



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.

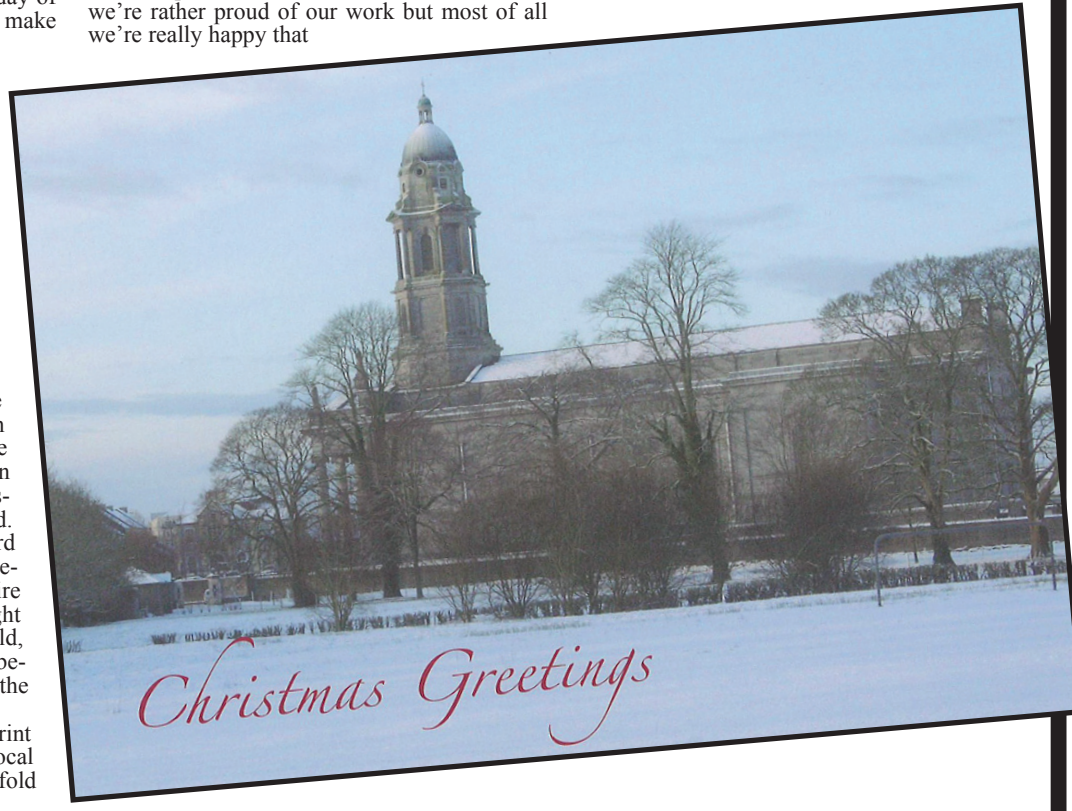
But when the cards completely sold out in early November, we were over the moon and quite chuffed with our efforts. And then we said we'd order an other batch, so by now we have sorted over 6,000 Christmas cards.

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.

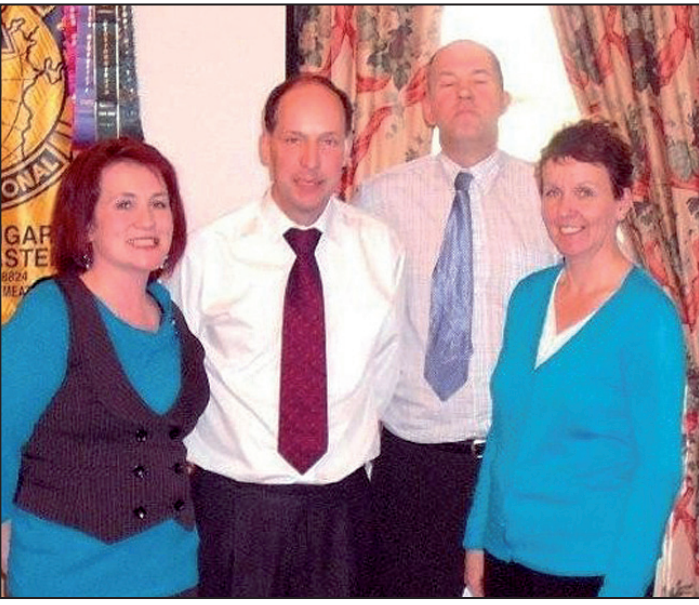
This group set about raising funds and they brought over a truck full of materials tools and machinery the following year. Eventually the system was put into working order but there was other work to be done and the work continues. The building is enormous with hundreds of windows and doors, the worst 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 ?



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.

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