



**Birdwatch Galway** pg.8  
Goldfinch - Photograph by Michael Davis



GALWAY EARLY MUSIC - PG.3



GALWAY CITY COMMUNITY  
FORUM NEWS - PG.5



NUI GALWAY ALIVE PROGRAMME -  
PG.6



GALWAY CIVIC TRUST - PG.7

# Galway Irish – Polish Association

By **Marta Slawinska**

The inflow of Polish people into Ireland observed during the past few years is some kind of marvel. No other ethnic minority has arrived in Ireland in numbers comparable to ours. What is more, we have not been passive in view of these numbers and we have been acting and setting up organisations and associations in order to support each other, integrate ourselves and to be present not only in the professional field. What the Polish community in Galway also stands for is vast potential, which, if properly informed and supported, can contribute to highlighting our Polish presence on the island and creating a positive image of the Polish community.

With this in mind, in May 2007, we founded the Galway Irish – Polish Association (GIPA; Polsko – Irlandzkie Stowarzyszenie w Galway - in Polish), which has fifteen active members of both nationalities at the moment and which operates in Galway City and Galway County. At the beginning, the Association was operating unofficially, as a group of people willing to help their compatriots in difficulty and seeking to integrate the Polish and the Irish communities. The Association plays a leading role in the Intercultural Forum, an initiative supported by the Community Forum and Galway City Partnership, which seeks to raise awareness of and promote the integration of new communities in the city.

Up until now GIPA has run several projects such as Integration Walk and Polish Evening in September 2007 which aimed to introduce the Association to the Galway community. GIPA then established the Polish Information Centre, where Polish seeking any information in Polish or referral to Irish institutions in relation to particular problems can come once a week and consult with GIPA members. These members co-operate closely with institutions like Galway Migrant Service or Galway Citizen Information Centre. The centre also runs English classes for the Polish with basic or no English.

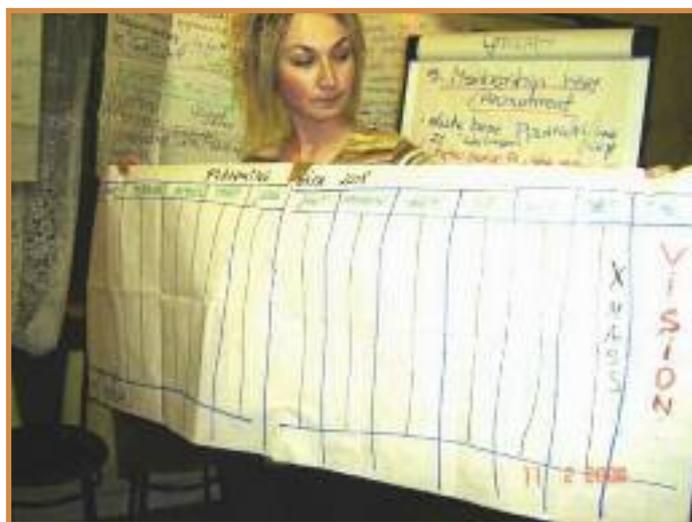
The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity was the first and biggest charity project organised by GIPA last January. It attracted hundreds of Polish people and plenty of different nationalities that were enjoying a great night in The Cellar Bar with good music, competitions and auctions. The event was a part of a big finale organised by a well-known Foundation in Poland supporting children suffering from different dangerous diseases. The event was a great success and GIPA managed to raise €6,360 this year.

For the past couple of weeks members of GIPA were planning intensively their activities for 2008. 'We hope to grow continuously and get engaged not only in our own projects but also co-operate with other Irish groups and come up with some new innovative ideas on Irish – Polish integration', says Marta Slawinska, Chairperson of GIPA.

Information on GIPA's activity is available on their website: [www.gipa.org.pl](http://www.gipa.org.pl) Anybody seeking any more details is welcome to contact Marta Slawinska on [chairperson@gipa.org.pl](mailto:chairperson@gipa.org.pl).



*'Members of Galway Irish-Polish Association'*



*'Marta Slawinska busy planning for 2008'*

## MONEY AND BUDGETING SERVICE (MABS)

By **Máire T. Robinson**

The Money and Budgeting Service (MABS) is a national service for people in debt or in danger of getting into debt. It is funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. MABS has 65 offices nationwide and is staffed by professional money advisers. The services it provides are free and confidential. There are two Galway branches; one in Tuam, Co. Galway and one in Galway City.

According to 2006 end of year statistics published by MABS, the vast majority of clients availing of its services are on social welfare or on a very low income. They are people who are finding it difficult to make ends meet, in an increasingly expensive society. They are mostly between the ages of 26 and 65 and over 60% are female. Over half of MABS' clients live in rented accommodation and 37% of people attending are of single parent households.

"It is families on low incomes, struggling to bring up children, that most frequently get into financial difficulty, with 57% of MABS clients coming from households with children," says MABS.

While the numbers are relatively small (16%) there is a significant increase in clients coming to the service as a result of divorce and separation. There is also a growing number of people in employment getting into financial difficulty, due to a change in their life's circumstances. This can

occur as a result of illness, injury, or bereavement, among other reasons. Being unable to work impacts on their ability to maintain their borrowing commitments. These clients' borrowings make up the greater portion of the €79 million owed by new Clients presenting to MABS in 2006.

MABS' latest venture is a lo-call national helpline. It was launched in October of last year, with the aim of acting in conjunction with existing services and providing ease of access to people experiencing financial problems. At the launch in Dublin, Minister Máire Hctor, T.D, highlighted the need for the services of MABS: "The issues that give rise to debt problems are complex. Research shows that lack of information about money management contributes to the difficulties that people on low incomes encounter. It is my view that the Money Advice and Budgeting Service has a distinct role in providing information and addressing the need for money management education in local communities."

There are three ways to access the services of MABS. Frontline offices around the country offer a face-to-face service. Appointments can be made by phone. Secondly, the MABS website, which can be accessed at [www.mabs.ie](http://www.mabs.ie), offers an online money management facility, with printable budget sheets and downloadable spending diaries available. It is an excellent source of information on money and budgeting issues and features links to financial forums and other useful sites. Finally, MABS' national lo-call helpline can be reached Monday to Friday from 9am-8pm, at 1890 283438 (or 1890 BUDGET). Outside these times you can leave a message and a MABS adviser will get back to you.

**MABS is situated at The Halls (3rd Floor), Quay Street, Galway. Ph: 091-569349. [www.mabs.ie](http://www.mabs.ie)**

# Galway Early Music

By Máire T. Robinson

Sackbutts, Crumhorns and Hurdy gurdies . . . characters from a Dr. Seuss story? No, they are in fact, musical instruments of the past! Other musical instruments from bygone eras sound far more familiar, as Maura O' Cronin explains: 'Some of them are predecessors of what we have now. So you also have fiddles, drums, flutes and recorders.'

Maura is the chairperson of Galway Early Music. It was set up in 1996 by a group of musicians, who were interested in music from Medieval and Renaissance periods. The group have two musical ensembles, Seoda and The Red Earl's Consort. They also run Galway's annual Early Music Festival.

The sight of musicians in resplendent period costumes, weaving their way through the streets and playing to delighted onlookers, has become a familiar one in Galway city each May. Over the past twelve years, the Early Music Festival has established itself as a colourful feature in the arts program, attracting major international acts as well as showcasing local talent.

This year's festival runs from the 16th-18th May. The theme is: Sensuous – A Multisensory Musical Experience. 'The idea is that whenever you enjoy music, all your senses are involved in some way or another,' says Maura.

One of the highlights of this year's festival is I Furiosi, a young, audacious, Canadian group. Although they play baroque music by the likes of Handel and Gemimiani, they have been dubbed a 'ba-rock ensemble'. Maura explains, 'The music itself, they don't do anything funny with it, but they perform it in the way that they like to see music performed. They wear black leather, they have punk haircuts, they have tattoos and they do very unusual programmes.' This one is called Addicted to Love, and focuses on love in all its forms, carnal love, forbidden love, unrequited love and pure, unbridled lust!

As in previous years, harp music is a key feature of the programme. 'It's an important part of Irish music that we always explore in our festivals' says Maura. 'In Ireland we had our own specific harp, which was unique because it was wire strung.' This year the Western Early Irish Harp Circle will perform. There will also be an Early Irish Harp Taster Workshop, for those interested in trying their hand at harp playing.

Michael Henry's Medieval walking tour has proved a big hit in previous years, illuminating historical detail in the city landscape that may not be obvious to the untrained eye. 'Galway doesn't wear its Medieval heart on its sleeve, you have to go looking,' says Maura. This free event makes a welcome return to the lineup this year.

This is a festival for all ages, with a schools concert at the Town Hall Theatre, 'This year the concert is horns and harps. It's the musical soundscape of early Ireland, so you've got Pre-historic and Medieval horns done by Simon O' Dwyer.' Simon has reproduced horns from the National Museum of Ireland. 'They are just fantastic,' enthuses Maura, 'They 'out-didgeri' the didgeridoo!'

The festival certainly promises to be a feast for the senses. Further information about Galway Early Music and the Galway Early Music Festival can be found at [www.galwayearlymusic.com](http://www.galwayearlymusic.com).



Pre-historic horns of Ireland!

# Galway Centre for Independent Living

The Independent Living Movement came to Galway on the 24th June 1994, giving Galway the distinction of being the first centre to be set up outside Dublin.

On Monday 3rd December 2007 The Galway Centre for Independent Living jointly celebrated International Day of People with Disabilities, European Year of Equal Opportunities For All and the launch of their newly updated IT Learning Centre; by holding a reception at their office in the Town Park Centre. This state of the art facility was officially opened by His Worship Mayor of Galway City Councillor Tom Costello who took the opportunity of testing the Learning Centre for himself and was delighted that such a facility is available in Galway.

An address on Disability and Equality Law by was given by Ms. Shivaun Quinlivan, Lecturer in Law at NUI Galway to an audience of those dedicated to promoting equality and rights for individuals with a disability or impairment.

Ms. Quinlivan spoke about the shift in thinking in recent years from charity to rights where "people with disabilities are not problems, they have rights and equally legitimate hopes and aspirations for their lives" and that while there are National, European and International influences via legislation; "it is important that we don't forget what drives the change at that level and they are local influences. When we want to see independent living projects in practice then we need not look to the international treaties, but to groups like the Galway Centre for Independent Living. GCIL in their practices live the ideal of promoting equal opportunities, they

do so by providing people a chance to gain a qualification in technology, this in turn offers people the opportunity to pursue a career and an income, which is the key to independence and so to have a real choice in life". Ms. Quinlivan also said that "People often ask for examples of how equality can be made to work in practice and again I have to say it's a matter of looking to the work of groups like GCIL to see this work in practice."

The Chairperson of Galway Centre for Independent Living said that "while in general things have improved for people it is our goal that by the provision of this facility we can continue to bridge the divide between those who have access to technology and those who don't, and this will further open the door to knowledge and lifelong learning". The Learning Centre now has ten state of the art computers with 22 inch monitors together with the most recent software and hardware specifically designed for use by individuals with a disability or impairment. The facility is also available to groups or individuals. This is one of GCIL's methods of generating revenue to support other services offered by the organisation, primarily the Personal Assistant Service on which the ethos and philosophy of Independent Living is founded.

**For further information on any service provided by Galway Centre for Independent Living please contact the office on: 091 773910 or [info@gcil.com](mailto:info@gcil.com)**



'Attendees at the launch of GCIL's updated IT centre'

# Spring Cleaning for Charity

By Niamh Madden

Spring time has traditionally been a time of change: the sun raises its head after a long winter sleep, dandelions sprout up, buds form on trees. We tend to follow the season by spring-cleaning our own habitat and making way for a new environment. Chucking out the old, and purchasing the new tends to make us feel just as fresh as the season. When you spring-clean and donate the items to charity, you are killing two birds with one stone: showing that you care for those who are truly in need of something extra, and also de-cluttering that ever increasing wardrobe or garage.

There are many charity shops in Galway where you can easily donate a bag or two, as well as contributing to an excellent cause. And some of the best items you can ever purchase to replace some of those spring-cleaned items can come from charity shops too. After all, one person's spring-cleaned junk is another's treasure. Stock changes quite rapidly, so you never really know what you could find. The best days to go are during the week when it is quiet, so you have a chance to hunt for the perfect item.

Most charity shops do not accept electrical goods second hand or anything that is in bad condition. They do accept books, toys, bric-a-brac, clothes, some furniture and accessories like jewellery, hats and belts. You could even pick up bargains for yourself including candle holders, old vinyl records, CDs, DVDs, unusual ornaments or jewellery.

Proceeds from all of your purchases go directly to the charities helping disadvantaged people who need it most at this time of year. The bags you donate will become the shop's stock, and can be purchased for a cheap price by those who may not be able to afford the expensive high street shops, or even for those who just love a good vintage bargain.

The picture shows that clothes to suit the changing season can be picked up second-hand. Bought for just €2 at an Oxfam stall at Electric Picnic, the beige hat (pictured) is stylish and vintage. There is a whole basket of hats available down at Enable Ireland on Quay Street and all proceeds go towards helping people with disabilities. The matching cream scarf was picked up at Harambee on Newcastle Road at a cost of only 50 cent. The brown belt came from Simon Community shop on Sea Road, and costed only €2. The chain with cream and blue flowered beads was also just €2 from Simon. The striped tunic was probably the best bargain at just 50 cent in the GSPCA on Augustine Street.

As for other excellent items, check out the book selections - I picked up a perfect hardback copy of award-winning novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* by Mark Haddon, for just €1 in Galway Simon shop. The shop currently has a large selection of books for just a couple of Euro each, and even has some classics in good condition. Galway Simon, which contributes to the homeless, has window displays with unusual and better quality items for sale. The shop also has sales where everything inside is only €2. These are very popular so make sure you keep your eyes peeled and check the Galway city newspapers for the date of the sales.

Don't forget to spring-clean your garage, and pop on down to any of the charity shops in town with your bags! Who knows what you could pick up for yourself too?



- Galway SPCA Shop, Augustine Street
- Age Action's Charity Shop, 25 Upper Abbeygate Street, Galway
- Harambee, Newcastle Road, Galway
- Galway Simon Community Shop, 18 Sea Road, Galway
- St. Vincent De Paul, Ozanman House, Merchant's Quay, Galway
- Enable Ireland, 23/24 High Street, Galway
- Clann2Clann, Sea Road, Galway (near Four Star Pizza)

# Galway Contact

By Fergal McNally



Contact awarded Organisation of the Year at the Making Galway Proud Ball

An elderly person living alone in Galway may receive regular visits from catering services, home help or a public health nurse. While these services may ensure the recipient remains physically healthy they do not necessarily address a human need which is as fundamental to our well being as regular meals or comfortable surroundings: company.

A survey carried out in 1981 by the junior chamber and the social services identified loneliness and alienation as the major problems facing elderly people. Galway Contact was set up to tackle these previously overlooked social problems. It is a voluntary organisation which organises one-to-one visits between volunteers and elderly people who are living alone or in nursing homes. The organisation currently has 81 volunteers, each of whom visits an elderly person every week. The group also organises a morning club, a Christmas dinner and summer outings. Galway Contact also concerns itself with the security issues that are faced by older people living on their own. They help allocate and install security systems, sensor lights, locks and smoke alarms. The group won organisation of the year in 2006 at the Making Galway Proud fundraising initiative.

Mary O'Connor is Galway Contact's co-ordinator and secretary as well as being a volunteer. She believes that the group's main goals are to help older people maintain their sense of pride and dignity and ensure they are part of their communities. The main part of Mary's job is matching personalities: pairing volunteers and clients with whom they are likely to develop a relationship based on mutual trust. A volunteer must be someone who genuinely enjoys the company of older people. As Mary says herself, "You learn so much from older people. They've given us what we have."

# GALWAY CITY COMMUNITY FORUM NEWS

Galway City Community Forum held a very successful AGM just before Christmas when a packed meeting heard from the Galway Harbour Board in association with PJ Tobin engineering about their proposals to develop the new harbour port. Tom O'Neill, CEO of the board welcomed the opportunity to speak to the Forum and said that the Harbour Board's hope was that the docklands, excluding the new port, would be designated a Strategic Development Zone (SDZ). Brendan Rudden played a DVD tracing the development of the city and port since 1400 and the proposed plans for future expansion. Brendan Smith, former Chairperson of the Forum thanked the presenters again stating that it was important for the community sector to come together to influence the shape of the city centre.

A new Steering Group for 2008 was also nominated. The following Forum members remained on the Steering Group: Sheila Mangan (Tirellan Heights Residents Association), Stan Sjothun (Claddagh Heritage Society), Evelyn Moran (Renmore Active Retired Association), Rose Kavanagh (Galway AD/HD), Nuala O'Hara (Tirellan Heights Residents Association), Nuala Nolan (Western Family History Association), Derrick Hambleton (An Taisce), Helen Jackson (Galway Centre for Independent Living). Newly elected members were Jennifer Banks (A Woman's Heart), Helena Dixon Caffola (Galway Educate Together Secondary School), Frank Okonkwo (Progressive Friends Association) and Grace John (The Ambassador's Family Event).

Also at the meeting, Kieran Cunnane was elected to represent GCCF on the Environment Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) of Galway City Council while Sabina Higgins was elected to the Economic Development and Planning SPC. In 2007, the Forum established a Sports Forum made up of local sports clubs and an Intercultural Forum. Many new migrant communities and ethnic groups are now active members in community and local development initiatives promoting integration in the city. In January, the first Steering group of the Intercultural Forum, which aims to promote the integration of ethnic minority groups in Galway, was also nominated. Those selected were Bras D'or (Galway Congolese Association), Son Gyoh (Campaign for Integration of Migrants), Abdul Halim (Bangladesh Community Galway), Marta Slawinska (Galway Irish-Polish Association), Elena Toniato (Italian Group), Vernice Murray (Galway Migrant Service) and Julie Sweeney (Galway Traveller Movement).



## Fathers for Justice and Equality By Rachel O'Toole



**Sam Butt, John McMahon and Seamus Langan**

'Fathers for Justice and Equality' is a charity service which was set up on the 25th of June, 2005 to provide 'counselling, friendship, advice and research data to men and their extended families.' It is one of the first facilities of its kind in Ireland propagating justice and equality for all. The organisation provides a dedicated place for fathers and their extended families to meet and discuss the problems they faced in the past, their present physical and emotional challenges, and to bring hope to their future. The mission of 'Fathers for Justice and Equality' is: "To raise awareness of fathers' issues, their obligations and their rights, thus making the public aware of the prejudice that currently exists towards fathers in Irish family law and also to seek judicial review and changes in law thereby granting fathers the same parental rights as mothers."

In his submission to the Law Reform Commission on the 26th of March 2007, Mr. Sohail Nasar (Sam) Butt, director of 'Fathers for Justice and Equality' called for 'common sense, common decency

and accountability' as a cure for the ails of Irish Family Law. He spoke about the lack of consistency, lack of transparency and the bias against fathers in the law. He stressed that 'current practices in family law are to the detriment of the family and the individual which the Irish Constitution undertakes to protect.' He stated that the 'paramount welfare of the child' is suffering from the injustice being done to parents, especially fathers.

The charity hopes to break down this bias against fathers and establish greater fairness by making it necessary for courts to look at the roles played by both parents in parenting, by training judges in family matters and by lobbying the media to take a fairer and more realistic view of the man and his role as a father.

'Fathers for Justice and Equality' believes its objectives can be achieved in a number of ways. The charity advocates educating fathers and their extended families by way of public meetings, lectures, and one-to-one discussions, about their rights, the legal process and what action they can expect from state bodies. It offers 'ongoing emotional support to fathers during a difficult and traumatic experience, giving assurance during a period of separation, hopelessness and isolation.'

The charity is based in Joyce House, Tuam Road, Galway. Detailed information can be found on the 'Fathers for Justice and Equality' website [www.fathers.ie](http://www.fathers.ie). Essentially the charity aims to highlight men's problems and promote awareness of the duties, obligations and rights of fathers in the 21 century and to create a level



playing field in the family courts in Ireland. The services are provided free of charge and without bias to ethnicity or gender.

**Billy Rooney, Mayor Tom Costello and Sam Butt**

# NUI Galway Alive Programme

By Colm Brady

*"The impact of NUI Galway students volunteering in the community is considerable and we are proud to celebrate their achievements and support volunteering on and off campus."* Dr Iognáid Ó Muircheartaigh.

The ALIVE Programme - A Learning Initiative and the Volunteering Experience - was established in 2003 by the National University of Ireland, Galway to harness, acknowledge and support the contribution that its students make by volunteering. The programme draws on a strong tradition of student engagement both on and off campus and assists students who wish to actively volunteer while developing tangible and transferable skills alongside practical volunteering experiences.

The ALIVE programme was set up by the Community Knowledge Initiative in NUIG. With the financial assistance of philanthropic donors CKI was set up in 2001 to help educate students for civic engagement and seeks to underpin and realise a civic mission. It has four strands: Research, student volunteering, service learning and knowledge sharing. The ALIVE Programme at NUI Galway seeks to support and recognise student volunteering through an integrated programme including: Volunteer opportunities website database; a series of volunteer training workshops; peer support reflection sessions and social gatherings; and recognition through the NUI Galway ALIVE Certificate.

This is the first such programme to be embedded within an institute of higher education in Ireland and its success has been closely followed by other institutions interested in duplicating that success. Lorraine Tansey has been involved with ALIVE since the 2003 Pilot project and now serves as Student Volunteer Co-ordinator. She quantifies the growth of the programme as having facilitated over 1300 student volunteers in 2007 compared with 50 in 2003. Initially students had to commit to a set amount of hours to gain an ALIVE certificate but after two years and consultation with students, community groups etc., the scheme was structured in a more flexible way. Under the broader scheme the students can complete the number of volunteer hours that suit their circumstances and still be accredited by the programme.

"I think a large part of the process is getting the word out to students. This year we have a flyer campaign that would encourage students to get involved," says Lorraine. The benefits perceived by students include making a difference, making friends and getting valuable career experience. "Employers would tend to see a student who has volunteered as a more rounded individual."

There is no typical volunteer profile and different factors influence the work they can take on such as whether they commute or the demands their course places on them. Historically the roles have been occupied by a majority of female students but that is changing rapidly. The volunteering

tends to complement what the student is learning in college in their course. Each faculty has different skills to offer: e.g. In January, medical students organise a Teddy Hospital each year to let children see a positive image of a hospital visit and dispel their fears while future doctors learn to deal with young patients.

In common with all work with vulnerable members of society, volunteers must be screened and comply with Garda clearance procedures. Lorraine says that is a major issue in all facets of community work and that the ALIVE team monitor regulations closely. ALIVE also provides a jumping-off point for students who want to volunteer on a larger scale through development work abroad. Training is provided to support volunteers abroad and to make the volunteers useful and effective.

There is a synergy between volunteering locally and progressing onto international work. Lorraine says it can act as a screening process to volunteers who can assess their reasons for following this path and to the receiving organisation who have some examples of how the volunteer can perform. ALIVE uses student media such as Flirt FM and the SIN newspaper extensively. Recently Galway Bay FM, The Galway Voice and the Connacht Tribune have given much useful exposure in Galway. Raising the profile of the organisation attracts more community organisations interested in having volunteers involved.

Challenges Lorraine Tansey identifies include maintaining partnerships and providing a personal service; a key requirement in an organisation which is growing rapidly. The programme is inundated with requests from other Universities who plan on setting up their own volunteering programmes. A new member of staff has been employed to set up a network to facilitate other Universities following suit.



*'Student Signing up to volunteer with Foróige'*

## Ballinfoile Mór RAPID Committee

By Sheila Mangan

The Ballinfoile Mór RAPID Committee is in existence since the year 2000. It is made up of representatives from resident's associations from Castlelawn to Castlegar. The main focus has always been the provision of a Neighbourhood centre in the area and finally our efforts are nearing fruition. Plans are ready to go to City Council and thanks to St. Columbas Credit Union Ltd for their partnership in this very worthy project.

### Mayor's Awards

The Mayor's awards, which are held on an annual basis, acknowledges outstanding people and organisations who, through their commitment to participating in unpaid community and voluntary activities, have made a significant impact on their communities in Galway City. This year under the category of Neighbourhood and Residents' Groups, The Ballinfoile Mór RAPID Committee won for its collaborative work in the Ballinfoile Mór area. The unique thing about our committee is that we all work well together, private and public housing estates alike. We all work for the benefit of the complete area.

### CCTV

Over the last few months local Residents Associations in Ballinfoile have been developing an application to apply for Community CCTV cameras in their areas. In Ballinfoile a technical survey has been carried out with the aim of developing a consultation document.

A public meeting is to be held on the 27th February at 7pm in the Menlo Park, revealing the details of where the cameras will be initially installed. The local RAPID committee will be in touch with all local people to encourage them to attend.



The office holders of the present committee are:  
**Chairperson:** Sam Butt  
**Secretary:** Sheila Mangan  
**Treasurer:** Michael McDonald  
**AIT Rep:** Sheila Mangan

**Ballinfoile Mór RAPID Committee receiving the Mayor's Award L to R Valerie Pointer Sheila Mangan Tom Costello and Sam Butt**

# Galway Civic Trust

By Rachel O'Toole

Galway Civic Trust was set up in 1992 with the aim to preserve, conserve and present. The founding of the Trust began with the City Council and businesses coming together with the goal of protecting the heritage of Galway. Research was carried out on the concept of a Civic Trust and how it could be successfully set up in Galway. Civic Trusts have been in existence for decades though they have a longer history in England than in Ireland. The Limerick Civic Trust, which has been the basis of research for the Galway Trust, has been in operation for 25 years now. In its 16 years of existence, the Galway branch has achieved well over 50 projects, the Fisheries Tower being, perhaps, the most noted.

In speaking about this project, the director, Delo Collier, emphasised the importance of the Trust's role in presenting as well as restoring. She explained that when the Fisheries Tower was completed it was opened to the public and is being used to host a Fisheries exhibition. She stressed that it is one thing to restore a building but this project is a landmark one, because it is serving to exhibit culture and history. It was a big project and very important as it is a unique Western Fisheries Board building. There is no other one like it in the country. The aim was to have the Tower open ten months of the year but it had to be closed on account of storm damage to its access bridge. The design for a new bridge is due to be released this spring. However a picture or diagram of the original bridge is being sought.

The largest project to date is the Lighthouse and Keeper's Cottage on Mutton Island. The project was started two to three years ago and is being worked on in stages. The original windows of the Keeper's cottage have now been restored. The windows were found to be unique with two of them different from the others. 'When the cottage was in use,' Delo remarked, 'it was very important that the shutters could close fully without any light escaping so as not to mislead any shipping.' This feature will be incorporated into the restored cottage.

Access is the biggest problem now being faced concerning the lighthouse. Presently all access is through the Waste Treatment Plant. 'This is not an option when it is opened to the public,' Delo stated. She said she would love to see a water taxi in operation from the Docks to Mutton Island among other places, especially when both the Docks and the lighthouse are finished. At present however it is an aspiration rather than a plan. The Keeper's Cottage will be open to the public, once finished, as a type of museum where the cottage life may be experienced. In the meantime memorabilia for it is being collected by the public and is being held in the City Hall until the Cottage will be ready.

Smaller projects of the Trust include designing, making and mounting plaques. Informative plaques such as the one to be mounted outside The King's Head are designed to recognise the medieval, or other, aspects of a building. Other plaques, such as the one dedicated to Nelly McHugh, recognise people for work they have done. Nelly McHugh is recognised for the garden she kept along the Canal walk. A garden is now being kept in memory of her near the skateboard facility. Presently a project, for the creation of a number of

plaques with lines quoted from poetry, is being undertaken by Judy Green, a former director of Galway Civic Trust. Judy Green works with ceramics and is based on Kirwin's Lane.

The Galway Civic Trust is sponsored by local people and businesses. It receives its core funding from the City Council with grants being another source of financial support. The Trust aims to keep the money within the community and works with the FÁS Employment Scheme whereby people employed by FÁS carry out a lot of the work of the Trust. An example is where employees learn a skill, such as stone wall building or restoration skills, and gain hands on experience. In this way the Galway Civic Trust works with people for people.

The Galway Civic Trust hopes to get a role in the restoration of Comerford's House near the Spanish Arch. At present the House suffers from tidal damp which needs to be counteracted by remedial work of experts on this area. Once that is achieved, the Trust will have the resources to complete the rest of the restoration and will be able to present the project in an affordable manner. Whether or not they get to restore Comerford House remains to be seen. Either way the Trust continues to do great work in restoring and presenting Galway's heritage to both the community and people from far and wide.

**Launch of Heritage week Poster. *Dúchas na Gaillimhe Galway Civic Trust Board Members, Neil McNelis, Delo Collier, Chairperson, Jack Mulveen and Cllr. Brian Walsh, Deputy Mayor of Galway.***



***Some of the attentive young audience at a Galway Civic Trust Workshop on making St. Bridget's Cross with presenter Kathleen Costello, on 1st February 2008.***

# Galway Cocaine Clinic

By Niamh Madden

Cocaine usage in Ireland has increased over the past few years, according to a national survey published in January 2008. The National Advisory Committee on Drugs published the report, which found that lifetime cocaine usage in Ireland and Northern Ireland in 2006/07 has increased by 2.1% since 2002/3. The tragic drug-related deaths covered by the media before Christmas highlighted that cocaine usage touches not only celebrity culture, but all tiers of society.

Galway Cocaine Clinic at the Western Region Drugs Task Force (WRDTF) on Dominick Street is a free, confidential service, which offers non-judgemental support and advice. The clinic is appointment-based, and takes place on a Wednesday evening. Fiona Walsh, Regional Drugs Co-ordinator, HSE West, explains that the drugs service sees people with cocaine-related problems during the day as well. 'It's a free direct access counselling and support service, that people can access any time. They don't have to go to their GP.' The initiative on Wednesday evenings began as a drop-in centre to tackle primary cocaine users who were mostly working. However the clinic will now be appointment-based, to encourage those who are nervous about just dropping in and may wish to protect their anonymity.

Fiona mentions that recreational users of cocaine often reach a crisis point before calling in to the centre: 'The problem with cocaine is that people don't present themselves until they've got a problem. The way people use cocaine recreationally, it can be many years before they actually get to a point where they need help.' One of the counselling services provided to assist cocaine users, 'Brief Intervention', lasts six to eight weeks. This short programme shows users the negative effects of the drug and how they can address the problems, as well as supporting families and relatives who

may be in crisis. 'The problem is getting people through the door,' Fiona says. 'Once they're in, they often stay and they come back if they relapse.'

How can family and friends support their loved ones if they have a cocaine addiction? 'People need to be honest with each other,' Fiona believes. The cocaine service can facilitate that honesty and assist in rebuilding a family unit where communication may have broken down or users have been engaged in lying, avoidance and denial. Fiona advises that people need to be vigilant and take care of each other, particularly with friends when going out socially. If a friend is drinking too much or taking too much, then make sure to intervene and protect them from reaching a crisis point.

The Galway Drugs Service opened ten years ago with Fiona Walsh in the office, and there are now 26 staff in total across the region. The service is confidential and non-judgmental and people are encouraged to drop in and talk to a counsellor, make an appointment or call the service for advice.



**Fiona Walsh, Regional Drugs Co-ordinator, HSE West**

**The Galway Cocaine Clinic at the Western Region Drugs Task Force, 64 Dominick Street, is open by appointment on Wednesday evenings.**

**Contact 091 561299 and ask to speak to one of the counsellors for an appointment.**

# Women with Disabilities in the West

By Niamh Madden

Women with Disabilities in the West was set up to encourage and support women with disabilities and to enable them to take control of their lives. Women who have a disability of any kind and who live in the West of Ireland (Galway, Mayo, Roscommon), can become members, and younger women are also encouraged to join. Initially the organisation grew out of a leadership programme that ran from May 2003 - April 2004, with the vision to set up a national women's network for women with disabilities. Twelve women were chosen nationally in this initiative to establish the first network for women who have impairments.

Three women from the Galway area who were in this network, Marian Maloney Nolan, Celine O'Sullivan-Tartaro and Maggie Woods, set up WDW as a network in the West of Ireland. The group caters to all kinds of disabilities, whether it is sensory, physical, mental, hidden or any other kind. 'People with disabilities have a lot to learn from one another,' Marian explains. 'There's a great emphasis being put on disability awareness training - we really need to be aware of each other's impairments.' WDW encourages members to become aware of each others' impairments and needs.

The first WDW meeting took place on October 1st, 2004, and from then the network has taken small steps to increase the network and its activities. The committee of ten meets every six to eight weeks and meetings for the

48 members are held quarterly. They meet either in the IWA Centre in Tuam, the library in Westside, or the Westside resource centre. Funding has come from the Galway City Partnership, City of Galway VEC and the Department for Community, Rural, and Family affairs. WDW were recently given a grant by the Women's Health Promotion in the HSE to run a successful conference about women's rights on December 3rd 2007. Groups from Mayo and Limerick also attended the conference, and there will be more links with these groups in the future.

The network's initial main goal was to become affiliated to the National Women's Council of Ireland, and they have achieved this. The next quarterly meeting will discuss plans for future developments and aims. Marian says she would like to see more young women getting involved, and believes that down the road there shouldn't be a need to segregate women with their own disability organisation. 'I'd like to get the word out there that we're here, if there are women who haven't heard about our group. I think it's only by awareness that we will really strive to full inclusion.' Marian would also like to eventually expand the network to include women with children who have disabilities, to support them if they need assistance. 'Women need their own space, because it's only when you're with women that you'll talk about the problems that women encounter.'

**Anyone interested in joining WDW can contact Marian Maloney Nolan on 091 590974 or email [Gats@eircom.net](mailto:Gats@eircom.net)**

## BirdWatch Galway By Chris Peppiatt

An interest in birds is common to all parts of the world. Most countries have a national society concerned with bird conservation. This love of birds may be due to a number of reasons: their beauty, their ability to fly and the freedom this symbolises, or to the change of seasons that migration makes apparent. Bird study is important not just for the pleasure that it affords, but also as a barometer of the state of the environment.

The species of birds and the size of their populations in an area can be affected by pollution or changes in land use and, on a wider scale, by factors like global climate change. Although other animals and plants also indicate such changes, there are a relatively small number of bird species and they are relatively large in size, so are easy to identify in comparison with smaller animals like insects. These facts, coupled the migratory habits of some species, contribute to the importance of birds as biological indicators.

Ireland's national bird conservation NGO is BirdWatch Ireland (BWI, formerly the Irish Wildbird Conservancy). With An Taisce, BWI is among the largest NGOs in Ireland. There is a network of local branches around the country. BirdWatch Galway is the branch for both city and county; the branch currently has 300 members. Although Galway is a busy centre that has grown significantly in recent years, bird diversity is rich. The Corrib and canals are home to Grey Wagtails and Dipper, while there are at least three heronries and Kingfisher are occasionally seen (mostly at places like Lough Rusheen and Lough Atalia).

During late winter and early spring a flock of Brent Geese can often be seen on the playing fields at South Park, or at the golf course. During late April and May, large numbers of Whimbrel (a long-legged wading bird similar to the Curlew and with long downcurved beak) can be seen and heard around the city's shore and at Mutton Island. Another name for this bird, which was mentioned in James Joyce's Finnegans Wake, is the Maybird, after the time that it migrates through the country in spring. A colony of Common Tern breeds on one of the islands in the bay, and it will also interest Galwegians to know that Nimmo's Pier is famous for the rare gulls that visit during the winter. Visiting birdwatchers come from all over Europe to visit.

Birds of prey like Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine Falcon, Barn Owl and Long eared Owl are all present in small numbers and Raven breeds. However, the birds that are most familiar to householders are the small finches, Robin, Wren, Blackbird, tits and thrushes that visit our gardens. As

well as contributing to bodies like the Galway City Community Forum, BirdWatch Galway holds regular meetings and events. Members of the public are welcome to attend the monthly information event at Nimmo's Pier, where branch members are present to chat and show people the different birds present. The branch also participates in national bird counts and surveys and regularly hosts talks. Why not come along and join in? Branch events this spring: Saturday 1st March, 10:30am. Nimmo's Pier with Tim Griffin and friends. Saturday 8th March, Galway Bay Count. Wednesday 12th March, 8pm. Members meeting at the Anno Santo Hotel. Friday 14th March, 8pm. Talk on South Africa by John Carey, Anno Santo. Saturday 5th April, 10:30am. Nimmo's Pier with Tim Griffin and friends. Saturday 12th April. City and County Bird Race. Wednesday 16th April, 8pm. Members meeting at the Anno Santo Hotel. Sunday 18th May. National Dawn Chorus Day event at Dangan. [www.birdwatchgalway.org](http://www.birdwatchgalway.org)



**'Common Tern'**  
Photograph by Michael Davis

galway city  
**community forum**  
foram pobal chathair na gaillimhe

Editors Niamh Madden and Oisín Kenny  
City Hall, College Road, Galway.  
Ph: 091-536844  
[www.galwaycityforum.ie](http://www.galwaycityforum.ie)  
email: [communityforum@galwaycity.ie](mailto:communityforum@galwaycity.ie)  
[niamh.madden@gmail.com](mailto:niamh.madden@gmail.com)