

COUNTY LONGFORD SOCIAL SERVICES

THURSDAY 15 SEPTEMBER

1971
to
2011

THOUGHTS/REFLECTIONS



celebrating

40 years of
County Longford Social Services
and
Sr. Calasanctius Duffy

*Norman Wisdom is reported recently to have said -
"three things happen as one gets old—the first is
forgetfulness—I can't remember the other two" ...*

Preliminary:

To list acknowledgements, to name names are inherently dangerous exercises. So to do invites omissions, some will be more glaring than others, but all regrettable and despite every possible intention and effort to be avoided. A much greater mistake would be, however, not to attempt a reasonably comprehensive record on paper – on risk of offending a small number – by failing to chronicle the vast number of those who have contributed invaluable to the Council effort of over forty years, at this time.

Apology:

To begin with, therefore, I sincerely apologise to all or any of those not included in this brief summary – and who have excelled under the flag of County Longford Social Services.

Patrons:

The first of our patrons in 1971 were Bishop Cathal B. Daly (*later to become Cardinal and Primate of All Ireland*), Archdeacon William Bond of St. John's, and Rev. Lawrence Graham of the Methodist Church. They were followed, as important and much appreciated Patrons, Bishop Colm O'Reilly, Archdeacon Roy Jackson, Archdeacon Stanley Johnson and Canon David Catterall, together with Rev. Harold Agnew, Rev. Bill Perkins, Rev. Andrew Dougherty and Rev. Stephen Foster.



Sr. Calasanctius and Archdeacon Jackson.

Honorary Officers and Committee Members:

An army of "who's who" of the best Longford had to offer served in the administration of the Council and with great commitment and distinction. A succession of vice chairpersons, secretaries and treasurers included Joe Kelly,

Tom Waldron, Terry McGough, Nina Martin, Peg O'Halloran, Phyllis Branigan (*a singularly tireless and efficient secretarial wonder woman for almost the entire of the 40 years*), honorary auditors Dillon Gray and Tommy McDonnell, honorary accountants John Murphy and Owen O'Boyle. And Committee Maureen Drumm (*who was targeted, head hunted and recruited in 1971 and who never disappointed*). Jimmy Baxter (not least for his driving on day trips "always at the beck and call" of the administration in emergencies) Anne Treacy (who frequently substituted as recording and correspondence secretary, at meetings), Anne Freeman and Mary Brennan (both of whom livened up meetings and were so popular with meals recipients), Tony Eivers, Margaret Devine (the longest serving of the vast number of the "foot soldiers" and always in the front line), Noel O'Donnell, Mick Gilleran, Maureen Shirren, Michael Clancy, Tony McCormack, Fr. Pat Airlie, Fr. Bernard Noonan Fr. Tom Healy, Sean Reilly and Sr. Imelda, all of whom "multi-tasked" with the day to day activities including distribution of meals with the "regulars".

Health Board – Health Service Executive:

The input/support of the Health Board – later the Health Service Executive – cannot be overstated. For whatever reason, County Longford Social Service Council has always enjoyed a special relationship, regarded with some favour from Chief Executive Officers, our "Generals" and good friends Denis Dudley and Denis Doherty, and their hardworking and much appreciated "Senior Officers" on the "battle field", Eamonn Hannon (founder member and so helpful and supportive in early days), Pat McLoughlin, Denis Bergin, P.J. Fitzpatrick, Derry O'Dwyer.

Meals on Wheels:

The flagship service of the Council, the success and importance of which are reflected by statistics, 22,000 distributed and served in 1975 and 47,000 distributed and served in 1985 and increasing in numbers and importance all the time. The brainchild of Dr. Gerry McDonagh, after early investigative work, and with which Derek Cobbe and his *Longford News* contributed so handsomely, when the mobile unit toured National Schools in the county, to encourage young people to befriend elders of the areas, and a small army of drivers, countywide, such as Jimmy Monaghan, Michelle Carrigy, P.J. McManus and Pat Hourican, who also served on Committee, and



Dr. Gerry McDonagh

all of whom have contributed so selflessly in the distribution and service Meals on Wheels, and in so doing to lessen and relieve at least a little the acute loneliness of the recipients, living alone, and in remote/isolated locations, and so introducing an entirely new dimension to the concept of "corporal works of mercy", all of whom it is simply impossible to place on record as would be appropriate and desirable — Agnes McKenna, Andy and Maureen Quinn, Angela Davis, Anita Stenson, Ann Clancy, Ann Gibbons, Ann Greene, Anna B. McCabe, Anne Beirne, Anne Gerety, Anne Treacy, Annie Hayden, Beatrice McDermott, Bernadette Roberts, Bernard Bird, Bernie McLoughlin, Betty Carey, Betty Creegen, Breege McLoughlin, Brendan Bartley, Brendan Daly, Brendan Duke, Brendan Forkan, Brendan Gill, Brian Flynn, Brian



Sr. Calasactius and Bishop Colm O'Reilly.

Gorman, Brid McDermott, Bridget Dennigan, Bridie Donlon, Bridie Grealy, Carmel O'Brien, Catherine Mulderry, Christy Deely, Noel Byrne, Conor and Sheila O'Reilly, Cyril Fagan, Cyril Hewitt, Cyril Hussey, Dan O'Brien, Danny Quinn, David Pearse, Dennis Hughes, Denis Kennedy Denis Skelly, Derek Cobbe, Dessie Brennan, Dillon Gray, Donal Cummins, Donnie Murtagh, Dympna Brady, Dympna Donlon, Eamonn Quinn, Eddie Cullen, Edward Egan, Eileen Connell, Fr. Jerry Macaulay, Fr. Gerry Byrne, Fr. J.P. Masterson, Fr. Tom Healy, Fr. Bernard Noonan, Fr. Peter Tiernan, Fr. Hugh Turbitt,

Frank Carter, Frank O'Brien, George Shedwell, Gerald Farrell, Gerry Leavy, Harry Ledwith, Irene McWade, Ita Mulvihill, James O'Hara, Jim Duignan, Jimmy Baxter, Jimmy Finn, Jimmy Savage, Joe and Mary McLoughlin, Joe and Rose Carrig, Joe Breaden, Joe Kelly, John and Regina Maloney, John Barry, John Clarke, John Donlon, John Martin, John Sorohan, Johnny Stephens, Josie Hilliard, Kathleen McGuinness, Kathy Keary, Kathleen Casey, Kathleen Hourigan, Kathleen Mimnagh, Kevin O'Dowd, Lily McGuinness, Liz Palmer, May Clancy, Margaret Casey, Margaret Mollaghan, Marie Fox, Martina O'Reilly, Mary and Hughie Brennan, Mary and Leo Donlon, Mary and Mossie Burns, Mary Brady, Mary Flanagan, Mary Gaffney, Marty Logan Sweeney, Mary McWeeney, Mary Morrissey, Mary Murtagh, Mary Redmond, Maura Kelly, Maureen Drumm, Maureen Shirren, Michael Clancy, Michael Farrell, Michael Gilleran, Michael Neary, Minnie Goldsbury, Miriam Corcoran, Mona Galvin, Gerry Hickey, Bridie Fannin, Mrs. C. Cassells, Rose Cunningham, Mrs. D. Kenny, Mrs. E. Carey, Mrs. E. Palmer, Johanna Donlon, Maeve Cullen, Mrs. M. Shirren, Betty McGinnity, Miriam Farrell, Agnes O'Brien, Brenda Gearty, Mrs. S.

Flanagan, Una Connellan, Winnie Balfe, Nan and Sean McGoey, Nan Creed, Nan Murtagh, Ned Coyle, Nelly McCormack, Noel Carberry, Noel McGeeney, Noel O'Donnell, Noel Strange, Noeleen Shaw, Nuala Fitzpatrick, Maureen Kerins, Olivia Quinn, Owen Harrison, Pdraig Connellan, Pam Rogers, Pascal Quinn, Pat and Anne Freeman, Pat Clyne, Pat Doona, Pat Hourican, Pat Norton, Patrick Duffy, Patsy Brady, Patsy McNally, Pauline Byrne, Pauline Lyons, Peg O'Halloran, Peggy McHugh, Peter Boyle, Peter Duignan, Phyllis Branigan, Phyllis Wilson, Rose Duffy, Ruth Shanley, Seamus Greene, Seamus Keaveney, Seamus Magurie, Seamus McLoughlin and Family, Seamus Mulvey, Sean McGoey, Sean O'Hara, Sean Reilly, Sheila O'Reilly, Sheila Shields, Sister Alphonsus, Sister Angela, Sister Bonaventure, Sister Catherine, Sister de Chantel, Sister Felicitas, Sister Imelda, Sister Kevin, Sister Laurence, Sister Matilda, Sister Margaret, Sister Mary McLoughlin, Sister Maura, Sister Pius, Sister Thecla, Sr. Margaret, Sr. Mercy, Sr. Monica, Sr. Veroica, Sr. Scholastica, Stella Fitzgerald, Syl Carroll, Ted Mulcahy, Teresa Harte, Terry McGough, Tish Quinn, Tom Waldron, Tony Finnan and Tony McCormack.

Umbrella Associations:

Under the auspices of our Council were sub-divisions created and put in place, later to prosper independently, and contribute massively to the Town and County Community –

- **“Hospice Homecare”** (so magnificently put and kept on track by Pdraig Connellan and his son Mark) and Pdraig was central also to
- **“Friends of St. Joseph’s”**, with Nina Martin (financially and otherwise involved in and responsible for the Hospital Chapels)
- **“The Millennium Cemetery”** (Charlie Lee and Mel McCormack outstanding work in the design and structure of so magnificent a memorial and to transform “Buley’s Acre”)
- **“Sales of Work”** (important source of much needed funds, the speciality of the gentle but quietly efficient Sr. Kevin with Brendan Casey, Joe Durkin, and Sr. Margaret principle amongst her helpers)
- **“Whist Drives”** (a social service in themselves, so well supported and so much appreciated and enjoyed by many for whom there were few other social events, and conducted with consummate attention and efficiency by Canon William Bond and his wife Rosemarie, and also a modest but welcome fundraisers)
- **“Christmas Raffle”** (to sell the tickets for which there were “conscripts” rather than volunteers, but which were never less than outstandingly successful)

- **“Ladies Family Club”** (the creation of Sr. Berchmans, with the inspired support and hard work of Mary Brennan, Dympna Donlon, Liz Palmer, Bernie Belton, Eileen Caslin, Veronica Meenaghan and Sr. Angela Bracken, amongst others, so seriously successful in introducing cookery and home skill including to the formation of the
- **“Tuesday Club”** (and still ongoing since 1985)
- **“Community Information Centre”** (now a statutory State operation in the capable hands of Connie Gerety and her backup team, was introduced and launched in the first place by our Council, with the unique driving force of John Barry, and aided and abetted by Stella Fitzgerald, Michael Walshe, Mollie Bowers, Anne Reynolds, amongst many others)
- **“Church Gate Collections and Flag Day”** (throughout the County and to which local “managers” provided such unwavering and loyal commitment to supplement the Department grant aid”)
- **“Visitation”**
- **“Christmas Celebrations”** (involving voluntary transport to St. Joseph’s and an annual party to which local musicians and singers/performers created and maintained a festive atmosphere to correspond with the Season)
- **“St. Joseph’s Kitchen Staff”** (to whom a deep debt of gratitude is due and owing having cooked and prepared the meals in the early days of the Service, in addition to a
- **“Laundry Service”** (and never less than willing to put in additional time and effort)
- **“Rolling Stock”** (acquisition of vans and vehicles with Longford Dealers, Joe O’Reilly, Sean McGoey, Mel Donlon, Ian Dennehy (Finnegans) of Ballymahon, adapted by Ronan McNiven and his skilful staff, overseen and certified by the always helpful and available Bill Kirk)
- **“Guesthouse Scheme of 1974”**
- **“Schoolchildren’s Breakfasts 1977”**
- **“Stroke Club”** (2006———)
- **“House Maintenance/Repairs”**
- **“Care-Call Service”**

Office Staff:

Efficient and hardworking office staff led by Elaine Keogh, and with Annette McDonald and Bernie Hagan in support, and the ever present Margaret Devine and those legion of office staff over the full forty year period.



Bernie Hagan.

Officers:

Our Council has given lip service to the democratic process – the same “Top Table” has been imposed on the Council, after some AGM elections that were almost meaningless – but in 2011 came an inspired and seamless “transfer of power” when the Chair was taken over by Donnie Murtagh, with Dennis Hughes taking the position of vice chairman – and new and unprecedented success and expansion – introducing the Council to the 21st Century —.

Guest Speakers:

At some of our General Meetings, down the years, we have been honoured to be addressed by eminent Guest Speakers including Sr. Consilio, Deirdre Rackard, Marian Finnucane, Sr. Stansilaus, John Lonergan, Austin Currie, Christy Kenneally, Dr. Michael Beirne, Superintendent Martin Maguire, Bernard Daly, Dr. Jack Cooney, Sr. Mary Walsh, Frank Cox, Dr. Enda McDonagh, Deirdre O’Connell, Bishop John Kirby, Eamonn Hannon, Avril Doyle T.D., Fr. Peter McVerry, Senator Des Hannafin, Dr. Paul Andrews S.J., Dr. Alistar Graham, Rev. Sean Healy, Bishop Mayes, Eugene McGee. Individually and collectively they enlightened, inspired and motivated all concerned in seeking to bring a little less hardship and a little more happiness to the lives of the aged, the feeble and the infirm in the Town and County Communities.



Each and every one associated with, or connected to, the marvellous work of our Council is entitled to credit and commendation, and on a personal note I appreciate and thank everyone for the great joy and pleasure of their support for and the warmth of their friendship with me.

Padraic Gearty



Sr. Calasanctius

To say that Mother Teresa of Calcutta was in the same league as Sr. Calasanctius is in no way to demean the iconic standing of Mother Teresa. Undoubtedly, there have been and are great men of Longford – Town and County – but it is difficult if not impossible to think of any to compare with the women, Dr. Victorine Pettit, Philo Kelly, Sylvia Dawson and Sr. Calasanctius.

And it is equally difficult to argue that Sr. Calasanctius cannot be hailed and saluted as the best of them all.

This is a celebration of 40 Great Years of County Longford Social Services Council.

And, correspondingly, it has to be an acknowledgement and celebration of the life and times of Sr. Calasanctius – at once an inspiration and a legend, by whom we all of us have been led and driven, who refused ever to take no for an answer, by whom we have been motivated and guided, who has illuminated and given purpose and meaning to our lives of which at least some of us did not ever think could be possible ———