



## ■ INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING CONTESTED SITES



Report from Coiste conference on  
the development of Maze/Long Kesh

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Coiste PNB staff pictured at the Slieve Russell Hotel, Co Cavan, where they were one of 50 groups selected for an award by *Daily Ireland* for their work in promoting reconciliation and conflict resolution

## PNB Training Events 2005/2006

An important part of the PNB programme since the outset has been to design a programme of work facilitating republican ex-prisoners in deepening and developing their commitment to justice and peace and to foster greater interaction and communication between republican ex-prisoners and all other sectors of Irish society.

As part of this process we hosted two training sessions for the republican ex-prisoner community, one on 3rd December 2005 and another on 11th March 2006.

The first event took place in Castlewellan Co Down involving 60 participants who were



**Rosie McCorley, PNB Outreach Coordinator, facilitates one of the workshops**

given the opportunity to hone their skills in the arena of management and good organizational practices. Included in the day long event was a presentation based on the principles laid out in the 'Get Organised' handbook, the much lauded Coiste publication produced some years ago.

The second training session

took place in Tí Chulainn in South Armagh. There were 90 participants involved in this event which was primarily focused on computer techniques. Although both events were intensive, all the ex-prisoners who took part found them to be both beneficial and relevant to the work in which they are involved.

# ICT course experiences - former political prisoners take their skills to South Africa



Stevie O'Neill and John Payne pictured at Kyaltsha

## **"Opportunity for enrolment in a 30-week ICT training programme**

In conjunction with the Northern Ireland Congress of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC-ICTU), Coiste na nIarchimí can now offer a limited number of places on an intensive 30-week ICT training programme scheduled to begin later this year."

**T**he above advertisement was one which caught my eye last year and immediately struck me as something that would be of great benefit to me.



**John Payne on a trip to the game reserve**

After talking to the PNB people at Coiste I enrolled for the course and committed myself to the 30 weeks of intensive training in the hope that it would equip me with the qualifications to enhance my employment prospects.

The programme for unemployed former political prisoners and their relatives took place in Belfast but the latter part of the programme (weeks 23-28) included a trip to South Africa where delegates were on placement with various statutory agencies. (An overseas allowance was available for participants).

This programme was developed through a collaboration of Coiste, other republican and loyalist prisoner organisations, Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre (BURC), Bridge to Employment and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

The training programme commenced in February 2005 with 13 participants in attendance at BURC's training suites in Belfast city centre.

All participants were given support and advice in relation to any concerns about benefits and entitlements whilst attending the course.

As this was an official Bridge to Employment training

programme all participants joined the course with little or no hassle from their local Social Security Office. As the course progressed some participants felt unable to continue for various reasons and the number of people to finally complete was 8.



**Gary Matthews, David Livingstone, Liam Heffernan and Sean Campbell on their way to Seal Island**

**A + TRAINING**

The IT training began with A + training in computer hardware and software; this was chosen as the first module as it was the easiest exam to achieve.

The training included both theory and hands-on practical labs.

Each participant was provided with their own toolkit and computer to work on.

Certification was achieved after the successful completion of two 'online' multiple choice exams.

**INET + TRAINING**

Inet + is an introduction to internet technologies and principles. This course was more theory based than A+ and included various topics. There were some practical labs which gave participants the opportunity to design their own web pages and test them using different web browsers. Certification was achieved upon the successful completion of an 'online' multiple choice exam.

■ Report from Coiste conference on the development of Maze/Long Kesh

# Interpreting and Developing Contested Sites



(l-r) Mike Ritchie, Margaret Edwards and Johnston Price

**O**n Thursday 19th January 2006, a large number of people turned up at the Holiday Inn in Belfast to attend an event entitled 'Interpreting and developing contested sites'. This was a seminar organised by the PNB team as part of Coiste's involvement in the process of having the Long Kesh prison site preserved and an International Centre for Conflict Transformation (ICCT) established there.

Martina Purdy from the BBC very ably chaired the entire morning's proceedings which included a formidable line-up of hugely-informed speakers from a range of backgrounds, all contributing a wealth of experience and information to this controversial debate.

Raymond Mc Cartney, Chairperson of Coiste and Sinn Féin appointee to the Maze/Long Kesh Monitoring Group, welcomed the audience and gave a short background to the issue. As a former republican prisoner he said that the project was never about creating a trophy but was rather about 'ensuring that a place of history can be used in a progressive and beneficial way'.

Patrick Cooke, curator of Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin, described the experiences he has come through in his work there since 1986. He spoke of the difficulties of handling the history of such an emotive site, the issue of revisionism, the 'intense cauldron of bitterness' which existed after the civil war, the execution of the 1916 Rising leaders, and how they at Kilmainham agreed to present the facts, the truth of what happened there and allow visitors to make up their own minds. In his own words 'The raw reality of that building is the historic truth'.

Patrick described the voluntary work of the Restoration Society in the 1960s which led to the important museum which now exists. They set about collecting memorabilia and artefacts which now form parts of the impressive exhibition which visitors can view on the museum tour.

The huge success of Kilmainham Gaol Museum is evident from the level of interest in the site, both nationally and internationally. When it opened in 1986 some 14,000 people visited the site. Now one of the top tourist attractions in Dublin, Patrick in-



**"...ensuring that a place of history can be used in a progressive and beneficial way"**

formed us that there are tens of thousands of visitors passing through its gates every year.

The next speaker was Margaret Edwards from the Tower Museum in Derry. Under the stewardship of Derry City Council, this project has now become a major tourist attraction which also has had its difficulties in arriving at agreement in how it should present the city's history.

Margaret spoke about the exhibitions on the siege of Derry, the world wars, partition and emigration. A film is shown which documents the history right up till 1992 and there is ongoing work to update this even further. This project assists people in gaining an understanding of the city's history and as Margaret states 'The educational role of the exhibition and the whole museum context cannot be over-estimated'.

Louise Purbrick from the University of Brighton was the next contributor who spoke about different contested historical sites such as the Rangariri Battlefield in New Zealand and the Stasi Prison site in Germany. She also made reference to a project in London where there is an exhibition called 'Pottery of the Interned.' These are works by interned foreign nationals currently imprisoned in Belmarsh Prison. Louise suggested that it might be appropriate to take such an exhibition to be shown at the Long Kesh/Maze site at some future point given that this is also 'a space where people were once interned.'

Adding further to the debate, Alan Mc Bride, a north Belfast youth worker, spoke about how he felt about the preservation of the Maze/Long Kesh site as



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:**  
**John Ross and Ciaran Mackle, Martina Purdy and Mark Thompson, Mick Beyers and Paul Arthur; Paul Butler, Louise Purbrick and Alan McBride; Rosie McCorley; Roy Garland and Alan Maitland; Patrick Cooke**

someone who had lost family members in the Shankill bomb. He feels strongly that there should be no glorification of the conflict, however, he also sees that it is important that 'The stories should be told, they have to be told'. The focus of the discussion changed with a focus on the ICCT where Johnston Price from the Ulster People's College gave his very specific views as someone who has been working in the conflict resolution environment for a long time. He stressed the need for practical work and the inclusion of community, women, youth and ex-prisoners in an 'Institution for conflict transformation that would give us all the inspiration that would reinforce our courage to move beyond conflict.' The next contribution came from Paul Arthur from the

University of Ulster who emphasised the need for truth-telling and stated that the ICCT must grapple with the problem of 'complex truth'. His view is that part of the agenda of the ICCT would be dealing with the need to 'revision and reformulate the views' that led to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. The final speaker was Mike Ritchie, director of Coiste, who gave an overview of the proposals which Coiste has put forward for the prison site and the ICCT. He gave a comprehensive description of the tours, visits, visitor centre, menu of tours and what is required to have the site made ready. Speaking about the ICCT he recommended that this be 'a new iconic building that should be a way of interpreting the transformation that has happened.' The debate was thrown open

then to the floor to allow the audience the opportunity to state their views. This was a lively and sometimes controversial discussion which could have gone on far beyond our allotted time but finally had to be brought to a close. In terms of the process of widening the debate on the future of the Long Kesh/Maze site and the establishment of an ICCT, this seminar was hugely successful in achieving that. This article gives only a very abbreviated flavour of the contributions made on that day but, for those interested in reading more, the PNB team will be publishing a transcript of the proceedings which will be available at a later date. Anyone wishing to receive a copy of that when available should contact the Coiste office in Belfast.

# Roads to Recovery

**R**oads to Recovery was the title of a conference organised under Coiste's Processes of Nation Building (PNB) programme. The conference, held in the Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle, Co Down on the 4-5 April, sought to bring together individuals and organisations working on behalf of victims and survivors of the conflict from all shades of political opinion and none. An invite was extended to the widest possible range of groups and we were delighted with the response.

The primary purpose of the event was simply to provide a neutral venue where people from communities across the island and beyond could come together to state how they have been impacted by the conflict, what they feel is needed to assist recovery, and how they may be able to assist others, drawing upon their own experience. We didn't set out to make any big statements by the conference or to come up with dramatic revelations or miracle solutions. Rather, it was an attempt to simply allow people from very different political, religious and cultural backgrounds to come together and share with others their very different life experiences.

To that end the conference included both a time for presentations and workshops but also time for reflection and casual discussion - an opportunity for people to meet one another for the first time and to do so in the

pleasant surroundings of the beach front with the Mourne Mountains in the background.

The morning session focused on the impact the conflict had on people's lives and first speaker, Wilhelm Verwoerd, gave an excellent presentation that set the mood for the entire conference. Since May 2002 Wilhelm has co-ordinated the Former Combatants Programme at the Glenree Centre for Reconciliation, which is aimed at cultivating relationships between all armed parties to the 'Troubles' and promoting dialogue between victims/survivors, ex-combatants and the wider society on the islands of Ireland and Britain. This work includes the Glenree Sustainable Peace project (see [www.glenree.ie](http://www.glenree.ie)). Before coming to Ireland in 2001, as the husband of the South African ambassador to the Republic of Ireland, Wilhelm was a philosophy lecturer at the University of Stellenbosch. He also served as a researcher on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and has co-authored, authored and edited a number of books and articles on the subject.

In his address to the conference, Wilhelm spoke of his own history of growing up in South Africa, the grandson of - NAME - most widely recognised as the architect of the apartheid regime. Wilhelm told how as a child he had been taught that his people, the Boers, had been the victims of English Imperialism



**"... a neutral venue where people from communities across the island and beyond could come together to state how they have been impacted by the conflict"**



and aggression and how a sense of victimhood was cultivated. What he didn't learn until later years was how the non-white community had also been treated. As he grew and moved to university he came into contact with that community who had a very much different experience of South Africa than he had and he struggled with the new



**TOP:** Enjoying the sunshine in Tullymore Park Forest  
**BOTTOM:** A section of the conference participants

perspectives that challenged his version of history. Eventually he himself became a member of Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) and this led to serious rifts within his own family circle. Now, in present day South Africa and the apartheid regime abolished, members of his family who fought for the old regime feel confused, let down and neg-

lected. It was a very moving account and one which prompted much discussion in the workshops which followed as the participants sought to explain and explore how the conflict had impacted them in a variety of ways. Feedback from the workshops was extremely detailed and comprehensive as well as varied.

The afternoon session had a focus on how we deal with the impact of the conflict and Oscar Daly, consultant in general adult psychiatry working in Lisburn, gave a keynote address. Since his appointment, in 1990, Oscar has had a particular clinical and research interest in the psychological problems experienced by those in the North affected by the conflict. He has worked closely with victims/survivors of the conflict and has had a number of publications in the field. He has been a member of the UK Trauma Group since its inception in 1995 and a member of both the Local Health Authority's Trauma Advisory Panel and Trauma Implementation Group. He was the lead author for the development of guidelines on the management of post traumatic stress disorder in adults published by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Belfast in 2003 and has been clinical director for



**Wilhelm Verwoerd**



**Rosie McCorley**



**Keli Harrington**



**Cathy Neilis**

psychiatry in Down Lisburn Trust since September 2002. Although very well qualified in the medical field Oscar believes that often the solution to the trauma experienced by individuals in conflict and post-conflict situations is not to be found in medical remedies but instead in a supportive community of family, friends and community. This element of his presentation struck a chord with many of the participants at the conference as they have learned from experience that often what works best is simply to be there for people, to provide an ear and reassurance. Again the workshops that followed Oscar's presentation were lively events and feedback from them and the plenary session lasted much longer than anticipated.

As we broke for the evening, the bright spring sunshine that had filled the conference room all day still shone. It added to the sense of hope that pervaded the gathering despite the weightiness of the subject being discussed. That sunshine was still there the following morning when a group of us walked up a trail in Tullymore Park Forest. We chatted, told stories, cracked jokes. No labels; just people together enjoying nature and being alive. Survivors. (A full report on feedback from the conference workshops is currently being prepared by Coiste)

## The 1981 hunger strike – *Impact and Interpretations*



TOP (I-R): Laurence McKeown, Susan McKay and Billy McQuiston

BOTTOM: Susan McKay and Séanna Walsh

On the 28 March, in conjunction with the Belfast Film Festival, Coiste hosted an event in the Queen's Film Theatre, Belfast. '81, the excellent short film written and directed by Stephen Burke and released in 1996 was screened followed by a panel discussion chaired by Susan McKay, writer and journalist. The event was one of a number organised under Coiste's PNB programme to examine the events of 1981 and how the hunger strike impacted upon communities. Séanna Walsh, a personal friend of Bobby Sands and himself a former prisoner participated on the panel as did Billy McQuiston, a former loyalist prisoner. They were joined by Liz Groves of the Falls Community Council and Mina Wardle of the Shankill Stress Clinic. PNB staff are currently transcribing an audio recording of the event which will be published later in the year.

## Fáilte Chluain Eois undetake extensive childcare project

ONE of the many children of Republican ex-prisoners who has availed of the childcare facility in Clones

The childcare facility in Clones was established by Republican ex-prisoners, particularly Rosena Brown, so that they could avail of childcare while attending training courses organised by Fáilte Chluain Eois. It first opened its doors on the 19th of June 2000. During the following year the facility began to attract members from the wider community and we obtained financial support for staffing. Local wits soon dubbed the facility 'Long Crèche'. A capital build project was planned in 2001 to provide an all day childcare centre and an application was submitted in 2001. To accommodate the facility the decision was taken to purchase an adjoining building known locally as 'The Mansion House'. Although financially straining, our hope is to turn yet another derelict building in Clones into a vibrant resource for the area.

## Tar Isteach Youth Project

THE Tar Isteach Youth Project was established to address issues unique to the children and young people from the political ex-prisoner community in the New Lodge area. As children and young people deprived of one, and sometimes two parents during the conflict, we feel a greater pain and suffering from the last thirty-five years than those children and young people who have had not had the misfortune to lose a parent for important periods of their lives. However, Tar Isteach operates an open door policy as we share life experiences common to all youth. Our group consists of 18 young people from the New Lodge area. Ten of us are children of republican ex-prisoners and six of us are related to a republican ex-prisoner. We are aged between eight and sixteen and there are an equal number of boys and girls. All of us were born in the New Lodge and have lived there all our lives.

The aims of our group are:

- To address the disadvantages suffered by our children and young people
- To address the legacy of the conflict and the impact it has on children and young people i.e imprisonment, bereavement, displacement etc
- To raise awareness around the new multicultural society and to participate in programmes with other marginalised groups
- To break the cycles of high unemployment, low income, low expectations, low self esteem and early school leaving experienced by many of our young people

Our objectives are:

- To meet the needs already articulated by our young people in the areas of identity/cultural identity
- To build their confidence and self esteem, awareness of equality and value as citizens through a series of personal development and confidence building programmes

- To involve our children and young people in the design and implementation of all our youth programmes

The major focus of our work is issue-based in that we seek out the particular identified needs of our group and attempt to understand the unique experiences that have shaped our lives due to being the children of political prisoners.

Many of our group have been directly affected by the consequences of political conflict in Ireland. The programme structure of the Tar Isteach Youth Group is broken down into a number of different headings, such as Political Development, Environmental/Community Pride, Arts, Diversionary/Team Building and Personal Development.

We were overjoyed recently when we heard that we had been nominated for an award in community development and endeavour by Coiste na nIarchimí youth officer, Dominic Adams.

The nomination was part of The Young Citizenship Awards and part of The European Year of Citizenship. Our joy increased when we learned that we had been selected to receive this award.

On 14th March 2006, I, on behalf of the group collected the award from President Mary McAleese at Áras an Uachtaráin. It was a long day but it was well worth the journey. I had the chance to meet other young people from across Ireland. I also got the opportunity to speak one on one with Mary McAleese and her husband, Martin.

I was extremely proud to represent Tar Isteach at the occasion but even more proud to represent our parents who despite all have guided and inspired us. I hope our group's success will be an encouragement to all those children of republican ex-prisoners all over Ireland.

Ciara Stanton  
Tar Isteach Youth Group

# H3 - the republican prison struggle on film

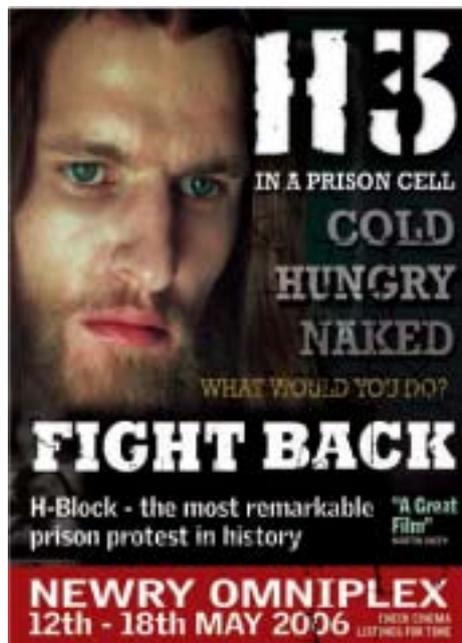
To commemorate the 25th anniversary of the 1981 Hunger Strike, as well as the 30th anniversary of the beginning of the blanket protest, the feature film H3 was re-released with a week long launch at Newry Omniplex 12-18 May.

The screenplay, co-written by two men who together spent nearly a quarter of a century imprisoned in Long Kesh, tells the story of the H-Block struggle, the most remarkable prison protest in history. Laurence McKeown spent 16 years in the H-Blocks, 4? of them on the blanket protest and 70 days on hunger strike, while Brian Campbell, who died tragically last year, spent 7? years in the H-Blocks, from 1986-1993.

H3 brings to life the unbelievable existence of the blanketmen - the horrific conditions of damp, filthy cells with walls smattered in shite, as well as the moments of camaraderie and craic, the sing songs, story telling and black humor. In this way the film documents not only the events leading up to the hunger strikes but also republican culture. All revolutionary movements have a revolutionary culture and the republican movement is no exception. Expressions of this distinct culture can be found in various creative forms such as poems, plays, music, literature as well as film.

These expressions contradict the stereotypical depictions of volunteers as hard individuals with no emotions and no thoughts other than of armed struggle. By extension, creative art forms serve to counteract the distortion the government and media exercise in their treatment of marginalized peoples and their political struggles. For revolutionary movements the medium of film is a tremendous resource which presents a fuller picture of the conditions and struggles of oppressed peoples. In H3 the full brutalities of the prison guards and British administration are revealed, as well as the courage, conviction and heroism of the political prisoners. As an educational resource film is capable of going further than oth-

er educational materials in the ability to recreate events and reveal emotions. As such revolutionary films can generate a spirited awareness in those who did not directly experience oppressive measures or who were too young to remember such events. In this way feature films produced with the intention of sharing the politic and perspective of those voices previously silenced can be a vital catalyst for raising awareness and politicization. For this rich medium governments have little use; they cannot



face the truths that revolutionary film reveals. Gerry Kelly MLA, who participated in poetry workshops whilst imprisoned in Long Kesh and later had a book of poems published, understands the utility of such cultural, artistic expressions to the larger republican struggle, "As active republicans we know what our policies, strategies, and tactics are, however struggle to bring about wide-sweeping change within society must of necessity involve a cultural component and we need to disseminate republican thoughts and ideals through a range of media.

H3 is excellent for that purpose. You identify with the characters. You start to see life through their eyes and involve yourself in the debates they are having - as well as the jokes

and the banter. You're there in the middle of the H-Blocks with them. You laugh with them. You feel fear with them. Anyone who hasn't seen the film should go and see it. Anyone who has seen it should go again just to remind themselves what it was all about and what we came through."

Having invested seven years in the creation of H3 Laurence McKeown understands too well the economic difficulties that arise from trying to produce and distribute a film of this nature. However McKeown feels it well worth the effort, "You go and watch a documentary about Cuba, of Fidel and Che in the Sierra Maestra, and you're intrigued by what is before your eyes. You watch a film such as the Battle of Algiers and you immediately relate to the anti-colonial struggle it depicts and the challenges facing the insurrectionists there, so to be able to go into the Omniplex cinema in Newry and watch on the big screen a film about the blanket protest and hunger strikes written by republicans in the course of our struggle is a significant indicator of just what can be achieved if we put our minds to it."

In 2001 H3 premiered at The Galway Film Festival to critical acclaim. One film critic wrote, "H3 is a cry from the heart that transcends the party political to embrace the truly human." The Irish Times described it as, "An accomplished, emotionally powerful drama." And actor Martin Sheen (Apocalypse Now) noted H3 is, "A great film".

In 2002 H3 won the award for best screenplay at the Avanca Film Festival (Portugal) in addition to the prestigious Gold Rosa Camuna Award from the Bergamo Film Meeting (Italy). Following the example of those in Newry/South Armagh, anyone interested in having the film screened in their local cinema should approach venue managers to make arrangements and then contact Brendan (Bik) McFarlane of the 1981 25th Anniversary Committee on 02890 740817 to obtain a film reel.

**Mick Beyers**



# Coiste youth - re-writing the 1916 Proclamation

**A**

s we set off for Ti Chulainn from the Coiste Offices in Beechmount Avenue on Wednesday morning, 19th April, the sun was shining bright. I watched the excited faces of those children for whom this was their first residential. Others, those more experienced in such matters, took it in their stride. We journeyed onwards and within an hour the green hills of South Armagh were replacing the brick and concrete buildings of Belfast. As we hopped off the bus at Ti Chulainn Heritage and Cultural Centre, Margaret was there to greet us, and shortly afterwards the Dundalk, Tyrone, Armagh, Newry and Derry contingents arrived in also. 35 children from 10 to 17 years of age (the majority directly related to republican ex-prisoners) and



8 leaders were there to discuss the 1916 Easter Proclamation and events of the Easter Rising. Before this however, Conor Murphy, MP for Newry and South Armagh, formally welcomed us all with a tale of Seteanta and the Red Branch Knights. When Conor had finished, we split into two groups, 10 to 13 year olds and 14 to 17 year olds. The older group's first task was to study the Proclamation. Kevin Murphy, an Irish history teacher took over for this. He gave out 2 copies of the Proclamation. One copy contained the full text and the other had certain words miss-

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Organisers and participants at the residential; Conor Murphy, MP for Newry and South Armagh, talks to the young people; on the tour of Kilmainham**

ing from the text. The meanings of the missing words were explained in the context of the language of 90 years ago being different from the language of today. Words like 'rapine', 'august' and 'unfettered control' had their meanings explained and the group was encouraged to replace the missing words with some of their own. Kevin went on to describe how the Proclamation was written and the influences of the French and American revolutions on the Proclamation's authors. The huge task undertaken to have it printed in time for Pearse to read on the steps of the GPO in Dublin was also

described. While the proclamation was being 're-written' the younger group began the painting of images connected to the Rising. Split into groups of two and three and armed with brushes, paints and papers they set about re-creating Connolly and Pearse. The GPO was projected onto the wall and copied onto large sheets of card. Tricolours and Fianna Flags adorned the images the kids produced. As the group painted, Rosena rushed from child to child, all the while encouraging them and regaling them with tales of how she and Countess Markiewicz

fought side by side in the GPO! Thursday morning we were on the bus again. This time for Dublin and Kilmainham Gaol. Again the sun was shining as we entered the building in which the leaders of the Rising and signatories of the Proclamation had been imprisoned and executed. I studied the faces of the children as they heard the stories from Mícheál, our tour guide, of how young people, the same ages as themselves, were imprisoned for 'crimes' such as stealing an apple in order to save one from going hungry. He also describe in graphic detail how one of the Easter 1916 leaders, James Connolly, unable to walk, was carried on a stretcher to the courtyard, tied to a chair and shot dead.

We then headed off to Phoenix Park for lunch. All around us groups of young people of different races played soccer and threw Frisbees to one another. Vastly different from the Ireland of 1916 but another example of the multi cultural society that Ireland is now becoming. The line from the Proclamation regarding 'cherishing all of the children of the nation equally' came to mind when a black couple passed by pushing their baby in a pram. Would the child's parents be subject to deportation if they were found to have entered Ireland illegally? Would the child be deprived of her parents? Would she be discriminated against because of her colour?

Soon after this we headed off to Trinity College and met up with Dublin tour guide, Shane MacThomais. He took us a short tour of Dublin city centre encompassing sites relevant to the Rising. The story of the 1913 Lock Out was told at the statue of Jim Larkin before we headed into the GPO. As we looked out the large windows onto

O'Connell Street Shane described how Connolly had his ankle shattered by a bullet wound on the first day of the Rising and how he command-



**TOP:**  
in Phoenix  
Park  
CENTRE  
**AND BOTTOM:**  
completing  
the art work  
at Tí Chulainn

ed the Volunteers from a stretcher. As the fighting ensued and Dublin buildings burned, the Volunteers evacuated the GPO before surrendering to British forces in Moore Street - not more than a few hundred yards from the GPO. We walked there next, the site of a a very busy market area where the smell of fresh fish and fruit combine to overtake your senses, Shane described how a young woman of 17, Elizabeth O'Farrell carried the letter of surrender from Pearse to the British Commander. She then carried it round the various volunteer positions in order that those commanders would accept its

authenticity.

"Why are there no statues to this woman or streets named after her?" asked Shane of the kids. A voice at the back shouted out, "Because she was a woman!"

Back in Tí Chulainn that night the most enjoyable part of the residential took place. Áine, an Irish dance teacher, taught us the céilí dance, 'The Walls Of Limerick'. After many attempts we had it mastered and off we went. Young and old(er) dancing hand in hand. The sound of feet tapping coupled with laughter.

The session continued with the kids taking it upon themselves to perform their own acts. Fionnuala and Caoilfhionn sang and danced to 'I'll tell my Ma'. Fiachra recited poetry as Aodhain played her feadóg stáin. Donal and Eoin performed the West/North Belfast Rap. Aoife slipped out for band practice and on her return entertained us with several tunes from her flute while Eugene sang his heart out. Brilliant craic throughout and smiling faces everywhere! The following morning it was time for an input of a different sort. Andrew Rawding, a former British soldier once based in South Armagh, had agreed to come along and discuss the Proclamation from the point of view of a non-Irish national now living in Ireland. The discussion was civil and courteous. Andrew said his piece in a forthright and honest fashion. The kids replied in an equally forthright and honest fashion and such was the enthusiasm displayed that the discussion ran over its allotted time and we had to cut it short.

As we packed our bags onto the bus to head home, the kids hugged each other and exchanged phone numbers. Friendships had been made and memories formed. A very worthwhile venture by Coiste na nIarchimí.

Dominic Adams  
Coiste Youth  
Outreach Worker

## Community Relations Week



Mike Ritchie, Sr Majella McCarron, Jenny Meegan, Fr Gerry Reynolds and Rosie McCorley

# Spirituality and religion

**O**n Monday evening, 24 April, Coiste hosted an event in Clonard monastery as part of Community Relations Week. Organised under Coiste's PNB programme the theme was 'spirituality and religion' - a topic that had arisen during engagements between former republican prisoners and Church members. Mike Ritchie, Director of Coiste, began the discussion with an account of his upbringing with the Scottish Presbyterian Church and his early life abroad, in Aden, Egypt and Kenya where his parents worked as missionaries. Sister Majella McCarron spoke of her work in Nigeria over the past three decades and her close personal friendship with

author and poet, Ken Sira Wiwa who was executed by the Nigerian authorities. Jenny Meegan, a lay preacher with the Methodist Church for the past 40 years, gave an account of her experience of working within the prisons as a university lecturer and how she found spirituality in the writings of prisoners which contrasted sharply with the criticisms prisoners had of organised religions.

Father Gerry Reynolds, based in Clonard monastery, told of his early days in the 1980s coming to Belfast and of the pain he felt at the division between those who profess the same Christian beliefs. All accounts were extremely moving and the points raised by the speakers taken up by the audience in the discussion that continued.

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### WORKING FOR THE REPUBLICAN EX-PRISONER COMMUNITY

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