



Many different nationalities gathered to share an evening of music and craic



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Profile - Galway Writers' Workshop

By Tony O'Dwyer

"Writers' workshops are full of talentless people, of limited imagination who'll only stifle your creativity." So said the books on writing that I had been reading back then. For years I resisted the urge to find out what Galway Writers' Workshop was really like. Then in 1996 I was urged by an acquaintance to see for myself. I brought along a poem I had been working on. The topic was quite sensitive. But that didn't bother me. Heck I said, I'm among poets! After I read it to the group I was told that I was engaging in 'emotional trickery'. Was this, I wondered afterwards, the stifling of my creativity? It was, I recall, a baptism of fire.

Thankfully today new members are treated to a gentler initiation! The workshop actually began as far back as 1982. A group of writers used to meet in a variety of venues around town and in the university, among them Jessie Lendennie. The group published Salmon Magazine which lasted for a few issues. But out of it grew Salmon Publishing now

run by Jessie down in Moher, Co. Clare. Since 2002 Galway Writers' Workshop has revived magazine publishing in the form of Crannóg Magazine. www.crannogmagazine.com. Crannóg is now the only literary print magazine published in Galway outside of university publications. It looks for quality fiction and poetry and is issued three times a year. Its gets submissions from all over the world, not just Galway, and each issue sees an eclectic mix of local, national and international writers.

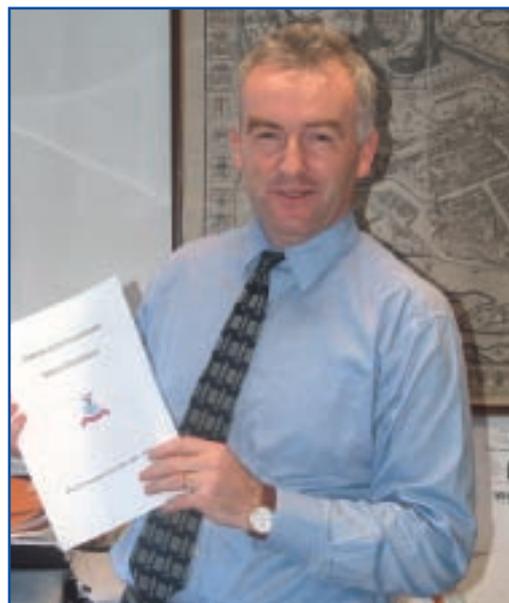
This winter it celebrates its 10th issue with a launch party in The Crane Bar. This is quite an achievement as many small magazines don't last that long. However with a dedicated Editorial Board and the enthusiastic support of the Workshop members we hope to be publishing Crannóg for many years to come.



City Hall To Be More User Friendly

By Sandra Bunting

It was not unusual in the past to be sometimes left with a sense of frustration when dealing with City Hall. Speaking as a member of a resident group and having shared experiences with other resident associations, and indeed other types of groups, even the simplest request for information could have you tearing your hair out. Either you felt you were treated as a troublemaker or passed from person to person on the telephone, not answered satisfactorily by post or dealt with inadequately in person. All that will hopefully end with the almost unanimous adoption of a draft Customer Service Plan by Galway City Council on November 14, 2005. The plan calls for a gradual improvement of customer service up to the year 2009, with yearly reviews,



Mr Joe O'Neill, Director of Services
Community & Enterprise and Corporate Services

The core of the plan involves training for staff and an exchange of clear information, not only with the public but between different departments. Key email addresses and direct phone numbers will be provided. There will also be greater facilities for people who want to do their business with City Hall through Irish.

separate 'Customer Plan' to be put on public display. In the meantime, actions were taken to make City Hall more accessible to the public. Remaining open at lunchtime was one such item.

In terms of response to queries, a tracking system and time frame (deadline) will be put in place.

Joe O'Neill, Director of Services, who tabled the plan, said most people are generally reasonable but that training was crucial. He said it must be remembered that there are almost 500 people working in city council and it can be confusing. Having a reference number handy can help. He added that in the past, some City Council workers might not have wanted to be the bearer of bad news (a longer wait for housing, etc.) and perhaps would not be as direct as recommended. "People are mature", he said, "they would rather have bad news than be left hanging".

The internet is going to play a large part in the plan. The web will be used for information to a greater extent and in the future, payments will be possible on line.

Concerns about privacy when at City Hall are also being addressed. There are a variety of small meeting rooms where people can have a level of confidentiality.

Mr. O'Neill said preliminary survey results of the plan were positive. However, he added that it was a two-way street; that members of the public can help by making appointments before visiting City Hall, keeping track of reference numbers or contacts in all communications, supplying documentation and filling out forms completely.

If someone is left unsatisfied by their treatment at City Hall, there is a complaints procedure available.

However, let's hope that with this new attitude and ongoing initiatives in customer service, it won't be necessary. The long-awaited plan should be given a chance to prove itself.

SEAN AGUS NUA

(A celebration of Galway's new-found cultural diversity)

By Brian McNamara



On November 17th an event took place in Arus na nGael to celebrate the cultural diversity that is now part of Galway. Representatives and friends of at least twenty-five different nationalities gathered to share in an evening of music and craic. They were joined for the occasion by a large number of locals. Guests had been invited to bring along some of their traditional cooking to share if they so wished, and many duly obliged. The event was organised to mark the culmination of the research stage of a freelance project exploring the fusion of various cultures in the Galway area in recent times, and to provide an environment where the various participants in the project could meet in an enjoyable and relaxed setting.

The project itself comprises a series of over ninety interviews, mainly of non-nationals that have recently arrived into the area. Interviewees come from a total of fifty-five countries scattered throughout most regions of the world. They hail from a wide range of backgrounds, traditions and religions, and include among their ranks migrant-workers, students, asylum-seekers, backpackers, refugees, and others. The interviews then explore such topics as their cultural backgrounds, reasons for coming to Galway, hopes and expectations on arrival, how their work situations develop, the development of their ethnic communities in the region, and their visions of Galway for the future. In addition to non-nationals there are a number of interviews with native Irish people featured, including some with the Travelling community.

The evening commenced at half past six and the area set aside for dining quickly filled with cuisine from exotic places such as Spain, China and West Africa. A traditional Irish music session in progress at the front of the club created a welcoming atmosphere for the arriving guests. The musicians at this time included two Irish, a Dane and a Japanese. As the premises rapidly filled up with guests the party moved into the back room. Centre-stage was then taken by Aine; a local singer-songwriter accompanying herself on guitar, and ably assisted on percussion by Marie from Liberia, as she played a short set of original tunes that was greatly appreciated by all present.

Following a brief interlude, in which gypsy and West African music CDs were played over the club's sound system, the main act of the night came on stage. Seasoned performers, Andile, Miriam and Kate from South Africa, and Charlotte from Ghana, treated the audience to a rousing set of traditional tunes from their home countries. These were then briefly followed by local-based English singer-songwriter, Richard Hiorns, who performed a selection of his own acoustic material. As proceedings seemed to be finally drawing to a conclusion the party once more spectacularly sparked to life as more South Africans arrived, spurring Andile to play an impromptu set on guitar, which was to entice all of those still present onto the dance-floor until the barmen eventually called time.

Galway Pipe Band to be Launched on St. Patrick's Day!

The new Galway City Pipe Band will march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade this year, to bridge a gap of five years since the City last had a pipe band of its own. The band will consist of ex pipers from the Liam Mellow's and Army Pipe bands that represented the City with distinction in the past. The band will also consist of newcomers to the pipe band scene in the City.

Having a City Pipe Band will be of tremendous benefit at all major Civic occasions. It is also expected that the band will represent the City abroad from time to time. Galway City has hosted a number of pipe bands from various cities around the world and the ambassadorial value of these bands have been clearly evident at these occasions.

The pipe band is currently preparing for their launch with band meetings held every Monday at the rowing club. Pipers around the city are welcome to join, and can find out more from Breandán at 091 536829.

Eitilt go Barcelona

Nach aisteach an rud é an bhealach
a bhuaileann racht thú
Mar thonn farraige deas ciúin nóiméad
amháin agus ansin mar ghála nach
féidir a stop.
Faitíos, deora, faitíos arís
Ansin Branda!
Ní maith liom a bheith ard
Tóg anál, isteach agus amach – mar
thaoide ag trá
Deas réidh
Tíocfaidh tú síos
Nach aisteach an rud é.

Bridín C.

On the whole the night was a tremendous success. This unfunded event brought together people of at least four continents (Australia was the only one not noticeably represented) who are now based in Galway. Some travelled in from as far as Gort and Loughrea for the occasion. A few were then able to demonstrate a surprising ability to use cupla focail as gaelge. Throughout the course of the night perhaps two hundred people joined in the fun. The only down-side to the occasion was the fact that nobody from the Galway City Partnership or the Anti-Racism Strategy was there to witness it. There are plans to hold another such event in the spring, due both to the unprecedented positive feedback of those in attendance and the fact that it was impossible for many of the interviewees in the original project to attend on that particular night. Watch this space for more details!!

Information accrued from the project, which is hoped to eventually be released in book form, is being made available to any organisation or body that can utilise it for the common good of the overall community. **CONTACT BRIAN MACNAMARA: 087 7954940**



FLIGHT PATHS

An education to reflect the cultural diversity of our City.

by Betsy Carreyette

So often we speak of the here today, gone tomorrow pace of life at the core of our city: We may have too many cars clogging up the roads and we may drink too much, but none the less, we are a friendly, spontaneous city of merchants, artisans and people from all over the world: In the past couple of decades there has been phenomenal change wrought in the name of progress; some of it good, some of it bad, all of it hard to keep up with. One of the only things we can be certain of is that this metamorphosis will continue.

In a climate of such vibrant change it is important for the individual to stop on occasion and reflect on the metamorphosis and their part within it: To really consider what changes we believe are beneficial for us as a community.

Galway Educate Together National School (GETNS) has long recognised the need to reach out to the wide multi-cultural community in its provision of an education that is, at the heart of its ethos, multi-denominational, democratically run and co-educational. The school was founded in 1994 as Galway School Project by a group of pioneering parents determined to create, an education that more reflected the interests of parents than the traditional schooling system.

In the last three years the school has operated from its wonderful purpose built building, no longer a 'project' but part of a firmly rooted and rapidly growing Education movement sweeping across the country.

GETNS has proved such a success, (indeed there is a waiting list for each class,) such an anchor in the stormy world of raising children, that there are now ongoing negotiations for the creation of a secondary school.

As a fund raising project for this pioneering new venture there are moves afoot to publish a book of children's writing and artwork. The project in question is named Flight Paths and, to date, we have gone into the classroom to carry out workshops with local community groups such as Amnesty International, Global Music Project, and local historian John Cunningham, exploring issues of culture and identity. We have facilitated ceramic workshops with the Afterschool Together, and are presently planning some work over the winter with Sonas community Arts group amongst others in the wider community of Galway City. We plan to go to print in the Spring.



Derelict Sites

by Niall Ó Brolcháin

One of the most recent policies adopted by Galway City Council was the Derelict Sites Policy. The purpose of it is to force the owners of sites left in a state of dereliction to clean up their act.

The mechanics of it are quite simple. Members of the public can put forward any site they consider to be derelict or in a state of general disrepair to Galway City Council's Environment Department. Officials will then inspect the site and inform the owners that their property will be put on the derelict sites register if the problems are not sorted out. If the site remains on the derelict sites register after the end of the calendar year, a levy of 3% of the value of the site will be payable to the City Council.

While 3% might not sound like a lot, it certainly is when you consider the value of property in Galway at the moment.

This policy can be used for all sorts of purposes. It can be used to get people to clean up old and vacant buildings that are in a state of disrepair. It can be used to force landlords to maintain the outside of the rented properties they own. It can also be used to get people to clean up empty plots on which rubbish is dumped.

There is a possible flaw in the policy as it stands. If a site is put on the derelict sites register in a state of disrepair and then the problems are sorted out, the site comes off the register. That's fine, but if the site is just allowed to slip into a state of disrepair again

we're back to square one. There probably should be some further sanction for serial offenders.

The key issue as to whether this policy works or not is whether it is enforced properly. In a rapidly expanding city like Galway, the last thing we can afford to have, is derelict sites. It makes no sense to allow buildings or areas to become derelict while we continue to push out the boundaries and develop on green field sites. At the moment, Galway City doesn't have too many no go areas. Let's hope it remains that way.

The problems of anti-social neighbours has been well highlighted in the media recently, Galway has its share of anti-social people just like anywhere else. While the derelict sites policy cannot solve that problem it can ensure that the owners of each property keep the outward appearance of each property in good condition. This should prevent areas from becoming too run down.

Yet again there is a possible pitfall here, in that Galway City Council is itself the biggest landlord in the City. If its own properties fall into a state of disrepair, it is hard to imagine that they will allow their properties to go on the derelict sites register. Even if they did, they would simply be taking money out of one pocket and putting it into another. Having said all that, it is a progressive policy and it can be tightened up as time goes on.

THE RUSSIAN COMMUNITY of

Galway celebrated Christmas according to its tradition on the 6th of January. There is now an active Galway-Russian Cultural Club consisting of Russian (& other Russian speaking ex-USSR countries as well as Irish) professionals. The group is solely for the purpose of fostering cultural ties in Ireland. A spokesperson for the organisation says that, for example, Moscow University has the largest IRISH Language Department outside Ireland. The group is interested in the promotion of art exhibitions and Russian cuisine.

Book Launch

The Official Launching of Loose Theatre will be on Monday 30th January at 6pm in the Town Hall Theatre Michael D Higgins will open the evening. "LOOSE THEATRE, Memoirs of a Guerrilla Theatre Activist" by Margaretta D'Arcy co-published by Trafford Publishing & Women's Pirate Press, 2005 £14.95 (£17.95 incl. Postage) €19.95 (€25.45 incl. Postage) 479 pages Illustrations

Loose Theatre is a fascinating collection of memories, a journey through a variegated landscape of the author's life and background, starting with her Jewish mother's parents in flight from the pogroms of Czarist Russia and her Irish father's involvement in the War of Independence on the streets of Dublin. The book describes the problems caused by a mixed marriage in a theocratic state, and the life of four little girls reared in a minority milieu of "progressive thought" against the social background of De Valera's Ireland of the 1930s and the "Emergency". D'Arcy joins the theatre as a teenager, at first in Ireland, and then in London where she meets English playwright John Arden. They both work at the Royal Court in its early days, and then undertake a fruitful play-writing (and producing) collaboration, over 20 plays for stage and radio.

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e-mail: margaretta@iol.ie webpage: www.margarettadarcy.com

City Centre Communities ‘Survival in the West’

By Sandra Bunting

Maintaining the character of an old city centre neighbourhood is not easy in a rapidly growing city. Development can be felt to be encroaching on all sides and, especially if things are left to run down, it is easier to say that it's not worth saving anyway. Well, residents in 'the West', a small area off Henry St., think their neighbourhood of terraced houses and tiny bungalows is worth it. In association with city architects and engineers, proposed changes to the area are being discussed in order to define it more visibly as a neighbourhood. Officials from city council and members of the residents' committee have



Photo by Eleanor Hough

been discussing improvements for years but it was only with the plans for rejuvenation of the Small Crane Square that it became feasible.

Residents have been calling for repairs to be done on footpaths and road surfaces, for better lighting to prevent outdoor drinking and drains unblocked to end the constant flooding when it rains. Traffic calming is also a consideration since the area is a thoroughfare for two schools: the Jes primary, Scoil Iognaid, and the Jes Secondary, Coláiste Iognaid.

'The West' is made up of old family homes and therefore has a high rate of elderly people. There have been newcomers over the past ten years and now rented-out houses are scattered among the terraced dwellings. It has its own character. Neighbours look out for each other and stop often to talk in the street. Determined that the area was worth saving as a residential community,

representatives of the residents' association met with city officials to see what could be done. After studying the area, chief city architect, Anne-Marie Cusack came up with the concept of creating a 'home zone' in the area. An idea developed in the Netherlands, and adopted widely in England, home zones are simply the creation of a safe, neighbourhood-friendly environment.

Coupled with that idea, improvements would be made to the physical look of the area with the addition of trees and the burying of unsightly wires. Some sort of tribute would also be paid to the Galway writer Walter Macken who lived in a corner house on St. Joseph's Avenue.



Photo by Eleanor Hough



Photo by Eleanor Hough

The proposal is undergoing a series of public consultations with residents and local merchants. Much will depend on plans and budget allocations for the Small Crane project. However, 'the West', a unique part of Galway should be preserved. Not to do so would be to let part of our heritage disappear.



Photo by Eleanor Hough

A New Volunteer Service for the City & County

Galway City & County is about to get a new service aimed at promoting and supporting volunteering. The service is called Galway Volunteer Centre (GVC) and is part of a national network of centres being developed with the support of Volunteer Centres Ireland. The centre will offer organisations and individuals/companies interested in volunteering, support, information and advice on all aspects of volunteering. The table below will give you some idea of what the GVC can offer.

If you are thinking of volunteering you can	If your organisation needs volunteers you can
Find out about opportunities in Galway City and County	Register your volunteer vacancies
Get information and advice without making a commitment	Have your needs matched with potential volunteers
Explore what skills and experience you can offer	Get information and advice on best practice for supporting volunteers
Register and have your details sent to registered organisations	Discuss volunteer training needs and ways of meeting these

Want to find out more?

You can get in contact directly with the GVC set up co-ordinator, Janet Kehelly, on 087 1353546. Janet would be delighted to talk to you about the service on the phone or in person. If you have questions, ideas, proposals, we'd really like to hear from you.

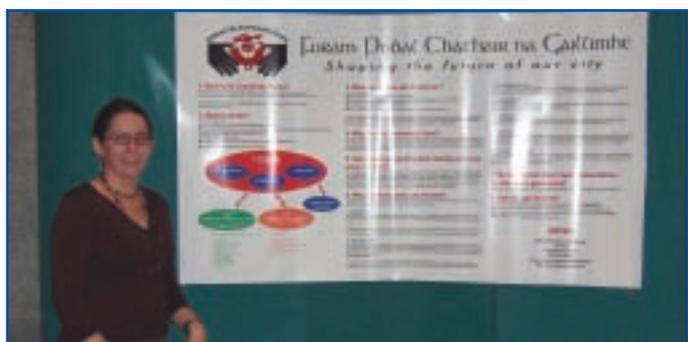
We are in the process of organising our office space and setting up our website and database. To find out more about Volunteer Centres Ireland, log onto www.volunteering.ie. The GVC website will soon be available on this site or by logging onto www.volunteergalway.ie We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Galway Learning Week 2005

Galway Learning Week promotes and celebrates learning in all its forms, and encourages people of all ages to try something new, learn a skill and have fun. In particular, Learning Week targets people who may not normally participate in learning, bringing learning events to them and bringing them to learning events.

Galway Learning Week took place from Monday 10th to Sunday 16th October 2005.

Galway Learning Week is an initiative of the City Development Board through the Strategic Learning Network, supported by City of Galway VEC, Galway City Council and Galway City Partnership. Other agencies actively involved in Galway Learning Week include FÁS, NUI Galway, Education Sectors (Primary and Second Level), Galway City and County Childcare Committee and Galway Technical Institute.



Separate Channels

(To the ghost of my father.)

By Betsy Carreyette

You never made it to the West of Ireland,
what would you say
gathered with the crowd on Shop Street
around a frontless piano where
a fleet fingered pianist flies the high-wire
then tumbles off over the edge?

Would this be too avant-garde for you?
Too far removed from your piano's hand-designed alcove

won by moving the bathroom wall?
Would you have tapped your well-shod heels and turned?

Just as in the cushioned comfort of home, you
dismissed with a flick of the switch anything minimalist?

Or would you hang-on in your logical quest?
Patient and poised as chorus don masks and turquoise
robes, weaving new-millennium Celtic-fringe
with Athenian tradition.

Would I whisper canny insights?
The one about yer man's last request
to have his ashes shipped home in the piano
along whose ivory keys his old fingers had run?

And though your piano sits bereft in the alcove dust
there was a time I begged you to play:-
This could be the moment we've been waiting for.

This could be your encore,
perched on a barstool whisked
by your daughter from Garavans',
ragtime fingers furiously flying over
the black and the white
while punters line the top with pints
as they did in the post-war England
you had ceased to understand.

And I want to tell you of the Renvyle piano,
pushed through the flaming
streets of Bruges in 1941 by conscientious nuns
when my thoughts are swallowed in the moan
of this ocean-bound chorus:

Connemara, womb of the sea upon whose shore we stand
in this fastest growing City of Tribes and resurrections.
Where anything can happen onboard an impromptu golden
ship bound with skull and crossbones for an uncertain shore,
where Captain swallows a flaming sword
and crew brandish cutlasses at the gathered crowd.

You never made it to the West of Ireland,
so far removed from the velvet heart
of home where we gathered
around the piano in the port of midwinter to sing
'I saw three ships come sailing in....
on Christmas day, on Christmas day,
before tuning into the Queen's speech,
and navigating separate channels out
of the Empire.

Update on the Forum

By Claire Ann Ní Fhlaithearta

There was a great turnout for the recent AGM and Quarterly Meeting of the Galway City Community Forum held on the 7th of December 2005. On the night, nominations were put forward for the election of the new Steering Group for 2006. The New Steering Group for 2006 is as follows:

Mr. Shane Foran
Mr. Michael Dooley
Ms. Trish Carr
Mr. Stan Sjothun
Ms. Matti Twomey
Ms. Nuala O'Hara
Ms. Delo Collier
Ms. Evelyn Moran
Ms. Eleanor Hough
Mr. Andy Bourne
Ms. Rose Kavanagh
Mr. Brian McNamara
Ms. Nuala Nolan
Ms. Margaret Carr

If you have any queries please contact me at 091-536844 or communityforum@galwaycity.ie. If you recently held an AGM, please let me know if the contact details for your group have changed. If you would like to get involved in submitting articles or photos for the Galway City Community Forum's Newsletter, please contact me. Let the Forum know what your group is doing! May I take this opportunity to thank Ms. Sandra Bunting for all her help in the past year with the Newsletter and everyone else who has submitted articles, poems and photos.

Editors: Claire Ann Ní Fhlaithearta, Sandra Bunting.



galway city
community forum
forum pobal chathair na gaillimhe

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* The views expressed in this Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of Galway City Community Forum or the Community & Enterprise Department of Galway City Council.