadness throughout the diocese but nowhere more so than in our parish, Templemichael and Ballymacormack, where he served as curate for over ten years from around 1958 to 1968.

I was just a young boy when he arrived in the presbytery and I got to know him very well through being an altar boy. I was also his neighbour, and self-appointed messenger boy for Anne their housekeeper who repaid my labours with left over desserts. But in fact he was everyone's friend. With his lovely charming personality he was a winner all the way.

When you served his Mass he always thanked you and often on a summer morning he would invite those who served on a trip to Tarmonbarry that evening where he loved to swim. "Be at the gate at five sharp". Often 4, 5 or even 6 would turn up and were bundled into the back of his meticulously minded black Volkswagen Beetle and off we went. He enjoyed his swim and kept a watchful eye over us as we did our dogs paddle along the wall. I was often invited to accompany him to station Masses in various houses "out the country". When Mass was celebrated and dues and oats money collected, we would sit down to a beautiful breakfast and I would listen rapturously to the wonderful chats he would have with the men. He was knowledgeable on many topics, but space travel was one that enthralled him. This was the age of the Sputnik and his great admiration for the Russians and their achievements had me worried as Sr Cecelia in her sodalities had told us they were bad men and had us praying for their conversion. The happy years I had as an altar boy were slipping by and the time had come for me to head off to St Mels College, believe it or not, as a boarder. This meant that my contacts with Fr Sean were less frequent.

However at the end of my second year the annual sports were being held on the Senior Field and Fr O'Rourke, out for his daily walk along the Bishop's Road, came in to watch. He spotted me lining up for the "220 yards" and declared to all and sundry that "my old friend Leo will surely be last". You see he knew about the desserts!! I won the race and he was the first to congratulate me. The following day he sent down a large box of Terry's All Gold chocolates to make up for his lack of faith in me and also because he heard it was my birthday. The chocolates did not last long but the memory of his lovely gesture will stay with me forever. Suaimhneas síoraí dá anam. — Leo Donlon.

Parish Cell Groups in Longford

Catholic Cell groups began in the 1980s as a way of people sharing their faith with others in their parish. In our parish there are four cell groups established for a number of years with between four and fourteen people in each group. Those who are part of these groups have found it a great support for their faith and daily lives.

Cell groups go back to the early Church when before there were any churches or cathedrals Christians met in one another's houses to pray and celebrate Mass.

Last year the Parish Cell organisation, which is particularly strong in Milan, Italy and Florida, USA, was formally recognised as a movement within the Catholic Church by Pope Benedict XVI.

The Cell groups in Longford meet in their houses or community hall every fortnight



between September and June. Each meeting begins with an opening prayer; followed by hymns; then listening to the Gospel for the following Sunday Mass; sharing thoughts on the passage by the members of the group; then listening to a reflection on the Gospel by Fr. Kelliher on CD; prayers of intercession; the recitation of the Our Father; followed by a cup

of tea and a chat. The meeting lasts about an hour and a half.

You are warmly invited to come along to a cell meeting to see it all for yourself. There is no obligation to continue. It is open to parishioners and non-parishioners. Some cell group members host the groups in their houses in turn but there is never any expectation that a member will host the group meeting. Like the cells in the human body it is hoped that the cells grow and divide and become more numerous.

It started with one group in Longford Parish — there are now four groups here and one in neighbouring Killoe. For further information please contact any of the following: Catherine Corkery (086-2622327); Elaine Keogh (087-2413214); Joyce O'Hara (043-3331728); Bernadette Wall (043-3347771).

Co. Longford Historical Society



Founded in 1967, Co. Longford Historical Society continues to foster an awareness of the rich history and traditions of our county. The past year has included the following:

Lectures: The Society's varied 2010 lecture programme has featured talks

on aspects of Longford's history: 'The Creation of Co. Longford in 1570', 'Crime and Punishment in Nineteenth Century Longford', 'Emigration from Co. Longford', 'The history of Longford I.C.A.', 'The Development of Technical Education in Co. Longford' and 'Buildings of Co. Longford'. Lectures are very well attended and non members are always welcome.

Publications: The next issue of the Society's journal 'Teathbha' is due in 2011. The past year has seen the launch of three important publications which received funding from Co. Longford Historical Society — 'Longford Historic Town Atlas', 'Townlands Map of Co. Longford' and 'Longford: History and Society'. **Current Projects:** Early in 2010 the Society commissioned a survey of the stained glass windows of Co. Longford. Magnus Archaeology has completed the survey and it will be available early in 2011. The Society is also helping to sponsor a feasibility study in the vicinity of Corlea Trackway.

Newsletter: Each month the Society's 350 members receive a newsletter, which keeps them informed of current developments and, in the 'Times Past' section, highlights moments from Longford's often turbulent history.

Tours: Members travelled on day trips to the Boyne Valley in May and to Cavan in September while the annual five day tour in July covered Mayo and Galway.

Seamus Mulvey R.I.P.: Members of the Society were deeply saddened to learn of the death of former Secretary Seamus Mulvey in June. **Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.**

Membership: If you are interested in joining, contact teathbha@gmail.com or phone 043 3348821. Annual membership is only €15 for an individual, €25 for family. Life membership is €150.



Longford Prayer Group members on their annual retreat in Boyle recently with two of the Sisters from the Galilee Community Prayer Centre.

Prayers for all

Longford Prayer Group has been on the go for the last three decades meeting every Monday at 8pm in St. Joseph's Hospital for a time spent together in prayer and song. On the first Monday of each month the group gathers for the Rosary and Mass in the hospital chapel and afterwards come together for a cup of tea. The group has roots in the charismatic movement and prays for people's intentions and offers thanksgiving to God for our many blessings. Many of the group go on pilgrimage to Medjugorje for a week each summer. For the last two years the

group has gone for a day's retreat with our spiritual director Fr. Kelliher to the beautiful 'Galilee Community' centre just outside Boyle overlooking Lough Key run by the Sisters of Mercy.

Our latest day of recollection was held on Saturday November 27th last and was a good inspiration to making the season of Advent a prayerful time.

We wish everyone a blessed Christmas, thank all those who have supported us during the last twelve months and invite you to come and join with us in the New Year.



Crib, St. Mel's College Chapel 2010

Acknowledgements:

All associated with the production of the Parish Review would like to express our thanks to all who have assisted us in many ways. We express our gratitude in particular to the following: Helen O'Sullivan, Parish Secretary, Groups and organisations who submitted articles and photographs, Longford Leader, Roscommon People and all who assisted in any way. We invite any group who would like to be included in next year's edition to email parishreview@hotmail.com with their details.

Thank you.

Parish Review Editorial Team:

Tom Chapman, Deirdre Dalton, Tiernan Dolan, Leo Donlon, Fr. Tom Healy, Kitty Hughes and Sive McGuinness.



Attic Youth Committee and their leaders take London by storm!



Deane Connolly presents a cheque to Bishop Colm O'Reilly for the Cathedra Restoration Fund on behalf of the Attic Youth Committee.

Another successful year for the Attic Youth Cafe Longford

It is always said that young people are our future and nobody knows this better than the staff and volunteers in the Foróige Attic Youth Cafe in Longford. Since the cafe's doors opened November 2006 the cafe has grown to be now the central Hub for the Young people of Longford town and county. The Attic has without doubt become a hive of activity everyday with various programmes running on a daily basis.

The Attic opens its doors daily at 12:30pm to 2pm for lunch time where young people are welcome to drop in and eat their lunch and watch television and play pool or go on the computers. In the evening the Youth committee meet which is made up of local Transition Year students who decide the direction the cafe needs to take to maintain young people's interest. The Attic is open every Wednesday evening from 3:30pm until 5pm for drop in and this attracts huge numbers

of young people as it gives them a safe social environment to mix and have fun in an out of school setting. Weekly Drug and alcohol educational programmes are run by Ms. Theresa Connell to educate young people on the harmful effects of these substances on your body and mind. Weekend activities include, Band nights, discos, bingo, table quizzes etc.

Overall the Attic is continuing to be a space that the youth of Longford take ownership over and appreciate what they can learn through the programmes and activities laid on for them in the attic and the skills they develop through taking part in these programmes. The Attic is managed by Foróige and the voluntary management committee chaired by Ms Ruth McGarry Quinn. The Attic has a youth committee which meet weekly and it is this committee that guides the management team on what the needs of

young people are in Longford. Each year the Attic Youth Cafe take part in Citizenship work in the community and this work such as organising the Longford Youth Factor on a yearly basis which raises money for local charities.

The Attic have won the overall Citizenship award in 2009 and in 2010 they were honoured with a merit award for compiling a booklet for 6th class students named Are youth Ready for the next step which featured information for pupils entering secondary school for the first time and prepared them for what to expect whilst giving parents food for thought on subject choices, healthy eating and drug and alcohol awareness.

The Attic is already fully underway with this year's Citizenship project which will not only benefit members of the Attic youth cafe but also the community as a whole through creat-

ing a budget card to help keep business local especially in this economic climate. The Attic Youth Cafe have taken part in many events over the past twelve months including, travelling to London to see a west end musical, trips to Dublin, Recognition events in Mayo, Summer Camps in adventure centres and sports day in Roscommon where they won the Tony Reid Perpetual Trophy. The Foróige Attic Youth cafe is now a fundamental part of the lives of young people living in the town and surrounding areas as it gives them a fun safe environment to socialise under the supervision of dedicated volunteers.

The cafe is a voluntarily led initiative and without the dedicated support of all the volunteers involved in the running of the Cafe on a weekly basis we would not be able to reach out to the many young people that use the facility. Successes to date for the Attic

Youth Cafe include; St Patricks Day Parade 2008 Best new entrant award, AIB Better Ireland Award runners up 2008, Pride Of Longford Award 2009, Permanent TSB Foróige Youth Citizenship Award winners 2009, St Patricks Day Parade 2010 Best non commercial entrant and Merit award winners Permanent TSB Foróige Youth Citizenship Award 2010. Special thank you to all the staff in the Attic Youth Cafe, Jim Maher, Theresa Connell, James Duignan and Kathleen Mahon and to all the Volunteers who continue to give their time selflessly throughout the year to help in the development of our young people.

*If you wish to find out more about the Attic Youth Cafe and you wish to get involved please contact
Jim Maher on 086 9672920 or email james.maher@foroige.ie*

Adoration in music and prayer

A Holy Hour is a traditional form of Catholic prayer that is said privately or in a church in the presence of God in the Blessed Sacrament. The monthly holy hour takes place on the last Saturday of every month between the hours of 8.30 to 9.30 and is organised by Fr. Brendan O'Sullivan. It is a time of adoration in music and prayer. It is aimed at the youth and families to welcome them to the church community.

Each hour shows the hall in darkness, which draws attention to the illuminated Blessed Sacrament on the altar. The holy hour commences with a candle procession. A

number of youths volunteer to bring a candle to the altar. This is accompanied by powerful music from the folk group. Fr. Brendan then leads the hour in silence, songs and powerful reflections. The rosary prayer is sometimes recited part in English, part in Slovakian or Polish. The folk group sing a number of songs from their albums throughout the hour. The boys from the Cenacolo community in Knock join us in the holy hour. A house in Ireland was opened in Knock, Co. Mayo in 1999 for young people suffering with drug abuse. They have found a sense of belonging and peace through prayer.

This is an opportunity for us all to give thanks and to pray for those who are in need of our prayers, such as those who are bereaved, the sick and those with troubled minds. The powerful hour of prayer and adoration is attended by both young and old and is growing from month to month and year to year. We hope that it will continue growing into the New Year. Everybody is welcome to this powerful time of adoration. It takes place between 8.30pm-9.30pm on the last Saturday of every month in the St. Mel's Cathedral Centre. See you all there!



The meaning of the monthly hour from a young person's perspective

Many people, peers and others have often said to me **why go to the holy hour? Why not come out or what do you get out of it?** Sometimes I just don't answer or I'll answer them with, 'I'll say a prayer for you and just smile and continue on. But I think these few lines sum up one of my many reasons for attending our monthly holy hour.

*Time spent in prayer
Is never a waste of time*

It is a time with blessing and a time with God. (Fr. Jozo Zovlo)

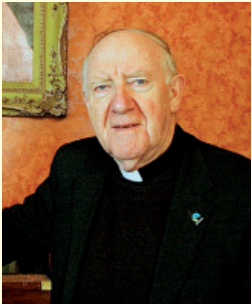
As a young person, particularly growing up in our current time of economic crisis I believe it is important to take time out and reflect on our lives, our worries, all the little things that each and every one of us have on our minds at that time and also to give thanks for the many blessings in our lives. The monthly holy hour in our parish is one of the things that I look forward to as a way of giving myself time to reflect in a place where there is a sense of warmth and belonging and where you feel welcome. It is a place where you forget all your little worries and troubles and sit back and enjoy the beautiful music and candlelight while not forgetting the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. When I see young people and families come together it makes me smile and think to myself 'I'm glad I'm here tonight' and I believe it brings many blessings to our families and our community. I imagine it is of great benefit to the men from The Cenacolo Community and will empower them to overcome their addictions and it is always enlightening to see them present on the night. Also as a person who has experienced bereavement I think it is a wonderful time to remember our dead as you can feel their presence with you in front of the Blessed Sacrament. At the last holy hour I overheard a man saying 'I got a lot from that, when is the next one?' and he had just been bereaved, so this monthly holy hour has really touched the hearts of many people in our community.

Last Christmas will be etched in many of our minds forever and one of the things that I first thought of when I realised we wouldn't have the church was, 'oh no we'll have no holy hour' but it has continued with thanks to Fr. Brendan, the pastoral team and of course the folk group and I am very grateful for this.

Sometimes it phases me when people stereotype or put young people down by saying, 'ah sure they have no faith or what would they know?' So I would encourage people to come to the holy hour and see for themselves that young people are well represented and we should give them a chance, because I believe it is possible for all of us to lose sight of our faith but at some time in our lives be it through home or school we have all learned to pray and because of this, God always stands a chance with that person.



Congratulations



Celebrating Golden Jubilee

Bishop Colm O'Reilly

Fifty years ago on the 19th June 1960 in St Patrick's College, Maynooth sixty eight young men were ordained to the priesthood among them a young man from the parish of Colmcille, Colm O'Reilly. He celebrated his first Mass the following day in his home parish of Colmcille. Fr

Colm was appointed curate in the parish of St Mary's in Grannard where he served for nine years before being appointed curate in 1969 at St Mel's Cathedral in Longford and later in 1978 he became Administrator. In 1983 the Holy Father named him successor to Cahal Daly as Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois. For the past 27 years Bishop Colm has been a very pastoral and caring leader of our diocese. He has also served as President/Chairman of many Episcopal Agencies including ACCORD, CURA and the Council for Justice and Peace.

So fifty years on in June, Bishop Colm returned to his native Colmcille to celebrate his Golden Jubilee Mass among his own people. He has a special place in the hearts and homes of the people of Longford and the diocese where their Confirmation photo with Bishop Colm has pride of place on the mantle piece.

Bishop Colm is one of our own, a man of great faith and prayer and it is fitting that we congratulate him in this his Golden Jubilee year as a priest and wish him many, many more years of good health and God's blessing on his priestly work.



Celebrating Silver Jubilee

Fr. James McKiernan

On the 16th June 2010, I celebrated being ordained a priest for 25 years. Yeah, my Silver Jubilee. And like everyone who reaches any kind of milestone, I wonder, where has the time gone? I've now been a priest more than half of my life. It's a sobering thought. Yet also a wonderful one, because so much blessing has come to me because of it. As you know in recent years priesthood has taken some

real hits. The abuse scandal has marred the public perception of priests. And even though abusers are a small handful of sick people, priesthood itself has been maligned and misunderstood because of them.

I was really happy to be able to take some time over a period of a few months during the Summer to celebrate the gift that priesthood has been to me. And hopefully the gift it has enabled me to be for others. I've had amazing opportunities because of my role as priest, from my initial time in the Parish of Clonguish, to the wonderful years I spent in Chipata Zambia, to Coosan in Athlone and now in the Parish of Leamonaghan in Offaly. But the most cherished ones have been the trust others have placed in me with their most cherished concerns, hopes and dreams.

Being a priest has given me instant intimacy with people who've shared their joy and pain with me without even knowing who I am. I've sat in the confessional and had people tell me their deepest secrets and struggles hoping that I could be an agent of forgiveness and healing. I pray I have been. I've welcomed infants into various communities. I've buried the dead. And I've preached a Gospel that I have found to be life-giving and expanding. Who could ask for more than that? Not me.

And so I'm thankful for the gift this ministry has been in my life. And for the many along the way who've trusted me enough to be an agent of God's love and grace. I've received much more than I've given. It has been enriching as well as rewarding, I've enjoyed it all and I couldn't ask for any more over the past 25 years. So here's to the next 25 years and the opportunities and the possibilities that it will bring to my life - God willing. Thanks to all who have been a part of it from my family to the countless number I have engaged with; here in the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois and in the Diocese of Chipata. I pray that I will continue to be enriched and indeed humbled as I continue to served God and his people.



Fr. Vincent Connaughton

Celebrating Silver Jubilee

Fr. Vincent Connaughton

The image of being like the Parish Priest, or to imitate him in the saying of Mass was probably a familiar scene for many young boys growing up in the late sixties or the early seventies.

That was an image I had growing up, and indeed used to practise it in my family home. Soon, that image faded away, and the reality of Secondary School, and one's career began to take toll.

Having attended St. Mary's N.S. in Newtowncashel, I then went to the Vocational School in Ballymahon for one year and there after as a boarder to the Salesian College in Ballinakill, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, for the last four years of my second level Education. The Salesian College was a boarding School like many other boarding Schools of its time. It was here that I quickly learned how to become more independent and self sufficient.

I had four very happy years in Ballinakill, and the Priests, Brothers and Staff were very helpful, and some of the Staff I am still in contact with to this present day. I completed my Leaving Cert in 1979, and at first thought of joining the Salesian Order as a Priest, but later changed my mind to become a Priest for the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois.

The long road to St. Patrick's College, Maynooth started for me. I still remember the President's talk to all seventy two of us and I quote "if half of you will be ordained for the Irish Church in six or seven years from now, it will be great for Ireland." In fact thirty seven of us were ordained to the Priesthood in 1985.

My first appointment was to be Chaplain to the Marist College and our Lady's Bower Secondary Schools in Athlone. It was here that I came to know the students, staff and parents of the Schools, as well as helping out in the football, and in the Parish of St. Mary's and Our Lady Queen of Peace, Coosan. To this day I am still invited back to perform Weddings Christenings etc for many of my past pupils.

From Athlone, Bishop Colm asked me to take up an appointment in St. Mel's Cathedral Parish in Longford after six happy years in Athlone. I went to Longford in 1991 and remained there till 2008. I loved the Parish of Templemichael & Ballymacormack, and it was here that I journeyed with so many people especially in their illness, bereavements and the every day life of the people. During my early time in the Parish I became very involved with the work of St. Vincent de Paul Society. It was my great wish and hope to have hostel accommodation for the homeless, who were not always the welcome guest in the community. With the help of a couple of the members of St. Vincent de Paul, the County Manager, some Council Officials and the H.S.E, I saw my reality come through with the buying of a house on the Dublin Road to be named St. Martha's Hostel which opened its doors in 1996. Some years later I was able to secure funding from the Dept of the Environment, and we successfully opened the second Hostel which we named Bethany House. This was for women and children suffering from domestic violence in the family home. To this day I will always be grateful to the people who worked and helped me in fulfilling this dream for Longford in giving a new way of life for the homeless, and those who suffer from violence in the home.

After spending seventeen years in the Parish of Longford, I was asked by Bishop Colm to take up an appointment in the Par-

ish of Killennummery and Killery, the Island Parish of the Diocese situated in the North West and approx, twenty minutes from Sligo City. To be very honest, it was not an easy appointment, having left Longford, and come to a parish where I knew nobody. I renovated the parochial house, and I visited people and came to know them very quickly, and glad to say that I achieved a lot of work in the parish in the last two years. I am very privileged to be in this parish that I now call my home. If one is happy and contented in their Vocation and work, then that is the most important aspect for anyone on life's journey. I am very happy in this lovely scenic Parish of Killennummery & Killery.

The last twenty five years were not easy years in Ministry. Having lost my Parents within three months of each other was rather difficult. The abuse scandals were very tough to endure, and to apologise for the wrongs of other Priests was a rather difficult task to say the least.

For Priests to have betrayed their trust and to cause so much hurt and pain to people is still something that makes me very angry and frustrated. The one area of my life as a Priest is my Faith and the celebration of the Eucharist. The holy Mass is my daily energy as a Priest, and my holy hour every morning in the Church before Mass is my daily sustenance for the love of Christ as a friend and healer in my life as a Priest in Ireland today.

Finally, the sad tragedy for me and the many people of Longford and the Diocese was the devastating news of the fire in St. Mel's Cathedral that I received on Christmas morning last. This shocking news rocked our Diocese, and especially those of us who had the wonderful privilege of serving in this historic building which served the needs of so many people since Famine times. May I wish the Committee every success in their endeavours to restore St. Mel's Cathedral to its former glory?

In conclusion, having celebrated my Silver Jubilee to my Priesthood this June, I take the opportunity to thank my Family, my friends and so many good, kind and generous people in the Parishes of Athlone, Longford and Killennummery & Killery that I am now proud to know and call my friends, as we continue to progress together in Faith, Hope and Love.



Fr. Patrick Murphy

Celebrating Silver Jubilee

Fr. Patrick Murphy

I have very vivid memories of my ordination along with James and Vincent in St. Mel's Cathedral on 16 June 1985. Looking back at family photographs of the occasion it is clear to see how much we have aged. And yet it does not seem like twenty five years. How quickly the years have passed. I remember very well the homily at my first Mass. I described my years of formation and study in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth as a

time of preparation for the journey I was then only beginning. I concluded the homily by asking people to pray for me, that the Lord would lead me and guide me. Twenty five years later I am certain that many have prayed for me. I am aware of some who have, and others have done so in ways that I may never know. For all the prayers and words of encouragement I received along the way I express my deep gratitude.

My first appointment was to the teaching staff of St. Mel's College. This was followed by five years as curate in Kiltoghert Parish (Carrick-on-Shannon) before my appointment to Edgeworthstown. Each appointment brought its own challenges in very different circumstances. My years as a priest have truly been fulfilling, challenging, life giving and happy. I look forward to the challenges of the future, to continuing to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a world that is sometimes hostile and sometimes indifferent to that message. What gives me great hope is my conviction that the message is true and that it is as relevant today as it was at any time in our history.

Parish website LONGFORDPARISH.COM celebrates first birthday!

The parish website www.longfordparish.com was launched just a week before Christmas last year – the timing turned out to be fortuitous as it is a great platform on which to publish information of developments in the restoration of St. Mel's Cathedral. The pastoral council had decided to undertake the project in September 2009 and we sourced Martin McGinn of www.odyc.net to provide the technical expertise and to host the website. There is a great value for people here in the parish in having the website containing prayers and thoughts for the day and information on how to arrange weddings and baptisms. There is a further benefit for those who are living away from Longford that

they can keep track of events in the life of the parish and town. Every week the newsletter is uploaded online and there have been regular updates issued on developments in the reconstruction project and photos from outside, inside and above the Cathedral are there for all to peruse.

For example the report from the chartered loss-adjusters OSG, working on behalf of the insurance company Allianz, on the cause of the fire and containing a description of the damage caused and the next steps to be undertaken was uploaded for public access last April. The key to any website is to update the information and a common flaw is that after the initial

enthusiasm wanes sites that are not of commercial importance can begin to flounder. It is a lengthy occupation to edit photographs and keep the flow of information coming on stream. However so far we have managed to keep up with the news and hopefully its potential will evolve as use of the internet becomes ever more mainstream. The website is being revamped at the moment and will have a new, enhanced look for its first birthday just before Christmas.

Sincere thanks to all who have generously contributed articles and photos and to all who have placed links to our website www.longfordparish.com.





"One Book, One Longford"

Further to our Arctic explorer Adrian Vernon Fish, local couple James and Suzanne Dermody brought their two lovely Siberian huskies (Freya & Nabi) into the school. The children were very excited to see the dogs and relate them to the story of "Tom Crean" which they are doing as part of the "One Book, One Longford" project. Everyone got a chance to get close to the huskies and feel their coats and pat their heads which is a huge testament to their owners who have them impeccably trained. Pupils, parents and teachers enjoyed the experience very much. Our next project is to launch our book which is a combined effort between the 5th and 6th classes in St. Michaels and St. Josephs based on the exploration theme contained within the "One Book" project

Historic year for St. Joseph's NS

St. Joseph's National School

The History of St. Joseph's N.S. dates back to 1886 with the amalgamation of the past schools, Templemichael female, (St. Vincent's), Longford Convent School and Longford Convent infants. Throughout the years, the Mercy Sisters carried out their mission as educators with dedication and commitment in the true spirit of their founderess Catherine McAuley. Our present school building which was opened in 1957 was designed by well-known Longford architect Fred Browne and built by local company McLoughlin's.

This is an historic year for St. Joseph's school as the Mercy Sisters have transferred the trusteeship of our school to Bishop Colm O'Reilly. While welcoming Bishop Colm as our trustee, it is fitting that we pay tribute to the sterling work carried out in our school by the sisters of Mercy who were pioneers in the development of an holistic approach to education and in catering for the needs of the child. Our school lunch room in which children are served breakfast and hot lunches, was built by the Sisters.

Last June the Sisters presented our school with an illustrated prayer inspired by Catherine McAuley's Suscipe to mark their departure. We are grateful to them for our rich faith inheritance and ethos. We are happy to say that our links with the convent continue as we enjoy welcome visits from the Sisters and we are especially grateful to Sr. Angela Bracken and Sr. Mary Cassells, who contribute voluntarily to education in our school.

Activities: School life in St. Joseph's is a rich tapestry of educational and cultural activities. Our school choir is busily rehearsing their National Children's Choir Repertoire under their dedicated choir mistress Miss Dolan. We look forward to their performance with other local schools, in the Backstage Theatre and in the National Concert Hall in 2011.

Our Green School's Committee is leading the school towards our third Green Flag on the theme of Water Conservation. After schools activities include photography, sport e.g. football, tennis & basketball, computers and science. Local Charities: Our Hospice morning, which was hosted by past teacher Mrs. Mary Brennan was a great success. €1,200 was raised for our local Longford Hospice Movement.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul was the beneficiary of our carol singing events in the shopping centres, which were conducted by Mrs. Margaret Kenny; recorders Mrs. Patricia Fitzmaurice. Our pupils have also fundraised for Goal and we are grateful to the community for their generous sponsorship.

One Book, One Town: One of the highlights of our school year centred on our school community reading of the adventures of the famous explorer Tom Cream as depicted in the Ice Man by Michael Smith. The project which was co-ordinated by H.S.C.L. teacher Niall Gannon and generously supported by Longford Librarian Mary Carleton Reynolds and staff saw the school temporarily transported to Antarctica, where we encountered beautiful huskies, courtesy of James & Suzanne Dermody; viewed animal furs as we chatted famed explorer Adrian Fish.

In concluding this article, we wish to acknowledge the tragedy of the burning of our treasured Cathedral, St. Mel's. It is our nearest building of importance. From our school windows we momentarily glimpsed life's unfolding ceremonies, weddings, celebrations and funerals and enjoyed the chimes of its bell. We look forward to its restoration and revival and we pay tribute to all involved in leading and supporting the community in this great project. Guimis beannachtai na Nollag ar mhuintir Longoirt, rath De oraibh go leir agus suaimeas agus siocan an Linbh losa libh go leir.

Our school garden

St. Michael's National School

Harvesting potatoes St. Michael's School garden in July 2010 was a dream come true. Many thanks to all in the school community who helped make this dream come true: Peter Masterson and his crew; Catherine Jessup for her expertise and hard work; The many parents who gave their time working during the months of January through to June; Donal, our cartaker, for looking after the plants, especially the tomatoes; Eamon Tynan for supplying us with new plants and seedlings; And to all the boys in the school for their hard work during the year.

We say a very special thank you to Frank McKiernan, a past pupil, for building the greenhouse free of charge. Crops of onions, lettuce, beetroot, cabbage, carrots, leeks and potatoes were outstanding. However, pride of place went to the crop of tomatoes! Roll on next Spring!

New Stage - In September 2010 the school stage and the Assembly Hall were painted and given a new lease of life. We now have a beautiful stage with lights and everything needed to stage a school concert or play. The Boys of St. Michael's are looking forward to the 2010 Christmas concert and carol service.

The school hall is used by many dance groups and drama groups as a rehearsal venue. It's good to see the hall being used for the benefit of the local community.

St. Mel's Cathedral - St. Mel's Cathedral is a constant reminder of our Christian Faith. Our school has close ties with this magnificent building. Many of our past pupils have served at Mass in St. Mel's and some of our past pupils were ordained priests there. We are proud that Fr Turlough Baxter, Fr Pdraig Kelliher and Fr Patrick Murphy, to mention a few, are past pupils of St. Michael's School.

It was with great sadness we witnessed

the great fire which destroyed the Cathedral after Midnight Mass in December 2009. Since then we have witnessed the large cranes arrive on site and a new roof appear on St. Mel's Cathedral. Our pupils are greatly interested in the rebuilding of the Cathedral and we look forward to entering our Cathedral once again.

SPORT

Sport has always been a very important part of the school day in St. Michael's School. At each break time games are played on the tarmac and in the school field.

Gaelic Football: St. Michael's BNS fields a Gaelic Football team in the League and Championship competitions each year. Last year, 2009/2010, we won the Div 2 League and then entered the Div 1 Championship. We finished 4th in the competition which was a good result for us. The outright winners were Colmcille N.S. and we congratulate them on their success.



Pupils of St. Michael's NS, along with Principal and Head Gardener pictured with produce from their school garden.



Shane Nelson reading part of 'One Book, One Longford'.

St. Michael's School has been the nursery for the Longford Slashers Club for generations. Presently we have the following past pupils on the Slasher's Team - Dominic Glennon, Dermot Brady, Stephen Phillips, Barry Gilleran, Gordon Hourican, Peter Brady. We congratulate them in winning the County Championship! Come on the boys in blue! Probably the best known Gaelic footballer in Longford, Dessie Barry, was a member of our schoolboy team 1972-73, 1973-74.

Soccer: St. Michael's School has produced very talented soccer players

over the years, some have represented Ireland at Junior International level. Many of our past pupils have played for Longford Town FC and our past pupils have acted as Chairmen and President of Longford Town FC. The names Devlin, Flaherty etc have served Longford Town over many generations and are all past pupils of St. Michael's School. It's true to say that at least 5 games of soccer take place at break time each day in our school and these games are played with the same intensity as any League of Ireland game

Swimming: Since the opening of the new Swimming Pool in the Mall, swimming in our school has changed for the better. Each class in the school is timetabled to receive swimming lessons throughout the school year. We are fortunate that we can walk to the pool, partake in our swimming lessons and walk back to school. The new swimming pool is a wonderful facility and we are fortunate in St. Michael's to be located so close to it.

Tennis: Last year 2009/2010 was our first venture into the wonderful world of tennis. Coach Noel Strange Jnr spends two days per week giving tennis lessons to all classes in the school. The children really enjoy tennis and it helps to improve their "hand to eye" coordination and their balance.

Basketball: Basketball is played by a small group of pupils in our school. This sport is gaining popularity in the school and I feel we will soon be able to enter a team in local competitions.

Bigger and brighter in Stonepark

Stonepark National School

A few weeks ago there was much excitement in Stonepark N.S. as workmen installed a new classroom and hall using enormous cranes to lift the prefabs into place. The children watched eagerly from classroom windows as engineers and workmen negotiated the huge room into place, starting first with our 6th class room and finishing with our adjoining drama room.

The long anxious wait was over and the 6th class pupils of Stonepark finally moved into the new spacious room. It took no time at all for the students to move all our materials and equipment. We hope we'll have many happy hours of learning in our new room.

The Perfect Pushkin Project - Last May, the 5th class pupils of Stonepark N.S. achieved great success when they took part in the annual Pushkin Project in St. Christopher's school.

The Pushkin project allows different schools around the country to complete a project with a similar theme. It gives pupils the chance to interact with each other. This year the theme was 'Go With the Flow'.

We brainstormed the theme and decided to use the volcanic eruption in Iceland as a starting point. We started work straight away on building a paper mache volcano that would erupt at our presentation. It was a blast!



Children from Stonepark NS display their award winning Pushkin project entitled "Go with the Flow"

Not only did we complete the project but each student got their poem published in a special Pushkin book. It was a very special day for every student and teacher who took part.

All Round Champs - Stonepark had many competition winners this year. We had several art winners throughout the school. Congratulations to Cian Clancy who won the overall prize in the Aisling Children's Art Competition. Cian is in first class.

Moving from art to poetry and well done to Aiman Azam, Diarmaid Ó Nualáin and Raymond Raleigh who recently got their poems published in the Eurochild book. Well done to all competition winners.

Stars in the making - Fourth class students wrote and performed an amazing play for the Aisling Children's Arts Festival with the help of Chris Thompson and Doug Fox-Roberts called "The 123 Project". The "123 Project" involved two classes from two different schools. They had to write and perfect their play without meeting the other school, except for the day before the grand performance when the two schools (Stonepark and St. Josephs) met and rehearsed.

The children all worked together to put on a truly brilliant performance. When the lights went out the crowd cheered and clapped. All their hard work paid off.

Green Flag Returns - The students of Stonepark are aiming to receive their second Green Flag this year. We received our first flag two years ago by keeping our school clean and litter free. We had a fantastic Green Schools' Day Fashion show. We are looking forward to more fun this year and a new green flag.



2010 has been a year of change for Melview

Melview National School

2010 has been a year of change for Melview. Christine Treacy retired in June after teaching for 35 years in Melview and is greatly missed. We wish her all the best in the future. Melview has welcomed two new staff members – Ms. Laura Sorohan and Ms. Carmel Farrell. Other good news is that Melview has been given the green light for a large extension and refurbishment of the existing building. This will hopefully be finished by September 2011.

Melview would like to thank Ulster Bank who sponsored 6th class's participation in "Up Tempo" which culminated in a memorable day for parents and children in the National Concert Hall. 5th and 6th classes participated in many quizzes throughout the year with good success.

On the sporting front Melview had a very successful year. The Annual Basketball tournament took place in the Mall in May 2010. Melview girls took the trophy completing a double having also won the Basketball Championship. Melview

boys reached the final but were pipped at the post by St. Emers.

In June Melview reached the Gaelic final in Division 1B, where they met St. Michaels in Pearse Park. It was a very hard fought battle but in the end Melview came out on top, winning by two points.

Melview partook in Cross Country Trials for the first time in 2010 and have discovered an up and coming star Mary Sloane. Mary came third in the Connacht School Trials and has since qualified for the Under 13 and Under 14 All Ireland Finals which will take place later this year. Mary has also been picked for the Connacht Regional Development Squad.

Melview N.S. took part in the 2010 Xtravision 5 a side Final in Flancare Park last January. Melview won the final and went on to play in Leinster but unfortunately our winning streak stopped here. Melview retained the Raymond Hewitt Trophy for Under11 Soccer by winning the final in Abbeycartron in June.

The boys and girls competed



Melview Gaelic team who won the Division 1B final.

in the Indoor Hurling Finals in Newtownforbes. The girls won Division 2 while the boys were narrowly defeated in their final.

Pupils from Melview did very well in the Connacht Schools Gala. Aine Mcweeney won gold in the Under 11 backstroke. Mark O'Boyle won silver in the Under 10 backstroke and Kate Sweeney also qualified for the All Ireland Schools Final. Melview will also be entering an Under 10 Relay team.



Teacher Anne Casey pictured with the Melview Basketball team.

Dissolving boundaries in Scoil Eimear

Scoil Eimear

Scoil Eimear first became involved in the Dissolving Boundaries in the 2008-2009 school year when one of our classroom teachers, Miss Baxter, introduced it to her 5th Class pupils. It has continued successfully since then and is now facilitated by our 5th Class Teacher, Mr. Dolan.

Dissolving Boundaries is a North-South schools-based project that brings pupils together using technology. The initiative has been running since 1999 and is funded by the two Departments of Education and managed by the University of Ulster and National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

Pupils use a range of Information and Communications Technologies including video-conferencing and online discussion and collaboration through applications such as Moodle, Word Processing and Presentation programmes. They begin by exchanging personal profiles to build the groups'

interpersonal relationships and to develop their familiarity with the technology. The Programme also funds a face-to-face meeting between the participating pupils.

Our partner school for the current school year is the same as for 2008-2009 - Holy Child Primary School, Belfast. This School is situated in the Andersontown area of Belfast- <http://holychildps.com/> and has an enrolment of over 700 pupils.

Correspondence between our two schools takes place through a protected website that is monitored by the participating teachers in the schools and by the programme organizers based in the two universities.

Pupils have also made contact with each other using video-conferencing in the classroom. We had our first video conference of the year at the end of October. Members of our local Garda Síochána visited Scoil Eimear to raise



Students from Scoil Eimear who took part in the 'Dissolving Boundaries' project.

awareness regarding safety at Halloween. Using an Interactive Whiteboard our colleagues in Holy Child Primary School were enabled to participate in the activities and communicate with our pupils and with the Gardaí. This proved to be

a very interesting and worthwhile initiative and we look forward to more conferences as the year goes on. Participating pupils will have the opportunity to meet face-to-face when our 5th Class pupils and pupils from Holy Child Primary

School meet at Tanagh Outdoor Pursuits Centre in Monaghan next May.

For further information about the Programme visit: www.dissolvingboundaries.org

St. Christopher's Special School

Great year at St. Christopher's

We had a great year here at St. Christopher's Special School. Pupils are actively encouraged to participate in local and national competitions.

We started off the New Year with the good news that one of our students won a prize in a poster competition. Students entered the INTO handwriting competition in February and we were delighted to hear that two of our pupils received prizes and one pupil reached the regional final. We had a visit from Longford Fire Station on 11th March.

We held a celebration day for the "Pushkin Project" on May 26th in the newly opened Sylvia Dawson Hall. We were joined by pupils from Stonepark National School and St. Fintan's, Lismacaffrey. The Duchess of Abbercorn, Sacha Abercorn attended the event. It was a fantastic day and was enjoyed by all.

The Agri Aware Mobile farm visited the school on Friday 28th May. The visit was a

prize for the Agri Aware Incredible Edibles competition which we won in June 2009. The mobile farm is a specifically designed unit that safely and humanely transports animals to any school or venue. The children were allowed to hold and feel the animals and learn about their role on the farm.

Our school tour to the Galway Aquarium and Salthill beach took place on June 18th. Our Sports day was held on Tuesday 22nd June 2010. We were greatly honored to be visited by President Mary McAleese on Thursday 4th November. There was great excitement preparing for her visit. We got to sing a song and introduce ourselves to the President.

One of our pupils is participating in the President's Award this year and hopes to receive a bronze award in 2011. We are looking forward to our Christmas Play - "A Present for the Baby" in December which is taking place in the Sylvia Dawson Hall.



Fioreann Basketball, Gaelscoil.

Gaelscoil Longfoirt

Beannachtaí ó Gaelscoil Longfoirt

Beannachtaí ó Gaelscoil Longfoirt! Tá breis is 200 dalta ag foghlaim trí mheán na Gaeilge i dtimpeallacht spreagúil thaitneamhach ar imeall bhaile Longfoirt. Tá an Ghaeilge mar theanga phobail na scoile idir páistí, múinteoirí, bainistíocht agus tuismitheoirí. Gaelscoil Longfoirt continues to go from strength to strength with an enrolment of over 200 students, nine mainstream teachers, a Learning Support Teacher and a Resource Teacher. Gaelscoil Longfoirt is part of the Gaelscoileanna movement and follows successfully in the path of all other gaelscoileanna throughout the country as more parents opt for Irish-medium education. We offer a choice to the parents of Longford as regards the education of their children.

Tá curaclam leathan ar fáil do pháistí na gaelscoile. The gaelscoil continues to offer a broad all-round education for children including Art, Crafts, P.E., Football, Basketball, Hurling and Handball. The children in Rang a ceathair, cúig agus a sé enjoy Oral French Classes. Swimming and Drama are offered to all classes including infants. Gaelscoil Longfoirt continue to enjoy the benefits of up-to-date ICT equipment. With the help of a grant from the Department of Education and Skills and generous fundraising by Cairde na Scoile we were able to furnish each classroom with short-throw projectors, visualisers, digital cameras and camcorders.

Tá Gaelscoil Longfoirt an-bhródúil as a gcuid sár-éachtaí le roinnt mhaith blianta anuas. The highlight of the year was that Gaelscoil Longfoirt were the gallant winners of the Cumann na mBunscol Division 2, B Final. Another honour bestowed on Gaelscoil Longfoirt last year was the winning of the Co. Longford School's Basketball League B Final, by both cailíní and buachaillí. The Under 9 and Under 11 soccer teams are training hard each week in the mall and are participating in FAI Longford Soccer Schoolboy/girl League each weekend. The Under 9 team narrowly missed out in a place in last year's final and both teams are hoping to build on last year's hard work! Fioreann Snámha Gaelscoil Longfoirt continue to find their place in the All-Ireland Schools Finals – we are very proud of them also.

Parental participation is appreciated and facilitated at all levels in Gaelscoil Longfoirt. All of us at Gaelscoil Longfoirt appreciate their efforts with fundraising, raising awareness, organising parties for First Communion and Confirmation among a wide range of other activities. Gaelscoil Longfoirt maintains strong links with other organisations in the local community thus promoting the Irish Language and culture. Cumann na bhFiann, Longfort le Chéile, Cumann Lúthchleas Gael, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann agus Spleodair are a few of the Irish Language organisations Gaelscoil Longfoirt are involved with.

Tá Gaelscoil Longfoirt ag súil le bliain eile den scoth. As we look forward to Christmas and the New Year, guimid Nollaig Shona agus Athbhliain faoi shéan agus faoi mhaise daoibh go léir.



President Mary McAleese is presented with a bouquet of flowers.



President Mary McAleese and her husband Martin received a warm welcome at St. Christopher's.



Successful year for St. Mel's College

2010 was a very busy and successful year for St. Mel's College. Our students enjoyed great success academically and in all of their extra curricular activities. The standard of Junior and Leaving Certificate results was very high with and we congratulate Muhib Ahmed, Ciaran Devine and Joseph Mc Gowan on winning University scholarships based on their exam results and sporting achievements. Ciaran was also named Student of the Year at our annual presentation day in May while Mark Hughes won the Fr Manning Medal.

Sport plays a major part in the life of St. Mel's College and win, lose or draw the boys compete with great passion and enthusiasm. Our Soccer, Gaelic, Basketball, Rugby and swimming teams all brought home silverware last year. The u14 and u16 Soccer teams won the West Leinster Leagues and are currently training hard for two in a row. There were great celebrations for trainers Jimmy Gacquin and Ed-

St. Mel's College

die Collins when the senior team beat St. Pats of Navan to take home the North Leinster Title for 2010. A prestigious event in the local sporting calendar is the Fr Mc Gee Cup and the senior team under trainers Jimmy Gacquin and Declan Rowley brought the Fr Mc Gee Cup back to St. Mel's again this year, making it a three in a row! Not to be outdone the U14 Gaelic team won the North Leinster Championship under the watchful eye of Fr. Joe Mc Grath. Captain Adrain Duffy and his team brought great pride to the school as it was the first time to win this in a number of years. Darragh Greene and Daniel Mimmagh represented the college in The All Ireland Schools Swimming Finals and both brought home silverware. On the Athletic front DJ Sokumbi and Robert Yorke competed in the All Ireland Finals in the 100 and 800 metres. Mick Murphy and the

basketball teams were busy also and achieved great success as both the U16 and U19 teams both won the Midland Regional Basketball Tournament and later in the year the senior basketball team got to the All Ireland play offs. Both Longford RFC and the college were delighted when Joseph Mc Gowan was selected to play with the Leinster U19 squad. This has been a great inspiration for our successful rugby teams. Hurling has made a welcome come back to the college this year as the students compete in the Leinster Schools Championship.

Off the sporting field Mel's students excelled also. The Transition Year "Ever Energy" project won the county final of the local schools enterprise awards and then went on to represent Longford at National level where they put on a spirited performance. It was a great achievement as this

was only the colleges second time to enter this competition. Success also for Ronan Mc Gowan from 4th year who competed in the National Ploughing Championships. During Science week Jonathan Magan, Robert Yorke, Michael Reilly, Gavin Dorrigan, Stephen Mc Loughlin and Dermot Brady took part in the ISTA Science Quiz and also amazed us with a science fair in school that week. Elsewhere in the school, students fundraised for local and national charities by having coffee mornings, football blitzes and also the creation and design of Christmas cards in aid of St. Mel's Cathedral.

The fire at St. Mel's Cathedral on Christmas morning had a huge impact on our College. While sharing a name, we pass it each day as we walk to school and can see its imposing spire from our classrooms and so it was with great sadness that we returned to school after Christmas. We then took pride in the fact that our school was to be-



Students from St. Mel's College pictured with St. Mel's Cross.

come the centre of worship for the parish while our beloved Cathedral is being restored. During the months of January and February we saw our Sports Hall and small College Chapel take on new life and we now enjoy our own school liturgies in St. Mel's

Cathedral Centre. We experienced many changes this year also with the retirement of Hal Carey and John Moloney both long-time, highly respected members of the teaching staff and parish community. With these retirements we welcomed

new members of staff: Emma Dempsey, Rachel Masterson and Siobhan Mc Morrow.

As 2011 approached St. Mel's College looks forward to a year that will bring health, success and happiness to its students, staff and parents.

Scoil Mhuire

Concern 'Festival'

This year, Concern has developed and emphasised the newly organised Concern festival. It is the fast that thinks it's a festival. In addition to the traditional 24hour fast, there will be festivals nationwide. These will vary from school to school. The transition year students of Mean Scoil Mhuire Longford will be organising a Santa's grotto on the day of the fast. The fast will be taking place on Thursday 25th November. The aim of Concern is to raise 1,000,000 euro through nationwide Festivals in order to stop childhood malnutrition. Best of luck to all "fasters" concerned.

Team Hope Christmas Shoebox Appeal - In the weeks approaching Christmas, we should always remember those less fortunate and that is exactly what students of Mean Scoil Mhuire Longford intend to do. We recognise Christmas as a time of giving. Each year, Transition Year students collect shoeboxes filled with presents for children in developing countries. The generosity of those who contributed is greatly appreciated. Overall, we managed to collect 190 boxes.

Shanghai Trip - The "Windsong Harpists" had the privilege of representing Ireland at the "World Expo" in Shanghai during the mid-term break. Among them was our very own, Annemarie Devine, a 6th year student of the school. The World Expo is held every three to five years in different cities all over the world. Here, the group got to showcase Irish culture and brought a varied programme ranging from traditional Irish music, South American tangos and jazz to Shanghai. Annemarie herself said the experience was amazing and that it effectively put Longford musicians on the world stage.

Junior Golfer of the Year - Caolinn Bushell golfed her way to gold at the under 18's Junior Golfing competition that took place in Sea Point Co. Louth recently. She claimed the top spot with a score of 41 points at the final of the event.

Concern Debates - Our school has always been a friend of the Concern Debating Programme which is Concern's flagship schools' activity. Again this year we have a team comprising of Rachel Ward (TY), Laura Whitney (5th Year), Henrietta Bisi (5th Year) and Ciara Moloney (5th Year). The students aim to promote a greater awareness and understanding of global issues ranging from Poverty to Human Rights. This year's team won their opening round and will meet Castlepollard tonight.

Bake Sales - Our Second Year students have been busy holding Bake Sales as part of their Junior Certificate CSPE Action Project. Students baked a range of chocolate and fruit delights and raised 118 euro. They decided to donate the money to County Longford Hospice Homecare for the much needed service and support that they provide.

FAI School Girls' Interprovincial Soccer Tournament - The Interprovincial FAI soccer schools' tournament takes place on Friday 5th November to Sunday 7th November. This is a designated weekend on the FAI international calendar and Clare Farrell 2nd Year is representing Leinster at this competition.



Pupils of Templemichael College

Busy year in Templemichael College

As we commence the new academic year of 2010/2011 we look back at another very busy year in Templemichael College. It was a year of steady progress and achievement in both curricular and extracurricular activities. Once again our Junior Cert. and Leaving Cert. examination results were excellent. They reflected the hard work of our students, the support of you their parents and the dedication of an extremely diligent and caring team of teachers who are on a daily basis constantly making sure that every opportunity is put in your child's way.

As you are aware life outside school is experiencing unprecedented change. Education in somewhat uncertain times must also be about creating successful, young, happy and resourceful students who can recognize opportunities and have the confidence to pursue them. We in Templemichael College recognize this need and provide many opportunities for our students to develop these skills. Our motto is "Unlocking Potential and Creating Opportunities".

We look forward to a successful 2010/2011 and we invite parents to work along with us here in Templemichael College to achieve the best future possible for our students.

Student Council - Our student council mainly coming from the higher years have been doing excellent. They have held two

Templemichael College



Sorcha Nic Dhonnacha, new Principal at Templemichael College.

meetings so far this term and have elected their Chairperson and Treasurer.

Green Schools - We are all happy to be making such progress to continue having our school clean and neat.

Photography Classes - Different classes in the school are at present participating in a photography class which is been run by local photographer Paddy Pibbys. The classes are a great success and students are learning a lot about different processes involved in using a camera and Photoshop.

Award Winning Project in Templemichael College

- Congratulations to Andrew Stewart a past pupil of Templemichael College for receiving first place in area four. (Longford, Leitrim, Sligo and Roscommon) of the Young Engineers Competition. The competition is organized by the Engineering Technology Teachers Association (ETTA) to acknowledge excellence in the field of leaving certificate engineering projects. Best of luck to Andrew in the National Finals in Cork on the 26th November '10. We had a great evening in the school with prize winners and their parents to celebrate the event.

Congratulations - Con-

grats to Emilia Malec in second year who won first prize in the Aisling Children's Festival Art Competition.

Retirement - We would like to take this opportunity of wishing long and happy retirement to the following staff who retired in recent times: Mr. Eamon Tynan - Teacher Mr. Tommy Donnelly - Caretaker; Ms. Josephine McCabe - Teacher Mr. Charlie Hilliard - Caretaker; Ms. Monica Tynan - Teacher; Ms. Rose Farrell - Teacher; Mr. Brendan McDermott - Teacher; Ms. Mary Mullins - Teacher. A function was held in Viewmount House for those who retired earlier followed by a function in Lough Rynn Castle for teachers and caretaker who retired more recently.

Our Principal Mrs. Ann Hefron has retired more recently and we would like to wish her every good luck in her retirement. She has done great work in Templemichael for the past 18 years. We would also like to welcome Sorcha Nic Dhonnacha who was recently appointed to the role of Principal. She has taken over the role with enormous energy, enthusiasm and commitment and has already made many positive changes.

Tastes of Christmas at Templemichael College - On Tuesday night the 22nd of November Templemichael College hosted a presentation of Festive Cooking with Broadcaster and

Chef- Instructor Frank Moynihan. The event was a huge success with over 200 people in attendance on the night. Frank prepared mouth-watering dishes including Pate, Soup, Main Courses and delicious Desserts. Templemichael students therefore should not be surprised if mum's traditional Sage and Onion stuffing is replaced with appetizing Apricot and Pistachio stuffing this Christmas Day!

Local Christmas produce was on sale on the night with a beautiful range of gifts from pottery to poetry, from personalized Christmas baskets and cards to decorative centre-pieces. Freshly baked, home-made produce was also available from the local country market stall. A most enjoyable and informative evening was had by all. Proceeds from the night go to Templemichael Development Fund and Longford Carer's Association. We would like to thank everyone who supported this event.

Templemichael College is following its ethos of supporting locally produced produce and companies. At this time this is more important than ever. We must encourage indigenous companies if Ireland is to prosper again. We have a strong record of entrepreneurship and this is evident from the amount of local business people who are past pupils of our college.



GOAL – as busy as ever in 2010



GOAL nurse Elaine Brennan at work in famine stricken Ethiopia.

Unfortunately it has been an extremely busy year yet again for GOAL but fortunately the incredibly generous people of Longford have continued to dig deep to support GOAL and its vital work worldwide. From January to November 11th, Longford donations had reached a truly staggering € 55,333.04.

The New Year had hardly arrived when the first major disaster struck in Haiti leaving total destruction in its wake. GOAL responded straight away and are still working away as you read this.

Thousands of shelters and hundreds of latrines as well as shower and hand-wash blocks have been built. In order to generate badly needed income, thousands of locals are employed on cash-for-work projects clearing rubble and collecting rubbish.

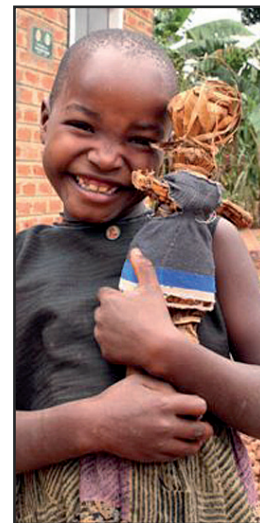
More recently, Pakistan was the scene of floods that had to be seen to be believed. Today GOAL is working across Sindh Province providing shelter, hygiene kits, plastic sheeting, sleeping mats, cooking utensils etc to thousands of families. 10.5 million water purification tablets have also been distributed by GOAL aid workers which will provide safe drinking water for 55,000 families for three months.

Meanwhile the work continues in Uganda at building 1,500 houses. Donations from Longford helped kick start this project with about 15 houses built directly from local money. Though not much in the news, Niger, Ethiopia and Sudan continue to have food and health problems on a massive scale and where GOALies are active in trying to lessen the suffering of the most vulnerable. And of course GOAL is still very involved in helping street children in places like Nairobi and Addis Ababa.

The main fundraiser for GOAL in Longford is the Christmas Day GOAL Mile which starts every year at 12 noon from Connolly Barracks. Each year, it has been run through the streets of the town until 2009 when we had to divert up the Battery Road because of the Cathedral fire. This year, as ever, we'll be back at Connolly Barracks and this time we'll be on our usual route, no matter what the weather, rain, hail or shine.

Finally, a sincere and heart felt THANK YOU for the exceptional support GOAL enjoys in Longford. It's deeply appreciated from Haiti to Pakistan, from the street children of Nairobi to the most vulnerable and hungry in Niger.

Thank you from GOAL – Tiernan Dolan.



A young Ugandan orphan clutches her home made doll outside her house built by GOAL using funds raised in Longford

Aisling Children's Arts Festival 2010

The Aisling Children's Arts Festival celebrated its 13th year recently... teenagers now but still children at heart! The recession was put to one side as children and grownups from all over the county enjoyed the family day, theatre shows and workshops.

The week started off with a Family Fun Day in St Michael's Boys School. This new venue for the day proved to be a great hit and we are very grateful to Peter Walshe, his staff and the Board of Management for facilitating us. Four different workshops took place during the day and 156 children went home with colourful wind chimes from one of them. We also had fun

with cards, circus tricks and the ever popular enchanted fairies workshop. There were never ending queues for the climbing wall, while there were shows in the main hall from Wolfgang Glochenspiel and Johnny Phelan "Juggler Extraordinaire". The Animal Roadshow was a first for the festival but we hope they will come back. Children were able to see and hold lizards, snakes, owls, hedgehogs and much more. The girls from Transition Year ensured that all the children had their faces painted while the boys from St Mel's helped with the circus skills workshop. The best thing about the day for parents was that they could leave their wallets at home as all the activities provided on the day were free.

The Backstage Theatre was busy for the week hosting a variety of shows and exhibitions for the festival. There was a packed house on Friday for the return of Mr. Toons and his balloon all the way from Denmark. The young children were wide eyed with amazement as Mr Toons disappeared into his balloon, while the "veterans" who had seen him last year were impressed with his cycling up the steps of the theatre. 'The Man who Planted Trees' an acclaimed children's production came to us from Scotland and children were still talking about it the following week. There were rave reviews for the Aisling Theatre project by the students from St Joseph's National School and Stonepark N.S. These children wrote and then performed a wonderful production on Wednesday evening at the Backstage. Another highlight of the week was the photography exhibition in the Atrium Gallery in Longford. A professional photographer workshopped with two local National Schools Tashinny N.S and Aughnaclyffe NS over six weeks. The children learned the craft of photography using an experiential and fun approach. We were certainly wowed by their very own exhibition which was launched in the Atrium Gallery in the Backstage Theatre during the festival. Children and their parents were also entertained on the night by Reuben from



Pictured celebrating Aisling Children's Arts Festival 2010.

'The Den'. We were honoured that local poet, Mary Melvin Geoghegan chose the Aisling Children's Festival week for the Longford Launch of Eurochild 2010 which featured poems from a number of local children. There was an enchanting theatre experience for our toddlers on Wednesday morning in the Canal Studio at Backstage Theatre with the tiny theatre and magical story of The Paper Princess.

The workshop programme started on the Family Fun Day and continued during the week in Kenagh, Ardagh, Moyne, Granard, Lanesboro, Newtownforbes, Drumlish and Clondra during the week and finished with a full day of workshops in the Temperance Hall on Saturday. As well as the old popular reliables, we had brand new workshops on offer this year including Football Stadiums, Throw a Pot, Slate Painting, Really Cool Rain Sticks, Flower Pot People, Kindermusik and the Aisling Gym. Almost 600 children participated in the workshop programme during the week.

We would like to congratulate all the winners in the Art Competition especially Cian Clancy, Stonepark National School who won the overall prize and who will have his picture featured in next year's brochure.

And so another festival comes to an end, but planning has already started for

next year's festival and we are looking forward to the premier of the film project that the students from Ballymahon Vocational School have been working on.

This annual children's festival would not be possible if it were not for the very generous sponsorship that is received from all our sponsors especially our local business sponsors. We would like to record our sincere gratitude to them. Thanks to all our supporters who ensure that Aisling continues from year to year, to the teachers in our local schools, and to the families, both parents and children who support

Aisling in their attendance and appreciation of the festival. The festival committee is always looking for new members. The terms of employment are long hours, no pay, but lots of fun! If interested please email us on aislingfestival@hotmail.com or contact any member of the committee. The festival is organised by a local voluntary committee including Maria Gray, Patricia McKiernan, Colette Meally, Nora Horan, Angela Crossan, Moe Reynolds, Fiona Jackson, Teresa McGuinness, Sive McGuinness, Brid Nevin, Rosie O'Hara, and Aine O'Sullivan.

National Parents Council Primary

National Parents Council Primary (NPC-P) is a nationwide organisation representing parents of children attending early and primary education. NPC is recognised by the Government and the Education Act of 1998 as a body representing parents. Our aim is to enrich the education of all children and support parents to get involved in their children's learning at home, at school and in the community.

It is essentially an umbrella body for all Parent Associations of all National Schools in the country.

NPC have a permanent staff located at 12 Marlborough Court, Dublin and an excellent website, www.npc.ie

Every National school's Parent Association is entitled to join and send a representative to meetings and discussions held from time to time around the country. Every National School who have affiliated is entitled to send a nominated representative to vote on education issues as they arise.

NPC is organised on a county and regional basis. Longford County have had a committee since 1985 when NPC commenced. The organisation is totally voluntary at county level with a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and committee members who attend meetings at National level.

The county committee disseminate information on education issues, e.g. class size, curriculum issues, special needs, safety, as well as holding seminars on education issues, e.g. bullying, dyslexia, healthy eating etc.

Longford branch hold an annual County Quiz inviting all National Schools in the County to send one or two teams of four pupils to compete for a trophy and prizes.

Last year the County branch held a number of road shows around the county with two aims to promote the work of the NPC and to inform parents and teachers on the topic of special needs education.

Monthly meetings are held in the Family Centre, St. Mel's Road, and Longford.

Any parent interested in getting involved or looking for information can contact the current committee: Chairperson, James Connors; Secretary, Mary Lillis; Treasurer, Joanne Pearman; National Representatives, James Connors and Mary Lillis. Phone: 087 962 5890 or Email: npcplongfordbranch@gmail.com



St Martha's Hostel
Knockahaw,
Dublin Road,
Longford.

**Society of
St Vincent De Paul**
Telephone: 043 33
48062

St Martha's Hostel provides temporary accommodation for homeless men. We provide accommodation and food in a warm, safe environment.

We offer support and links to other service providers and to follow on accommodation.

The hostel operates on a 24-hour day, 7 days a week basis and all staff are welcoming and friendly and confidentiality is assured.

Staff are fully trained in areas of homelessness.

If you find yourself in need of our support please contact the above number.

"Hostels are no longer just about providing shelter, they are a stable force for the person at a time of crisis in their lives"

**BETHANY HOUSE,
Women's Hostel/Refuge,
Longford.**



Society of St Vincent De Paul. Telephone: 087 7497043

Bethany house offers accommodation to women and their children who find themselves homeless because of domestic abuse or other crisis related issues.

It operates on a 24 hour day, 7 days a week basis and all staff are welcoming and friendly, confidentiality is assured.

We provide safe accommodation that meets the needs of women who are homeless and we provide support and links to other service providers and to follow on accommodation.

STAFF ARE TRAINED IN AREAS OF:
• HOMELESSNESS
• DOMESTIC ABUSE & ADVOCACY

**IF YOU FIND YOURSELF IN NEED OF OUR SUPPORT
PLEASE CONTACT THE ABOVE NUMBER**

"Hostels are no longer just about providing shelter, they are a stable force for the person at a time of crisis in their lives"



Girl Guides look forward to Centenary Year



Girl Guides Tree Planting in the Mall Complex

Irish Girl Guides will celebrate their Centenary year in 2011, 100 years of Guiding in Ireland. In 2010 we began the celebrations by planting a tree in each county in Ireland, this represents growth in our organization. In Longford we planted our Manilla Tree in the grounds of the Mall Complex.

Longford Girl Guides currently have the largest attendance ever recorded. We meet weekly in the Temperance Hall. Annually we attend the Cheerios Panto in Dublin and participate in our local St. Patrick's Day Parade. This

year our Brownies packed up and headed to Co. Roscommon for a two night stay in the Guide Cottage, enjoying a range of indoor and outdoor activities including a midnight hike and cook-out. Our Guides on the other hand enjoyed a weekend camping trip. Wellingtons were at the ready as our Irish weather played up on us again, all girls still managed returned home with smiles form ear to ear. Irish Girl Guides ranges in age from 5 - 18 then we have the leaders. Ladybird Guides are aged 5 - 7 years and are

encouraged to share, help others, learn about teamwork, enjoy nature and discover the world around them. Brownie Guides are aged 6½ - 11 years. They have fun while learning to help others, enjoying the outdoors and playing games, doing crafts and working on awards and badges. Guides are aged 10 ½ to 15 years and not only enjoy active weekly meetings but also have the challenge of surviving in the outdoors. Senior Branch are aged 14 ½ to 18 and consists of Rangers and Young Guiders. Senior Branch offers them the

opportunity to experience adventure, enjoy international events, develop self-confidence and grow in independence. In 2010 the image of Irish Girl Guides changed by updating our Logo and Uniforms. In 2011 we take part in a number of celebrations with the main event taking place in Semple Stadium on May 7th. It is promised to be a great year and we look forward to celebrating 100 years of Guiding in Ireland.

A vision that has become a reality!



When the Temperance Hall re-opened its door in 2004 its new logo "the heart of the community... the centre of the town" was its vision for the future. Since then this vision has become a reality and no more so than during this past year. Like the

rest of the community we were devastated in December of 2009 that fire had destroyed St. Mel's Cathedral. In the shadow of the Cathedral parishioners joined together for Christmas Day Mass as they tried to comprehend the events of the early

morning fire. During the weeks that followed The Temperance Hall open its doors to the local community as Parish Masses were held there for January and February. We were proud that our building could easily become part of Parish life in a new way. At

this time the hall committee joined forces with the Parish Finance committee and the Pastoral Council and worked tirelessly in helping the parish move to its temporary home in St. Mel's College.

This busy start was to continue over the remainder of the year. Each week many community groups meet in the hall. It's a great joy to go into the Hall on any given evening to see the life and vibrancy that these groups bring to our landmark building...girl guides, Bridge, Karate and Yoga to name a few. Full details of all events that take place in the Hall can be seen on our website: www.temperancehallongford.ie. We thank all those who use the Temperance Hall and welcome enquires from new groups.

The Temperance Hall employs 5 staff and recently secured An Pobal funding for the next three years. We are conscious that many community groups are experiencing financial difficulties at the moment and we at the Temperance Hall offer very competitive community rates where the main hall, civic suite and other ancillary rooms can be rented on an hourly of daily rate.

When the Hall reopened in 2004 the committee had the vision of a dedicated youth space. Since then the Attic management team joined forces with Foroige. This collaboration of Foroige and the dedicated local volunteers has made the Attic what it is today. It is a testament to the adult volunteers involved; their time,

dedication and passion for a much-needed youth facility has added greatly to the town and indeed all of County Longford. The Attic adds to the life and colour of the Temperance Hall with band nights, LY factor and many more exciting and educational programmes on offer.

The Temperance Hall plays an important roll in the local community and this would not be possible were it not for the commitment, hard work and dedication of the voluntary management committee and its hard working staff; Donal, Michele, Jason, James and Kathleen. We are in the centre of the town and are pleased to serve our local community...*"the heart of the community...the centre of the town"*.

Longford Town ICA Guild

Longford town ICA Guild hold monthly meetings from September to June in the Family Centre at the back of the Cathedral. These meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month at 8p.m. All women are welcome. Our current committee is President May Campbell, Secretary Patricia Guihen and Treasurer Kathleen Kelly. Our Liaison officer is Jane Johnston. Her role is to make contact and befriend any women who express an interest to join. Her contact number is 043 33 41887. Contact Jane if you wish to join or you can come to 2 meetings "free gratis" and then make up your mind if it is for you or not. ICA has become more of a social outlet for women nowadays.

Our annual plan for our Guild is based on the requests of our members. Over the last year we have done 3D Decoupage classes in January, Aqua Aerobics and Bowling in March.

We invite a varied and eclectic mix of guest speakers to our meet-

ings to talk and/or demonstrate on their area of expertise. More recently these included talks on photography, History, gardening, crafts and a demonstration on finger knitting as well as an image Consultancy.

Every year we fundraise for some Charity chosen by the members or some Charity who have approached us on occasion.

We also make an annual donation to a local charity at Christmas in 2009 St Vincent de Paul were the beneficiaries. In approx 2001 we joined the program "Adopt a Friend" in St Josephs Care Centre. We have a list of Senior Citizens whom we visit on their birthdays and at Christmas.

The Guild went to the Christmas Party night in the Red Room in P.V.'s for our 2009 party and it proved to be a great night. For our annual summer outing we went to Ballina Salmon Festival Heritage Day. A brilliant day out was had by all.

2010 is the Centenary year of

ICA. Our Guild, together with the Federation, put together a Flower Festival and Craft Display to celebrate our 100 years. It was held on the 25th to 27th August and it was a huge success. There was a beautiful display of flowers in St Johns Church, Battery Rd.

Each month, at our Guild meetings, members take it in turn in providing the hospitality for the evening and spoil us with delectable treats.

This gives our members the opportunity to catch up with each other over a nice relaxing cup of tea before heading home for the night. Looking for something to do during the upcoming winter months? Now is the ideal time to join us. If you are new to the area or indeed an existing member of the community and would like to make new friends and share or develop a new hobby or indeed meet our guest speakers, feel free to drop by on the night.

On joining, you'll always be sure of a warm welcome - a Cead Mile Fáilte on arrival!

Weather Lore

*If Candlemas Day be fair and bright
Winter will have another flight
But if Candlemas Day be clouds and rain
Winter is gone and will not come again!*

*If there's ice in November
That will bear a duck,
There'll be nothing after
But sludge and muck.*



Lighting the first candle on the Advent Wreath at the International Mass.



A group of happy Altar Servers heading into the Vigil Mass at the Cathedral Centre on November 27th last.

Altar Servers

We are always pleased to welcome on board our young parishioners to participate in a special way in parish life by volunteering as an Altar Server. We hope that for the young boys and girls, being an altar server helps them to enter into the prayer of the Mass in a special way and is also an opportunity for them to come to know the priests of the parish at a personal level.

We are very grateful to the parents of our servers who make themselves available in ensuring that we meet the highest standards of our Child Protection Policy.



“Cumann” labhair Gaeilge linn!!

Cumann na bhFiann has been noted for many years, throughout the town, for its promotion of ‘An Gaeilge i Longford’. Cumann na bhFiann is Ireland's largest National Irish language Youth Organisation. Set up in the early 80's, the Cumann in Longford is one of the longest running and most successful youth clubs in the Country by the organisation.

Cumann na bhFiann in Longford and all others, provide a safe and comfortable environment where students get an opportunity on a weekly basis

to practise ‘ag labhairt as Gaeilge.’

Idir an Óg Chlub agus an Sean Chlub tá ós cionn 100 dalta ar na rollaí. Barra Mac Thiarnáin, West and Midlands area coordinator for Cumann na bhFiann, commented Cumann na bhFiann and Coláiste na bhFiann have a great history here in Longford. This year, both our junior and senior Cumann na bhFiann Youth Clubs have had a waiting list to become a member since before the Halloween break! The clubs in Longford have a combined weekly attendance of 85

and have been going from strength to strength not only here in Longford but also nationwide.” It runs every Friday night from 19.30 – 21.00 in the Temperance Hall.

Along with weekly clubs packed with activities, Cumann na bhFiann also organises fun events and trips for its members throughout the year. Recently, during the Halloween Mid-term break, Cumann na bhFiann attended Scléip na hÓige in Cill Airne. While there, the students attended many different events over the course of the week includ-



Members of Cumann na bhFiann.

ing, discos, cycling tours, glass-blowing workshops, ceilis and a hypnotist show. With in excess of

400 attending it proved to be a great success le gach rud as Gaeilge. Should you require further infor-

mation about Gaeltacht Summer Courses or the weekly Youth Club, all information can be found on

www.colaistenabhfiann.ie or by emailing Barra directly at barra@colaistenabhfiann.ie



The Aaron Hagan Memorial Hunt and Auction took place on January 30th 2010 and proceeds raised were donated to Meals on Wheels. A total of €9,300 was gratefully received. Please mark your diaries as the next hunt is scheduled for January 29th 2011 – All experienced huntsmen/women and happy hackers are invited to attend.

Longford Community Mothers

We aim to be a very valuable local resource capable of reducing the isolation and stress many parents experience by offering friendly mother-to-mother support and encouragement.

We recognise the parents we work with as equals and experts in the rearing of their own children. We achieve this through our home visiting programme for families with children under 5 years old.

Community Mothers are volunteers who use their experiences as mothers as well as local knowledge to support and encourage new parents. All visits take place in the parent's home and the service is free.

There are many reasons why parents use Community Mothers

- Feeling isolated in the community because of no family-friends nearby
- Finding it difficult adjusting to the life of being a parent
- Wanting to know what is happening in the local community but don't know where to start

Community Mothers also provide the following service in Harmony House and new members are always welcome.

- Parent & Toddler Group, Every Thursday from 11am - 1pm.
- Activities e.g. hand painting, arts & crafts, story/music time, outings.

Contact local Co-ordinator - Elaine Keogh @ Harmony House Community Centre. Phone: 043-3348754 Email: communitymothers@eircom.net



Volunteers assisting the elderly

Meals on Wheels is often the first service that is offered to older people as they become more dependant, but are still capable of continuing to live in their own homes. The benefits of the service are many.

It can improve the nutritional status of clients, it provides clients with a measure of social contact, particularly important for those who are socially isolated or living in remote areas. It can enable the early detection of problems that require further interventions.

In addition, the Meals on Wheels service is a local response to local needs.

The service has many benefits – it's objectives are to provide the opportunity for older people to live their years in dignity by:

- Providing healthy appealing meals;
- Promoting health and preventing disease;
- Reducing malnutrition risk and improving nutritional status;
- Reducing social isolation and increasing social interaction;
- The social role played is as important or more important than the nutritional aspect of the service.

It plays an important role in providing respite for carers and enabling home helps to undertake other tasks.

Meals on Wheels service is provided in the town and county on a seven day per week basis including Christmas day and other public holidays. The meals are delivered to the individu-

Longford Social Services

- Meals on Wheels (over 65)
- Chiropody (medical card holders, over 65)
- Transport – St Joseph's Day Care; Hospitals/Clinics; clubs etc
- Visitation

Contact Elaine Keogh, Co-Ordinator, Tel. No: 043 3350114/043 3350138. E-mail: longsocserv1@eircom.net

als home by our many volunteer drivers, helpers and staff.

While the service is not in a position to provide individuals with a choice of meals each day for financial reasons, the menu is

regularly rotated to ensure a good variety of meals.

We strive to make the meals reasonable and affordable and have to rely on subsidy by the HSE, direct payments from clients, fundraising, donations, flag days and church gate collections.

We would like to thank all our volunteers who give so generously of their time during the year, the people of Longford and surrounding counties who support our fundraising events and for donations received.

May God reward you for your efforts.

Contact Elaine Keogh, Co-Ordinator, 043 3350114/043 3350138; E-mail: longsocserv1@eircom.net



Members of Longford Social Services committee.

Promoting a deeper understanding of Christian Marriage

The ACCORD Centre situated in Teallach Iosa, St. Mel's Road, Longford, is part of a national organization providing a Marriage and Relationship Counselling Service as well as Marriage Preparation Programmes. Through its work ACCORD aims to promote a deeper understanding of Christian marriage and to offer people the means to safeguard and nourish their marriage and family relationships.

In our Longford Centre, trained counsellors work in a voluntary capacity offering a safe, professional and confidential process facilitating couples and individuals to explore, reflect upon and resolve difficulties in their marriage. Counselling is arranged by contacting the centre at 043 3347222. Our Marriage Preparation Programmes run throughout the year. Trained facilitators work in a voluntary capacity with couples preparing for marriage. 'Marriage a Journey not a Destination' is the name given to the current ACCORD Marriage Preparation Course. ACCORD recognises that the couples who present for our marriage preparation courses are already on a journey. This is a journey of discovery which began the first time they met. It is a journey that combines two histories, two families and two distinct sets of expectations of marriage. A Marriage Preparation Course is an opportunity for couples to take time out from the hectic planning of the Wedding Day, to focus on how things are between them, to affirm what is going well and to name the areas of their relationship that might need some attention. All of this takes place in a relaxed atmosphere in the company of other couples preparing for Marriage. A Marriage Preparation Course can be booked online at www.accord.ie or by contacting the centre directly at 043 3347222.



The Legion of Mary

The Legion of Mary has been in Longford for many years and was founded in Dublin in 1921 by the Servant of God, Frank Duff. It grew out of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and is to be found in almost every country in the world.

The Legion of Mary is a lay apostolic organization at the service of the Church under ecclesiastical guidance and its spirituality is based on the teachings of Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort.

It has over 3 million active members, many more auxiliary (praying) members and its handbook is translated into over 90 languages.

Its work in Longford consists of visitation of homes, hospitals, the elderly in their own homes and the distribution of Catholic literature and other good works. The members try to encourage people in their faith and always work in pairs.

Membership can develop life-long friendships among its members and people with whom they

come in contact. Many couples have met through the Legion and a group in Cork has reported 5 marriages!

We are fulfilling in a special way our apostolic duty by becoming members of the Legion of Mary and adhering to its rules and system.

A sense of peace, joy and a feeling of being forever young comes with membership, for when working for Our Lady we receive blessings which only She knows how to bestow. New members are welcome.

The following groups meet in The Family Centre, St. Mel's Road, Longford: Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Friday 4.30pm; (Young Peoples' group), Virgin Mother of Good Counsel, Thursday 7.30pm; Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Wednesday morning 10.30am; Our Lady of Seven Sorrows - A Slovakian Group, Monday 6.00 pm; The Patrician Group (Discussion) First Saturday of the month 8.30pm.



Corpus Christi Prayer

Let us pray

[to the Lord who gives himself in the Eucharist that this sacrament may bring us salvation and peace]
 Lord Jesus Christ,
 you gave us the Eucharist
 as the memorial of your suffering and death.
 May our worship of this sacrament of your body and blood
 help us to experience the salvation you won for us
 and the peace of the kingdom
 where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



Serving Midnight Mass in St. Mel's Cathedral 50 years ago

1958. The year of the Munich Air Crash. St. Michael's National School. Mr O Regan and Mr Quinn. "Getting the messages" in Jim Molloy's, Mr. Murtagh's and Mr. Hannawins. The Adelphi and The Odeon. Park Road on winter Sunday afternoons to support Longford town. Kevin Blount. A packed sitting room watching the F.A. Cup Final on B.B.C. TV courtesy of the Connolly family who lived opposite St. Mel's Cathedral. Serving Midnight Mass in that same Cathedral.

Two years previously we had enlisted as Mass servers. There had been an armed uprising in Hungary at that time and as we gathered for a "serving practice" we feared that the end of the world was coming. Our childish imaginations had run away with us.

Our tutor was Fr. Wall. We learned the Latin responses, how to transfer the Missal from the Epistle to the Gospel side, when to ring the bell, how to hold the paten properly. Most important was learning how to genuflect. Like a military commander he stood over us and made us practice for what seemed like hours. "Head up, back straight, up down, up down".

I cannot recall an examination to assess our proficiency but eventually we took our places on the cold marble steps at the foot of the high altar in St. Mel's. We were divided into 4 patrols, each with a leader. Week one we served at the 9 o'clock Mass, week two saw us serve the 8 o'clock. This earned us a two week break. Black soutanes and white surplices. The latter starched until you could almost slice bread with it. On Sundays we were allocated the 8, 10 or 11 o'clock Mass. Red soutane for Sunday. Surplice snow white. 12 o'clock Mass was a solemn High Mass. The servers for this important liturgical service were the elite. They were "on ceremonies". Eventually even ordinary servers reached that hallowed position. However the pinnacle we aspired to was to serve at Midnight Mass. To be allowed leave the house at the unearthly hour of 11 o'clock, to see the crowds, to perhaps glimpse Santa Claus on his rounds as we returned home. We were heading for the Promised Land. And so it came to pass.

Christmas seemed to come later in the 1950's. The appearance of the Beano and the Dandy annuals in Donlon's window was the first sign that it was time to think of letters to the North Pole. Vaughans in Ballymahon Street and Woods' in Main Street drew children to press noses against windows. The eyes of the girls gazed at the dolls, prams, tea sets, nurse's outfits. Boys were awestruck by the display of cowboy suits, cap guns, train sets, Dinky toys, Mecanno sets and board games. Perhaps, if we were good, one of them might materialise at the foot of the bed on Christmas morning. A few fairy lights, a sprinkling of artificial frost created the magic that the condensation on the inside of the window could not dispel.

In St. Mel's Cathedral the prepara-



tions were underway once the calendar turned to December. Here Jimmy Reilly, sacristan, was the magician. At Our Lady's Altar he erected the Crib. To us it was the best in the world. An orange star shone over a grey shed that glistened under the "frost" that Jimmy sprinkled on it. He expected the servers to help him decorate the Cathedral. Ivy festooned the tall candle sticks that stood like sentries on the altar. Brasses were polished until they reflected like mirrors. The fragrance of the wax candles burning and guttering in the candelabras was smothered by the smell of Brasso and wax polish. As a reward for our "assistance" Jimmy promised to show us Longford from the roof of the Cathedral "when summer comes". Our contributions paled into significance when we saw the toil and effort of the ladies who cleaned and swept away every trace of dirt.

Fr. Wall was also busy. On December evenings the Midnight Mass servers had practice after practice in the cold sacristy. It was like a military operation. Every movement was meticulously planned and rehearsed. Each boy had his allocated task. We learned how to bow.....all at one time. How to genuflect (again!)...all at one time. How to walk in a straight line. As the great night drew closer practices moved out into the Sanctuary. Our tutor stood at the Bishop's throne, a stand in for the great man himself. The Cross bearer marched up and down. The servers who held the Crozier and mitre were given their positions be-

hind and beside the "bishop". Torch and candle bearers were instructed how to carry them correctly at a uniform height. An imaginary book was held as Fr. Wall pretended to read while another server held an imaginary small candlestick and candle. The job description for the function these boys carried out was "book and bougie".

I can still pronounce it but cannot vouch for the spelling. In the dimly lit Cathedral we could hear the muttered prayers of those "doing" the Stations of the Cross or reciting the Rosary. We however had to concentrate on our tasks as we prepared for the real ceremony and our dreadful fear that we might make a mistake and disgrace ourselves and our families.

December 24th. Three o'clock and Santa Claus comes on Radio Eireann. Aided by his patient assistant he calls out names, addresses and lists of presents for all the good boys and girls. As darkness falls a tall red candle is lit and placed in the window. Back to the radio now as Santa leaves from the North Pole. Quick calculations are

made as to what time he might arrive in Longford. Will it be during or after Midnight Mass? Bath time. "Go to bed for an hour. We don't want you falling asleep in the Cathedral". Called at 11. Didn't sleep a wink. Gather a soutane (red) and newly ironed surplice. Already people are streaming through the main doors as I made my way, in the dark, to the back door.

11-30. A hushed sacristy. We aren't speak. We are almost afraid to breathe. The Grandfather clock tick tocks. The second hand moves slowly. Fr. Wall and Jimmy make final preparations. The sound of a car outside the window. Dr. Mc Namee, Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois, arrives. The priests queue to kiss his ring. It is almost time to walk up the two steps into the sanctuary. The minute hand moves slowly.

The signal is given and we all move forward. The peals of the organ reverberate around the walls and ceiling of the Cathedral. The sanctuary is bathed in light. In the gallery a boy soprano sings Silent Night. His performance will be praised for weeks afterwards. Outside it is cold, damp and foggy. Inside it is warm and cosy. Heat from the underground furnaces rises through the grills in the floor and spreads to the four corners. The congregation nosily rise to their feet and sit down again. Midnight Mass has begun.

Dr. Mc Namee is seated on his throne. Fr. Wall is Master of Ceremonies. Another signal and a group of servers come forth. Each of us carries

an item for the robing of the Bishop, an important ritual. One boy carries a pair of purple slippers on a silver tray. We stand in line and bow together. The first item is handed to Fr. Wall who presents it to the Bishop. The server bows, steps back and another server steps forward. At last this part of the ceremony is completed and no one has made a mistake or slipped. We take our places in the mahogany stalls in the sanctuary. From here we can view the huge congregation and watch the actions of the choir master in the organ loft.

Mass proceeds. The important tasks are performed by the older servers. We look up to them and look forward to being in their positions. Someday we will carry the thurible and spread the fragrant, pungent smell of burning incense amidst clouds of billowing smoke. Perhaps we will escort the celebrant and hold candles aloft. To follow the Bishop with crozier and mitre requires a steady step and you get to wear a short golden cape on your shoulders. Only the most ambitious and tallest among us could aspire to be train bearer, wear purple and to be last but not missed in formal processions.

The choir sing the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus and Agnus Dei in what, we are told, is Gregorian Chant. It's rhythms ebb and flow, rise and fall as we follow the words in our prayer books. The boy soprano sings Adeste Fideles and we think we might have died and gone to heaven. We come back to earth to accompany the priests as they distribute Holy Communion. Row after row comes to the altar rails marshalled by members of the St. Vincent de Paul. Kneeling in reverence the communicants will have been fasting for hours beforehand. The Bishop imparts his final blessing which includes some phrases that only he is allowed to pronounce.

Back to the sacristy and to a more relaxed atmosphere especially when the Bishop departs. The adults seem pleased. We are delighted. First time and no mistakes. Pack but don't crumble the soutane and surplice. Head for home. Christmas Day has several extra Masses and we will be back on duty again. As we move across the courtyard, knots of people are still talking and shouts of "Happy Christmas" ring in our ears.

Christmas lights twinkle on the tree at the Temperance Hall. Candles are burning low in the windows of Keons Tee directly opposite the Cathedral. Donlons, Connollys, Wilsons, Dolans, Dr. Pettits, Ellises. Behind their drawn curtains another Christmas Day has arrived.

I glance over the roof tops. No sign of Santa and his sleigh but plenty of stars. Home. A cup of tea and chocolate biscuits. Christmas cake later in the day. Up the stairs to bed. Presents. Santa has visited while I served my first Midnight Mass.

Hugh Dolan,
November 2010.

Back to the radio now as Santa leaves from the North Pole. Quick calculations are made as to what time he might arrive in Longford. Will it be during or after Midnight Mass?



THE CHRISTMAS CARD STORY

Shane Tully, 094 class prefect, St Mel's College

Way back in the autumn, our class decided to plant daffodils in the shape of 2009, the year of the Cathedral fire. We planted them along the new pathway so that when people were walking to Mass in the springtime, the new daffodils would be a sign of hope for the opening of the new Cathedral. Then when it would be opened, a different class could plant daffodils with the shape of that year.

We then decided we'd like to do something more. Our teacher (of Irish, History and CSPE) Mr Dolan said he had photos of the Cathedral in snow, which he took on the shortest day of the year, December 21st. So we decided to make Christmas cards, using his photos.

It was decided to use two photos, one taken from the college with the bare winter trees and the other of the front with the sun just coming up. One student suggested we use greetings in Irish as well as English because we are an Irish class. Then on the back we said we'd include a few photos to try to tell the story of the Cathedral. So on each we have a photo of the cathedral in all its glory taken in 2008 when Bishop Colm was celebrating his Silver Jubilee. Then we included the two photos used on the front. To finish we added one photo taken on the day of the fire. We included this one because it looks like a famous photo taken of St Paul's Cathedral, London during the blitz. (That's the History class connection!) We liked the idea that no flames were visible and the smoke just looks like a cloud. Then we composed the photos on one card to look like a cross, the shape of the cathedral and the other one to look like the spire shape of the cathedral. Because we thought the cards would be going all over the world, we put in the parish website and finally because of his photos, we decided to add the teacher's name.

We were thrilled that a local firm, Rapid Print was able to print them so we were helping local industry. When we got the cards we had to fold

each individually and then place them in threes, one of each design. After that we had to count out six envelopes and put them all together. The hardest part was yet to come...putting them into cellophane folders. They stuck to our fingers, air got jammed in them and sometimes we had them upside down and back to front and had to do them all over again. Frustrating times.

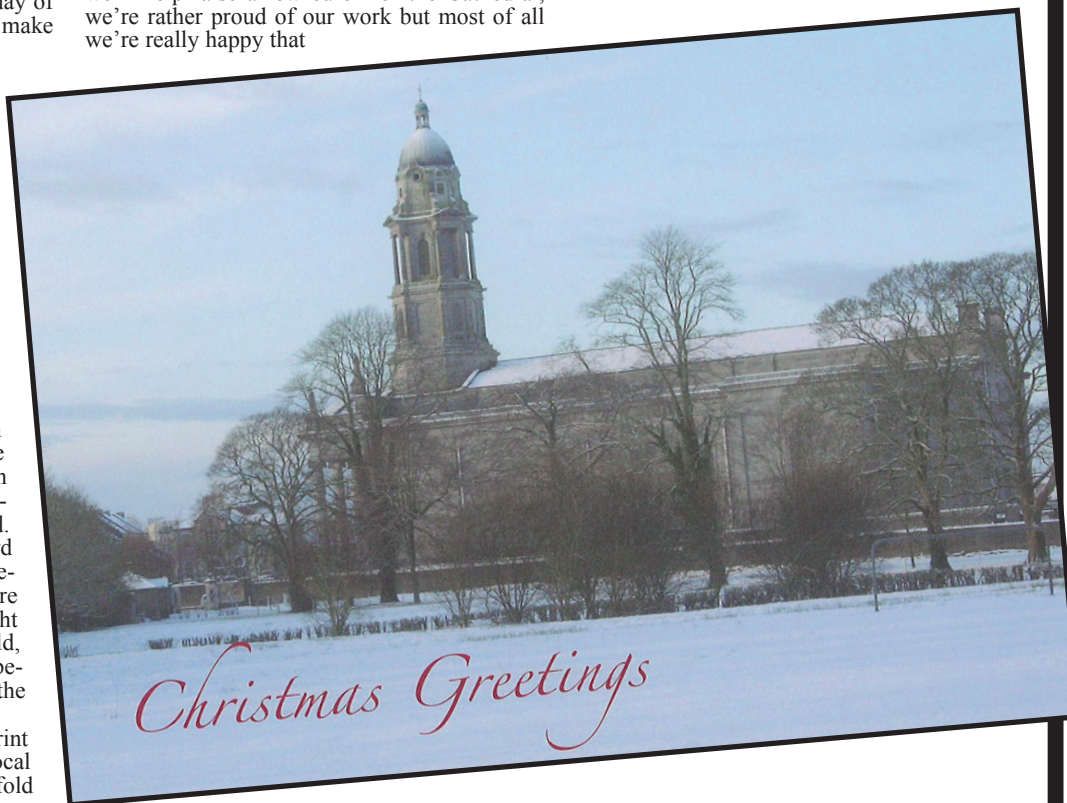
But when the cards completely sold out in early November, we were over the moon and quite chuffed with our efforts. And then we said we'd order an other batch, so by now we have sorted over 6,000 Christmas cards.

Yes, we had a bit of craic doing the project, we'll help raise a few euro for the Cathedral, we're rather proud of our work but most of all we're really happy that



Longford people all over the world will be getting a genuine Longford card with a photo of our special Cathedral which we hope will make their Christmas special too.

Happy Christmas from the boys of St Mel's College.



Friends of the Children of Chernobyl, Longford

The organisation was founded, in 1994, as a direct result of the explosion at the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl on 26th April 1986. The radioactive fallout caused by the explosion contaminated the country of Belarus most, making a poor country further impoverished and because of its proximity to the reactor it caused a big increase in conditions such as cancer leukaemia and respiratory problems.



The Friends of the Children of Chernobyl operate at two different levels, taking orphans and poor children to Ireland for a month's holiday during the summer and doing humanitarian work in Belarus. Kind generous families take the children into their homes and treat them to a holiday of a lifetime. The clean air, uncontaminated food gives their immune system a great boost and greatly helps their general health and development. Community groups and local organisations organise various activities for them.

The humanitarian part of the group was initiated when a delegation of seven people travelled to Belarus in 1997 and was shocked at what they found. They visited an orphanage in Sologorsk, from which they had been taking children to Ireland, and discovered a sewage system that had broken down and was flooding the basement of the building with huge health implications for the children whose health was already compromised.

This group set about raising funds and they brought over a truck full of materials tools and machinery the following year. Eventually the system was put into working order but there was other work to be done and the work continues. The building is enormous with hundreds of windows and doors, the worst of these have been replaced. Toilets showers wash hand basins and a lot of plumbing work has been done and is ongoing.

The arrival of the group to the orphanage each year is always greatly anticipated by the director her staff and approximately 140 children. On arrival they already have a programme of work that needs attention and a list of supplies that are badly needed. From the initial visit in '97 until the most recent visit in May '10, vast improvements have been made. Every child has a new bed and locker, many windows and doors have been replaced.

The director and her staff continue to be grateful to the people of Longford for their help and support and especially grateful to the small energetic group who visit annually to let them know we care. This work is ongoing and the group would like to thank all who have contributed materials and funds over the many years and a special word of thanks to the volunteers.

The people who travelled in May 2010 are: Michael Connell, John Patrick Gilroy, Madeline Bohan and Daniel Martin McPadden.

Would you like to improve your communication skills and learn to speak with ease and confidence?



We at Longford Toastmasters are now in our twelfth season and offer a proven and enjoyable manner in which to practice and perfect speaking, listening and communication skills.

With regular participation in a fun and supportive group you can become a more accomplished speaker and leader. The confidence you gain will benefit you in all walks of life, you will be amazed at your own potential.

In 1924, one Ralph C. Smedley held the first meeting of what would eventually become Toastmasters International. Smedley was working as a director of education for a young men's Christian association (YMCA) after graduating from college. He observed that many students needed training in the art of public speaking and decided on a winning formula in the format of a social club. He named his club Toastmasters because he taught it suggested a pleasant social atmosphere appealing to young men.

Today there are 12,500 clubs in 106 countries with 250,000 members. There are approximately 70 clubs in

Ireland (visit www.toastmasters.org)

Why not come along to one of our meetings. Visitors are always welcome and there is no obligation to join.

Our members include ladies and gentlemen of all ages, backgrounds and nationalities. Meetings are held on the first and third Thursday of each month, September to May. The venue is the Longford Arms Hotel, Time 8-20pm.

The meeting is in two parts with a short break for tea.

For further details contact John, (086) 8346559.



TOASTMASTERS
INTERNATIONAL

In times of loss: bereavement

support 

Bereaved people need the support of a caring community. To meet this need a six-week programme is offered each Lent to help adults cope with their loss. Over the past number of years many people have found this programme helpful. It is led by two trained and caring facilitators. A one-to-one support is also available for bereaved people.

The Rainbows programme for children and teenagers who are grieving because of death, separation or other painful loss continues to prove very helpful to young people. The Rainbows programme takes place annually over 14 weeks from November to February. Experience has shown that young people need to wait at least six months from the particular loss before enrolling in the programme to be most ready for it.

Enquiries for both programmes: 043 3346827

Pictured at the area final of the International speech contest 2010 held in Mullingar earlier this year: Siobhan Fitzgerald, Athlone; John Farrell Longford, (winner) John Woodford Mullingar and Jude Portbury, Longford.



Cathedral Bells



The sound of the bells of St. Mel's Cathedral have long been an integral part of the life of Longford Town. So much so, that when local band 'Busy Fingers', decided to launch a song to aid the restoration project, it was entitled 'The Bells of old St Mel's'.

At the suggestion of some parishioners, it is hoped to have the sound of bells ringing out again from the Cathedral spire in the near future as a symbol of continuity and hope as we look forward to the restoration project advancing. (It will not be possible to have the original bells up and running for some time so it is hoped to put a temporary arrangement in place).

Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, But just look what they can do when they stick together.
Verna M Kelly

We learn the rope of life by untying the knots
Jean Toomer



Our Annual Bereavement Ceremony was held in St. Mel's Cathedral Centre on Sun Nov 28th. All parishioners who were laid rest in the previous year were remembered by name, and commended into God's mercy as we asked His comfort and strength for all who were bereaved of their loved ones.

The wise woman's stone

A wise woman who was traveling in the mountains found a precious stone in a stream.

The next day she met another traveller who was hungry, and the wise woman opened her bag to share her food.

The hungry traveller saw the precious stone and asked the woman to give it to him. She did so without hesitation. The traveller left, rejoicing in his good fortune.

He knew the stone was worth enough to give him security for a lifetime. But a few days later he came back to return the stone to the wise woman.

"I've been thinking," he said, "I know how valuable the stone is, but I give it back in the hope that you can give me something even more

precious. Give me what you have within you that enabled you to give me something more precious.

Give me what you have within you that enabled you to give me the stone.
— Author Unknown



Kids Paradise Creche have great fun raising funds for Make-A-Wish Foundation

Parish giving

During these weeks, new boxes of envelopes for the various Parish Collections are being distributed to the homes of our Parish.

We are very grateful to you for your continued generous support which enables us to sustain the life of the parish, maintain its buildings and meet the many expenses a parish of this size carries.

Thank you to all who helped in the task of distributing approximately 2,500 boxes. We also thank our team of weekly counters.

In recent years we have been able to claim significant funds through the Tax Relief Scheme for Charities. Your use of the envelopes is important for us in the tasks of recording contributions which in turn enables us to claim this Tax Relief.

Therefore we would encourage you to use the envelopes for your contributions. It is also helpful to us if you write the amount of your contribution in the space provided.

As our Parish continues to grow, please understand that mistakes and omissions will inevitably happen. If you have not received your new envelopes by the end of December, extra boxes are available at the Presbytery. Thank You.



Forgive me, Lord, I am stingy

Every day you give me 24 hours for myself – 10,080 minutes a week – and I share so few with you. If Sunday Mass takes 40 minutes, I complain. Even then I still have 10,040 minutes for myself.

I have done some calculations, Lord, that disturb me. If I live to be 72, I will spend 24 years in bed – I need eight hours sleep every night. I will spend 14 years at work, 6 years eating meals, 5 years in conversation, 4 years travelling around and 8 years in recreation. But where would I be without the game of cards and the television?

Then I worked it out. If I go to Mass just every Sunday and say a few prayers every morning and evening, I will spend only 31 weeks with You. Just think of it – 31 weeks in a lifetime of 72 years!

Forgive me, Lord, for I am stingy.

THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS

*"When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star is gone,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The true work of Christmas begins;
To find the lost, to heal the broken,
To feed the hungry, to release the prisoner,
To bring peace among all, to make music in the heart"*

Mark Thurman

MOTHER

*Mother You filled my days with rainbow lights,
Fairy tales and sweet dream nights,
A kiss to wipe away my tears,
Gingerbread to ease my fears.
You gave the gift of life to me,
And then in love, you set me free.
I thank you for your tender care,
For deep warm hugs and being there.
I hope that when you think of me,
A part of you, you'll always see.*



Presented to the most Rev. Dr. Hoare, Bishop of Ardagh, on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee, 2nd June, 1917, by all the religious sisters of the diocese.

Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois: Child Safeguarding Policy Statement

Each child shall be cherished and affirmed as a gift from God with an inherent right to dignity of life and bodily integrity which shall be respected, nurtured and protected by all. This right is embedded in Gospel values, best practice guidelines and international and domestic laws. Everyone in the Church has an obligation to ensure that the fundamental rights of children are respected. The Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois is committed to taking the

necessary steps to:

- Demonstrate that the right of the child to protection from harm is paramount.
- Cherish and safeguard children and young people.
- Foster best practice.
- Demonstrate accountability through establishing effective structures.
- Support Church organisations and personnel in safeguarding children.
- Establish safe recruitment and

vetting practices – aimed at preventing those who pose a risk to children from holding positions of trust

- Maintain codes of behaviour – having clear guidelines that set out what is and is not acceptable behaviour as an essential part of keeping children safe.
- Operate safe activities for children – helping them ensure they can play and learn in a safe environment.

Services and Contact Details:

Designated Persons – Fr. Michael Bannon, Parochial House, Drumlish, Co. Longford. Tel. 043 3324132; Fr. Liam Murray, St. Mary's Presbytery, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Tel. 0906 472088.

Diocesan Representative for Concerns outside Safeguarding: Mr. Liam Faughan, 087 – 1443831; Faoiseamh Helpline, 1800 331234.

HSE Contacts: Social Work Department – Longford, Tivoli House, Longford, 043 3350584; Child Care Manager's Office – Longford

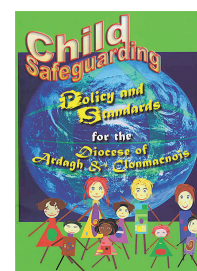
– Westmeath, Mullingar Health Centre, 044 9395019/20.

Garda Siochana, Longford, 043 3350570.

National Office for Safeguarding Children, 01 5053018. Website: www.safeguarding.ie

Diocesan Website: www.ardaghdiocese.org

Copies of "Child Safeguarding – Policy and Standards" are available from the Parish Priest / Parish Office or at www.ardaghdiocese.org



Rest In Peace



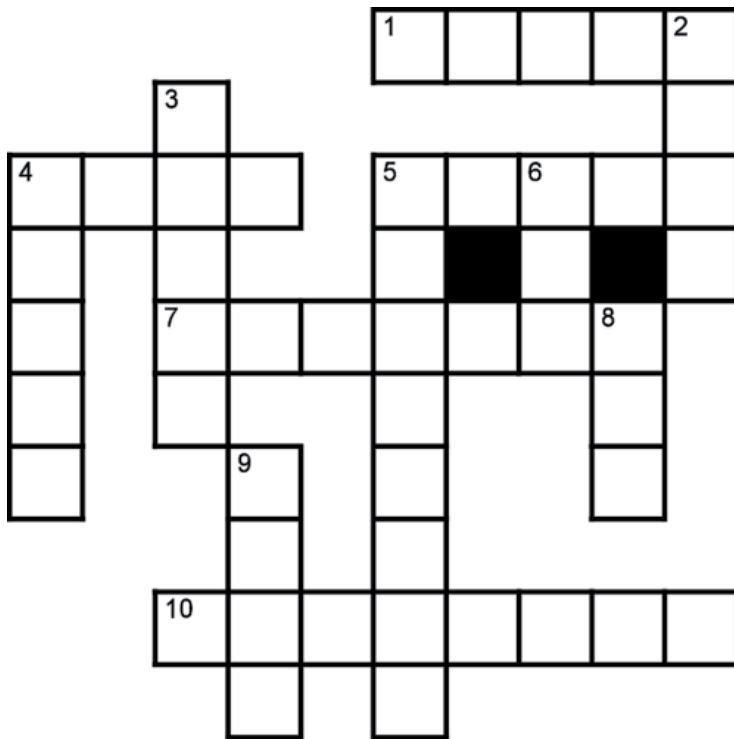
In the past year the following parishioners were laid to rest. We remember them with affection and commend them into God's loving care, trusting they have gone to share eternal life with him in the Heavenly Kingdom.

- BRENDAN MCCARTHY
- BRIDIE GHEE
- NELLIE CARR
- TERESA CUNNINGHAM
- MARY BELTON
- NOEL KEEGAN
- MARY FARRELL
- CHRISTY DELANEY
- PATRICK CASEY
- JAMES MURRAY
- MAUREEN MAHON
- BRENDAN GILL
- MATTIE JEFFRIES
- MARY MCBRIDE
- ANNIE GILCHRIST
- BRIAN CARBERRY
- EILEEN REYNOLDS
- MICHAEL SMYTH
- MARY TREW
- LINDA MCINERNEY
- DANIEL MCNAMARA
- COLM FUDY
- DAN FARRELL
- JOHN SHERIDAN
- MARGARET DONLON
- MICHAEL CLINCH
- BRIDGET HALVEY
- DAVID THORNE
- JOSEPHINE KELLY
- MOLLY KILLIAN
- DERMOT OROHOE
- BRIDGET THOMPSON
- BERNADETTE IRELAND
- P. J. MCTIERNAN
- ANTHONY HEALY
- THOMAS NOEL KELLY
- PATRICK REGAN
- MARY CULLEN
- SEAMUS MULVEY
- TOM CADWALADER
- BABY PATRICK DANIEL STOKES
- MICHAEL DORAN
- PATRICK MCCRANN
- MICHAEL KEARNEY
- VERONICA CORKERY
- JIM SHANLEY
- KATHLEEN O'MALLEY
- BRIDGET SEXTON
- CHARLES FLYNN
- ROSE MURPHY
- ROSE VAUGHAN
- BRONA O'TOOLE
- EILEEN HOLMES
- MICHAEL WALSH
- CYRIL FAGAN
- BABY JADEN ROHAN
- MAUREEN KELLY
- MARY KELLEHER
- FRANK FAHY
- MARY TAFFE
- GERALDINE HURD
- DAVID MCTIERNAN
- LIBERA MACARI
- ANNIE BYRNE
- JOHN HALLIGAN
- PADDY MARSHALL
- PEGGY KILEMADE
- BRIDGET LENNON

Father you made us for yourself, and our hearts will never rest until they rest in you. Grant that amid the uncertainties of this changing world our hearts may be set on our eternal home where true joys are to be found. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Christmas Crossword



Across

1. Jingle ____.
4. Send a Christmas ____.
5. Mr. Claus.
7. Stingy old man.
10. Animals that pull the sleigh.



Down

2. Something to put at the top of the tree.
3. It covers your window.
4. ____ cane.
6. Egg ____ A Christmas drink.
8. Santa's helper.
9. The presents are under the ____.



Children's Letters to God

Dear God, Are you really invisible or is that just a trick?

Dear God, Did you mean for the giraffe to look like that or was it an accident?

Dear God, Instead of letting people die and having to make new ones why don't you just keep the ones you got now?

Dear God, Who draws the lines around the countries?

Dear God, I went to this wedding and they kissed right in church. Is that OK?

Dear God, It's OK that you made different religions but don't you get mixed up sometimes?

Dear God, I am English. What are you? Dear God. Are you really invisible or is that just a trick?

Dear God, Thank you for the baby brother but what I prayed for was a puppy.

Dear God, How come you didn't invent any new animals lately? We still have just all the old ones.

Dear God, Please put another holiday in between Christmas and Easter. There is nothing good in there now.

Dear God, Please send Dennis Clark to a different camp this year.

Dear God, Maybe Cain and Abel would not kill each other so much if they had their own rooms. It works with my brother.

Dear God, I bet it is very hard for you to love everybody in the whole world. There are only 4 people in our family and I can never do it.

Dear God, If you watch in Church on Sunday I will show you my new shoes.

Dear God, I am doing the best I can.



The story of the birth of Jesus ...

In those days the government decided that they should count everyone that lived in that area of the world. So Joseph had to take Mary to his town, Bethlehem, to register.

It took Mary and Joseph a long time to get to Bethlehem. They didn't have cars back then, so it probably took them a lot longer to get there. This was very tiring for Mary because she was soon going to have a baby.

When they reached the town, all the hotels were full and there was nowhere that they could stay.

Finally, someone felt bad for them, and offered them a place to stay.

The Bible doesn't say for sure where they stayed but most people think that they stayed in a small barn where animals were kept. In any case, doesn't it seem strange that Jesus, the King of the Jews wasn't born in a fancy palace or even a hospital? Mary and Joseph were thankful that they at least had a place to lay down. It was warm, and there was plenty of straw to lie on.

That night an exciting, wonderful thing happened. Mary and Joseph had a baby! But it wasn't just any baby, it was Baby Jesus!

The creator of the whole world,

the King of Kings, the one who would save the world.

The little baby boy fell asleep in Mary's arms and she wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger on some clean straw.

Mary and Joseph soon fell asleep, they were so glad to have this special baby join their family.

Some shepherds who lived near Bethlehem, were out at night in their fields watching over their sheep. They were worried a bigger animal might come and hurt the sheep, so that sat on a hill visiting and watching their sheep together.

Suddenly there was a bright light. Now this wasn't just any bright light, the light was so bright that they had to close their eyes for a minute because the light hurt their eyes.

When they opened their eyes to see what was going on, a beautiful angel was standing in the air just above them with his arms opened wide.

The shepherds looked at each other in disbelief, but realized it must be real, because they were all seeing the same thing. All at once they were very afraid, but they didn't run because they were too stunned to do anything.

Then the angel spoke to them.

"Do not be afraid. I'm here to bring you good news for all people. Today in Bethlehem a baby has been born. He is the one that will save the world. You will know the baby because He will be wrapped in cloths, and laying in a manger."

Suddenly, just as quickly as the first angel came, there was a large group of angels, and they said together, "Glory to God, and peace to all people on earth." After they spoke, they floated away.

The shepherds were amazed and excited. Did everyone know this news, or just them? They had to go see this baby the angels were talking about.

They ran as fast as they could, and soon found Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus. The shepherds fell to their knees when they saw Jesus, they

were filled with joy that they had found the Lord.

During the time when Jesus was born there was a very mean king who ruled the land, his name was King Herod. Remember his name, because we will talk about him later.

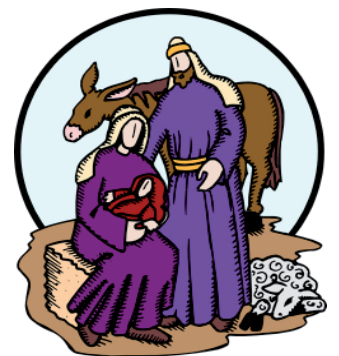
Soon after Jesus was born, wise men were traveling on their camels; one night they noticed a very strange star in the sky. They knew that this star meant that the King of the Jews, the One who would save the world had been born.

When the mean King... (what was his name again?) Herod heard this he got very worried.

He called a meeting with all the other important people in the area and asked them where this special baby had been born. The people replied, "In Bethlehem, because they heard that one day a special person would come from there and take care of all the people."

Then King Herod called the wise men to a secret meeting and found out from them exactly where they saw the star. He then told them, "Go and find this child. As soon as you find him, tell me, so that I can go and worship him."

After they had spoken to the King, the wise men left to find the baby.



They didn't know exactly where the baby was, but at night they followed the star in the east. They followed the star until it hung right over the very place where Jesus was.

Since it took the wise men a while to get to baby Jesus, they probably didn't arrive the day Jesus was born but sometime later. When they finally had arrived they were very excited and happy. They found Jesus laying in Mary's arms, and they bowed down and worshipped him.

After that they opened the gifts they had brought Jesus. They were gold, frankincense and myrrh. These were very expensive gifts, gifts that you would give to a King, not to a baby.

The story of Christmas is special, full of miracles and strange visitors all coming to visit a King and someday the Savior of the world.





Fostering and developing team skills

Longford Rugby Club has had a very successful year, with our youths and minis, where numbers are increasing every year. It just goes to show how popular the sport of rugby has become, whether its rugby or tag rugby. Our main focus is to foster and develop the team skills of every mini player and youth player. We operate a strict policy of inclusion to ensure that every player plays on match days. This has been the key to our

rapid expansion over the last number of years and one that we are proud of and keen to develop even further.

Tag rugby is being played in many local national schools in the area. Killoe Parish took part in the community games and won out in Leinster area. They also took part in the All Ireland Tag Rugby Community games finals. Killashee Parish also took part in the Community Games reaching the Lein-

ster regional competition.

We have our new Club Community Resources Official (CCRO), Stephen Coy Jr, visiting all of the schools working with players and school development teams. Both Moyne Community School and St Mels College are taking part in the development shield. St Mels won through to the final last year only to be beaten in the last minute of the game by Malahide Community School. Three new schools have come on board playing rugby, namely Cnoc Mhuire Granard, Ardscoil Phadraig Granard and Mercy Convent Ballyhanon. A lot of time goes into teaching the basic skills of rugby by Stephen Coy Jr and Steve Coy Sr, who now looks after the Midlands region and also the North-East region.

Our U6s travelled away this year the first time to a blitz in Mullingar playing Leprechaun rugby. Our U12s squad represented us on the national stage by playing at half-time during the Lein-

ster v Edinburgh match in October. Their great day was topped off by meeting Malcolm O'Kelly and Alan Quinlan. Captain Brian Hanley had his arm signed by Alan Quinlan, which brought much laughter from the large crowd, in our newly developed Sin Bin Restaurant and Event centre.

Our youths have had a fantastic season. Our U17s panel, coached by David Lulham and George McDermott, topped the Division 1 North Leinster league. The amount of dedication that these two coaches have shown has paid dividends in the results in all matches and the response they have also got from the squad, players and parents alike, has been tremendous. They played in the Leinster League Final, only narrowly losing to Wexford RFC. Nine representatives from that U17s panel took part in the inter-area Shane Horgan Cup, which was trained by Derek Maybury and Steve

Coy. They went on to be the winners of the Shane Horgan Trophy for the first time ever. Longford is going from strength to strength with the mini and youth players. Already this season, we have representatives going on for selection to the midland team, hoping to defend for Shane Horgan Trophy.

Our club was represented by one of our youths in the Leinster inter-provincial U18s Club Youths this season. It was a tremendous achievement for Finnbar McGowan. He was in the starting squad for all matches and his time and dedication could be seen by all.

With our newly developed clubhouse, we are now able to host visiting teams from the rest of the Leinster, as far away as Dundalk and Wexford. One thing that has to be mentioned is the great work done by parents within the club.

Helping out, whether its with stewarding, making sandwiches/tea/

coffee, supporting the players, or driving them to training, it is all hugely appreciated. Our club would not be so successful without all of your help.

We also hosted our Centra Leinster Summer Camp in late August. Players from 6-12 years took part. They met three of the Irish U20s players, Martin Moran, David Doyle and Andrew Mortimer. A note worth mentioning is that Andrew was on the Leinster U18s Club Youths team along with Longford players, Derek Farrell and Robert Kennedy. Robert was selected for Irish U18s Club Youths team two seasons ago.

Andrew went on the make history by scoring a hat trick of tries in the first match played in the new Aviva stadium. It was great that all of the Mini Summer camp remembered him at their first training session a week later.

This is one young player everyone should watch closely, he may be

one of our future Irish internationals.

Anyone wanting to make enquires about Mini Rugby (U6s -U12s) or Youths Rugby (u13s -U19s, whether you are U6s or U16s. It's never too late to take up rugby as a sport.

This has been proved in the past three in Longford RFC where, a player started playing at sixteen years, had never played before, and then when on to represent Longford RFC at U18s Leinster Youths and Irish U18s Club Youths teams and played in The Fira-Aer European Championships in Treviso, Italy.

Anyone wishing to join Longford mini or youths, please contact mini & youth co-ordinator, Maria Keilty on 086 0808111. To join as a senior player or womens player, check out our club site: www.longfordrugby.com or e-mail our club secretary, Tommy Butler at admin@longfordrugby.com.



Steve Coy, Finnbar McGowan and Trevor McHugh pictured after Finnbar was selected for the U18 Leinster squad.

Does exactly what it says on the tin!

The Longford Town Supporters' Club does exactly what it says on the tin ... it supports Longford Town football club. The past few seasons have had more downs than ups but that doesn't even register with the hard core supporters who travel the land in support of the red and black.

Recession or depression can't lessen the passion. This last season we dropped our membership by half and more then trebled our income; our Clubhouse prices are the lowest of any club and hence we're packed at half time for our famous home made sambos and hot drinks.

Of course we like to make a profit but it's not the be all and end all of our existence. We raise our funds through our Bank Holiday Car Boot Sales which have been an outstanding success and from our now famous Christmas Hamper raffle. Thankfully, it too has been extremely well supported by the generous people of Longford.

So what do we do with the money we make? Well

this year, we were able to hand over almost €13,000 to the Club to help pay players' wages, fund transport costs and help with some renovation and decoration work at Flancare Park. We also have weekly notes in the local paper and website, www.ltfc.ie keeping Longfordians all over the globe up to date with footie affairs.

Apart from slogging it out with the likes of Shamrock Rovers and Derry City, we had some even more fascinating visitors this season. In May we hosted the Family Day at Flancare in aid of the Cathedral Restoration reserve fund which was a success beyond our wildest dreams. It was particularly pleasing to have CASA use our Clubhouse facilities and also to see the stand full to capacity with people who till then, had never set foot in Flancare. Bishop Colm said Mass earlier in the day on the 20 metre line which we hoped would kick start our rise up the League table. Alas, it didn't work. After the Mass the stadium rocked to the sounds



LEGENDS ALL ... Jason McAteer, Liverpool FC; Liam Healion, Longford Town FC; John Aldridge, Liverpool FC; John Donlon, Longford Town FC.

of Declan Nerney, Mick Flavin, Larry Cunningham, Dermot Hegarty and Big Tom at what was a real genuine community event. We were proud to be part of it.

Later in the year saw the likes of former Ireland international players Jason McAteer and John Aldridge play for a Liverpool legends team against a local eleven. Again, a wonderful event for a huge football mad crowd.

There was a lovely and fitting finale to the season when the coveted Player of the Season award, in memory of Bernard Oates

was won by the popular local lad Michael Lee.

Why not join us next season, we'd love to have you on our team. Because,

as we say, Longford town without Longford Town FC is simply unimaginable.

C'MON DE TOWN!



Local lad, Michael Lee, was the popular winner of the Player of the Season award. He is pictured here receiving his trophy from Liz Oates.

New pitch opening in April

Longford and District Schoolboy/girl League

2010 was another successful year for the Longford and District Schoolboy/girl League. The league now has a excellent web site which is updated weekly with fixtures, results, league tables and match reports this can be viewed at www.ldssl.leaguerepublic.com Founded in 1991 the League reached new heights during the past twelve months with three girls from our league been picked to represent the Republic of Ireland at U15 level.

We also enjoyed success at the Kennedy Cup reaching the quarter final after winning our three group games. Limerick District League beat us on penalties after the game finished 1-1. We now have 25 clubs affiliated to the league covering counties Longford, Leitrim, Cavan and Westmeath.

Every week end from September to May over 1,000 children play soccer organised by the league. We start at U/7 up to U/16. In the parish of Templemichael we have the following clubs Camlin United, Stonepark, Melview, Olympic and Gaelscoil these clubs playing a vital role in moulding their young players into the future of our Town. We continue to cater for diverse cultures and nations.

In April we hope to open our newly developed Shane Brennan memorial pitch at our Abbeycarton headquarters. This magnificent facility will be a fitting reminder of Shane who was a very promising player.



Longford Slashers 'Senior' squad 2010: Back row, from l-r: David Sheridan, Gordon Hourican, Eamon Nolan, Gary Mathews, Conor Barrins, Peter Brady, Niall Mulligan, Dominic Glennon, Adrian Murphy, Sean Flynn, Andrew Lyons, Brian Farrell, Ronan Duffy, Mark Smith, Shane Campbell, Ruairi Barrins, Gavin Trapp and Barry Gilleran. Front row, from l-r: Andrew Lynch, Paul Kelly, John McKeon, Trevor Clendenning, Garreth Ghee, Stephen Philips, Dermot Brady, (Captain); Philip Dobson, Diarmad McRory, Tomás O'Rourke, Shane Dann, Colin Smith and Martin Jennings. Missing from photo, Mark Smith.



The Longford Slashers Camogie team that made history by representing Longford for the first time ever in the June 2010 Feile na hGael in Clare pictured with the President of the Camogie Association of Ireland. Also included in the picture are their trainers and mentors.



Longford Slashers Minor Team of 2010: Back Row, from l-r: Lee Shields, Ryan Hewitt, Tadhg Maher, Andrew Dalton, Ciaran Farrell, Nathan Conroy, David Blessington, Morgan Kelly, Sean Capmbell, Fearghal Reilly, Sean Goldrick and Dylan Quinn. Front row, from l-r: Adrian Duffy, James Campbell, Niall Kelly, Des Guihan, Brian Walsh, Darren Kelly, Tom Madden, Conor Clarke and Colm Farrell.



Pictured are the U-14 Girls County Champions 2010. Also included in the picture are their trainers and mentors.



Pictured are the U-12 Girls County Champions 2010.



Members of the U-11 Hurling team. Picture includes Matthew Duffy, Aidan Gray, Shane Maguire, (capt.); Raymond Raleigh, Brian Williams, William Tunstead, Kyle Quinn, Gerard Flynn, Robbie O'Connell, Jeremiah Obiekwe, Franklin Obiekwe, Dara O'Connell, Mark Howlin, Dylan Smyth, Ronan Kenny, Dara Maher, Phelim Maher, Rory Howlin, Dara O'Brien, Jack Oates and Fred Davis.

Top County title returns to parish

The local senior club, Longford Slashers, were recently crowned the 2010 Senior Football Championship winners when they defeated Dromard in the Senior Football final. This is the ultimate prize in Longford G.A.A. and this team has been playing extremely well throughout the year. They last won the 'Sean Connolly' Cup back in 1994 and for the Slashers club this seemed a long time without success. One of the most pleasing aspects of the year was the level of support which this side enjoyed from so many from the parish. The year commenced back in March and this side were most unlucky to end up as runners-up in the league and 'Leader Cup' competitions. The club also took part in Intermediate, Junior and U-21 grades,



Garreth Ghee of Longford Slasher was presented with the Lory Meagher Cup Player of the Year by Donal O'Grady, Chairman of the GPA Hurling Selection Committee, during the 2010 Opel Gaelic Players Association Gala Awards for hurling and football.

while at under age the 'Minor Club' took part in competitions from under 8 to under 18 grades. The Hurling club helped promote the ancient game of hurling at under age and senior levels. Garret Ghee of Longford Slashers hurling club and also a member of the County Longford Hurling team was honoured as the G.P.A. Hurling player of the year, a great honour for Garret, his family and his club and county Longford Slashers have been busy during the year promoting ladies Football and Camogie and have enjoyed much success on the playing fields.

**You don't choose your club.
You're born to it.**



*Well done to
Slashers on winning
the County Final*



Longford Harbour as it was before 1960.

THE MISSING LINK

Just over two months ago there were great celebrations in Clondara because after years of hard work and frustration the Royal Canal was reopened and barges or cabin cruisers could at long last travel the full distance, 91 miles, from Spenser Dock in Dublin to Richmond Harbour.

It is important to emphasize "re opened" as this waterway was first opened in 1817 and then 13 years later it was extended to Longford much to the great delight of the locals. In fact between five and six thousand people, led by the band of the First Regiment of Dragoons and turned out to escort the leading barge from Farneyhoogan Bridge to the harbour, which was situated at the rear of the Market Square.

The extension from Richmond Harbour through Kilashee and in to Longford is now closed and has been like this since 1960. If this were ever to be reopened it would be a dream come true for many Longfordians, particularly Noel McGeeney and members of the Canal Restoration Group.

Over the years Noel and

friends with the assistance of various FÁS Schemes have done a wonderful job on the stretch of the canal from the railway to Churchlands Bridge. It is now a very pleasant walk and is very popular with locals many of whom take their daily stroll along what is even, at this stage, a beautiful amenity.

As well as the commercial and recreational potential of the project we should remember that this is our heritage. Noel provided me with a short history and it makes fascinating reading.

19th century Ireland was cursed by emigration and for almost 40 years thousands of people from Longford and surrounding counties embarked on their heartbreaking journeys at the Harbour. Some, however, did not even reach Dublin. On Monday 3rd March, 1845 a tragic accident occurred. Around 50 second class passengers boarded the *Malgrave* boat and hundreds of family and friends came to see them off. The barge moved out to the middle of the harbour to prevent friends boarding. The passengers all went to one side of the barge to

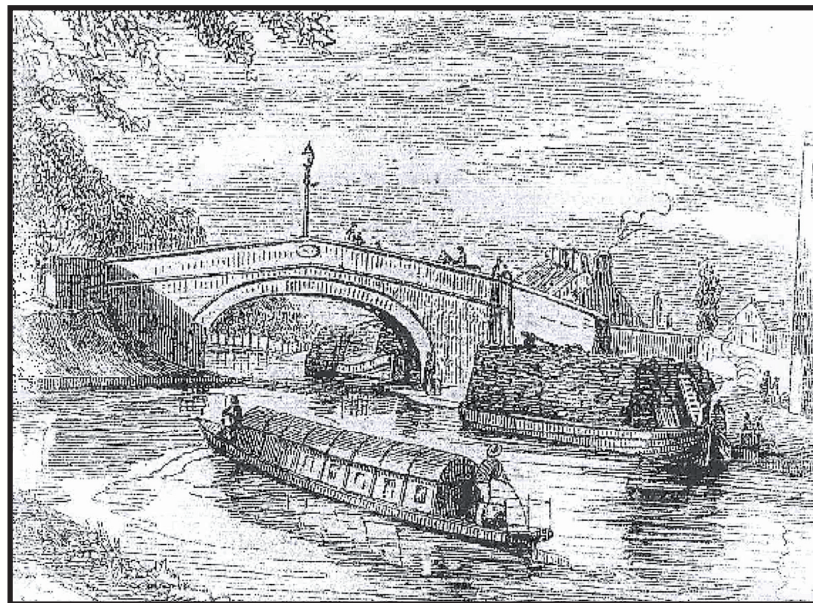


Illustration of Fly Boat.

wave back! This caused the *Malgrave* to capsize and seven people were drowned.

In those days travel by canal boat was an expensive business. Many journeyed to Longford on the famous Bianconi coaches which had a network throughout Ireland and I believe, a stable and depot at the rear of Main St. The town's people knew

when a boat was arriving because a bell ringer was employed to announce its approach and departure. This man's wages were considerably less than the fare to travel first class to Dublin. For a slightly reduced fare you could travel second class. Meals on board were extra.

In the first class cabin you would have to fork out 11 shillings but in second class it was only 10 pence, and that was just for breakfast. Travel time was an ongoing problem and to offset this fly boats were introduced. They could hold 110 passengers and travelled at the breath-taking speed of 10 mph and with scheduled stops, locks to negotiate and prevailing conditions the voyage took 19 hours.

When the railway reached Longford in the 1860's canal travel was severely affected but it wasn't until almost 1960, one hundred years later, that the 'powers that be'

decided that this wonderful amenity was out of date, served no useful purpose and they virtually destroyed it.

The people of Clondara have, with tremendous community spirit and enlightened leadership, shown how wrong they were. Can the canal be reopened and refurbished the whole way into Longford? Noel McGeeney and his associates certainly think so.

Could we follow the example shown by those in Richmond Harbour, and fight to have the "Missing Link" into Longford restored?

The timing may be wrong but haven't we the most talented and well educated people in the world and I'm sure among them there are brilliant young architects, engineers and gifted tradesmen out of work who would give anything to get involved in a project like this.

Sacraments – 2011

First Confessions

(St. Mel's College Chapel)

St. Emer's,	Wednesday, March 23rd, 6.15 p.m.
St. Joseph's,	Monday, March 21st, 6.15 p.m.
Melview ,	Tuesday, March 22nd, 6.15 p.m.
Gaelsoil,	Tuesday, March 29th, 6.15 p.m.
St. Michael's,	Wednesday, March 30th, 6.15 p.m.
Stonepark,	Monday, March 28th, 7.00 p.m. (Curry Church)

First Holy Communions

St. Emer's,	Saturday, May 21st, 2.00 p.m.
St. Joseph's,	Saturday, May 28th, 2.00 p.m.
Melview ,	Saturday, May 7th, 2.00 p.m.
Gaelsoil,	Saturday, May 7th, 11.00 a.m.
St. Michael's,	Saturday, May 28th, 11.00 a.m.
Stonepark,	Saturday, May 21st, 11.00 a.m. (Curry Church)

Confirmation

St. Emer's	Saturday, March 5th, 11.00 a.m.
Gaelsoil	Saturday, March 5th, 11.00 a.m.
Stonepark	Saturday, March 5th, 3.00 p.m.
St. Joseph's	Saturday, March 5th, 3.00 p.m.
Melview	Sunday, March 6th, 3.00 p.m.
St. Michael's	Sunday, March 6th, 3.00 p.m.

Commitment Ceremonies - Cathedral Centre

St. Joseph's	Saturday, January 15th, 7.30 p.m.
Melview	Sunday, January 16th, 10.00 a.m.
St. Emer's	Saturday, January 22nd, 7.30 p.m.
Stonepark	Sunday, January 23rd, 10.00 a.m.
St. Michael's	Saturday, January 29th, 7.30 p.m.
Gaelsoil	Sunday, January 30th, 10.00 a.m.

Service of Light - St. Mel's College Chapel

St. Joseph's	Monday, February 14th, 6.30 p.m.
St. Michael's	Monday, February 14th, 8.00 p.m.
Gaelsoil	Tuesday, February 15th, 6.30 p.m.
Melview	Tuesday, February 15th, 8.00 p.m.
Stonepark	Wednesday, February 16th, 7.00 p.m. (Curry Church)
St. Emer's	Wednesday, February 16th, 6.30 p.m.

Midnight Mass in St Mel's (view from the organ loft)

Extract from a poem by Michael J.Fannin, a native of Corteen written Christmas 1943 when he was held in a Prisoner of War camp during World War 11. He was part of the 'forced labour gangs' who built the aptly named 'Railway of Death' from Bangkok to Moulmein.

The greatest feast of Christian life is here

That holy night we Irish most revere,

And I in Longford's fine Cathedral kneel

In hushed expectancy, perhaps to feel

The air bestirred by soft angelic wings

When bearing down the Baby Lord of Kings

Up here where Segers moves the many keys

Thro' sheets of sacred notes with gifted ease

I feel exhalted, privileged to view

The scene below, so very old but ever new.

The noble altar dazzling to the sight

Enriched with priceless things and golden light,

Its many precious ornaments adorned

With seasonable holly, glistening, thorned-

A symbol, maybe of that greater date

When Mary held the tender Babe in lowly state.

The sanctuary steeped in years of prayer

Embellished now with thoughtful loving care

Is ready at the stroke of midnight bell

For him who guards the See of Saintly Mel.

The hour is here; and all the chimes ring forth

In gladsome song to greet the Saviours birth.

I look below. The edifice is filled

With fervent praying souls, bowed, silent- thrilled

At this expression of their heritage

Which shines in gold on Erin's ancient page.

"Deep Sinking"

"LEAVING the Park by Ashtown Gate, the Royal Canal is reached in a very short time, at the point where it adjoins Ashtown House. The names of the Royal Canal bridges in this western part of the county - Longford, Ranelagh, Talbot, Granard, Kirkpatrick, Kennan, Callaghan, Pakenham and Collin's Bridges - are in most cases from those of original Directors of the Royal Canal Company, the Earl of Longford, Lord Ranelagh, the Earl of Granard, Alexander Kirkpatrick, The Hon. Thomas Pakenham, and John Collins. Longford Bridge is at Ashtown, Talbot Bridge on the high road to Navan and Enniskillen, Callaghan Bridge, formerly Carhampton Bridge, is at Clonsilla Railway Station, and Collin's Bridge at Lucan Station. The "Deep Sinking", where the Canal is made between very high banks, is near Clonsilla, and was the scene of a disaster more than sixty years ago, when a passenger boat went down and many emigrants from Longford perished."

- "History of North Dublin," by Dillon Cosgrave, 1903.

The above insert is an extract from Dillon Cosgrave's History of North Dublin, which relates the story of another more serious tragedy which befell passengers who had embarked at Longford Harbour.