



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 Gods gift to you. What you do with it is your gift back to God.
~ Leo Buscaglia