



IRISH CHAPLAINCY SENIORS

NEWSLETTER :: SUMMER 2013

WWW.IRISHCHAPLAINCY.ORG.UK

Lasting Memories of the Kitchen Table

by Stafford Cunningham, Assistant Project Manager, ICSeniors



Thinking of the family kitchen table brings a smile to my face and a warm feeling in my heart. A short time ago I was sitting having my lunch in the London Irish Centre and realised the table reminded me of our kitchen table back home. That table is now in the third generation of the family. One of my sisters crossed the water to Berkshire in England and she now has a kitchen table in her home where my niece and nephews have this stability of the kitchen table in their daily life. It is so nice to see the tradition carrying on where they in turn will have their memories of the kitchen table – daily meals, birthday parties, relations and friends coming to visit and sit around the table, and many other events.

The different shades of colour of oak from scrubbing and wear and tear over the years and the four sugar barley legs (which reminds me of the sugar barley stick we got from the glass jar when we went to the chemist) like tree trunks carrying all the years of family celebrations and sadly, sad occasions.

The table was where the family problems were ironed out; world wide, national and local elections were planned and discussed; school home work was done; job applications and wedding plans.

KITCHEN TABLE story continues inside...

Help Stafford raise £2,000 for Irish Seniors

With a goal of raising £2,000 for the Irish Chaplaincy in Britain, Stafford Cunningham will be setting off on a personal Triathlon starting in mid-August and continuing through late September. He will be biking in Co. Mayo, swimming (possibly in Zurich!), and ending with running a Half Marathon in Windsor. Sponsors are needed. Stafford says *"The money I raise will support the needs of elderly Irish people in London. This can include buying a special bed for someone with a health problem, or helping with cleaning so a frail person can continue to live in their own home with dignity. The funds will also allow us to train volunteers to help break the loneliness of isolated Irish emigrants and bring comfort to their lives"*.

Sponsor donations of any size will be appreciated. Cheques payable to "ICB" should be sent to "Stafford's Triathlon", ICB, 50-52 Camden Sq, London NW1 9XB or contribute online at www.bit.ly/2013stafford

KITCHEN TABLE (continued from front page)

When Mass was said in the house, the table would be completely covered with a white table cloth. After the Mass the tablecloth would be covered with lace and the table set for the special "After Mass Breakfast". The table was used for Christening parties; First Communion and Confirmation parties, as well as retirement parties, 21st birthdays, - not to mention when the visitors came from overseas to visit – when the best cutlery and Waterford glass would be brought out.

On the morning my father was waked, we sat around the table, covered in the white lace tablecloth, with china cups and saucers, and reflected quietly, each with our own special memories.

Underneath of the table are two pieces of wood in the form of an "x", where you could put your feet on to rest. As I have already said the table was used for all the special occasions, but on a daily basis it was used for our daily meals. In times gone by the whole family sat around, but as time went on and the family gradually got smaller, the number of people got smaller and smaller. The table had to be extended when all were there, to seat 10 to 12, but you could close it back in again afterwards – so either 4 or 10 or 12 people could sit down around it. (You had to be careful not to catch your fingers when opening or closing!!)

I am not quite sure where the table came from. It always has been part of the family and the family history, and I hope that will continue for many years to come. The chairs were all different as were the people who sat on them. All letters and cards have been written on the table over the years, and I am sure many a whisper and many a tear has dropped on the table. When somebody would knock on the side window and come in the back door, they would automatically sit at the table. We would arrive in from school in the evenings and dump our school bags on the table. On Tuesdays, when my mother would come back from shopping and having collected the children's allowance she would have biscuits, and this was the only day of the week that we were allowed this special treat.

When the neighbours came in with their concerns or asked for support or advice, it was to the table they went – the table that saw all but said nothing!

We are now all scattered in different parts of the world but I am sure the memories of the kitchen table stay with each and every one of us. One of the memories I have is of my father sitting in his chair, at the table, enjoying

smoking his cigarette and reading the daily paper. After he sadly passed away, my mother then became the head of the family. I always feel it is at the family table that you miss those most who are no longer with you.

The table was next to the Stanley cooker so the big kettle was always on the boil ready to make the cup of tea for whoever would come in. The kitchen is heart of the home but the kitchen table is the heart of the kitchen. God blesses the people who made our table. As the words of one of Daniel O'Donnell's songs "There's always a fire in the kitchen, there's always a kettle on the hob". And, of course, there's always a table!

A version of this article appeared in the 16/8/13 issue of Ireland's Own.

IRISH SIGNS

Thank you to Joe Black for this photo of the Camberwell Old Cemetery grave of **Liam MacCarthy**, London GAA founder who lived in Southwark.



Do you know of any memorials, monuments or signs in London with interesting connections to Ireland or Irish people? Let us know, and we might feature it in a future issue of this newsletter.

Leave a Legacy

Please consider remembering the Irish Chaplaincy in Britain in your Will. To learn more about Legacies for ICB, call **020 7482 5528** and we will send you one of our new information sheets.

Make a Will

October is **FREE WILLS MONTH**. For details about how you can get a proper Will done free or at low cost visit www.freewillsmoth.org.uk or moneysavingexpert.com/family/free-cheap-wills

Re-discovering Kings Cross



by Anne Harding, ICSeniors volunteer

King's Cross is typical of any main line station. In the '50s there were the steam engines, and the train sheds around the back were busily employed. Steam was replaced in the '60s by diesel. There was great poverty at the time which drew people from all areas of life searching for jobs, housing, companionship and more. What you called the 'hookers/crookers' were all around. We all feel we know King's Cross when, in fact, the area has been and is still being transformed resulting in a massive area of public space to enjoy.

So, I took a comfortable one hour leisurely stroll from King's Cross to Angel tube that I'd like to share with you. Starting at the station opposite the German Gymnasium walk up the King's Boulevard, a new pedestrianised road with red and green hoardings, passing new buildings on your left. At the top there is a Viewing Platform well worth a climb as it overlooks the canal and Granary Square. Cross over Goods Way and continue over the canal bridge. Experience the fountains before going into the Visitor Centre in the large brick building ahead (Granary Building), now home to Central St Martin's Art College, where you can book a free guided tour. (On my visit, it was closed so "Plan B" is equally exciting!) There are lots of helpful leaflets to pick up here.



If adventurous, ask or find your way to the new Skip Garden four minutes walk away, and on the way you'll see a new indoor skate park being built under the roof of the old King's Cross Station. The Skip Garden is open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 10am to 4pm. It is an amazing, food-growing site created out of waste materials from the local construction sites, even using the skips for planting.

Retrace your steps from the Visitor Centre and go down the green steps to the Canal Towpath, turn left towards Islington on the towpath and enjoy a 30 minute stroll down the canal until you come to a tunnel. Here there are many bench seats to sit and enjoy the water, swans, or surprises all along this path. You just have to be aware that cyclists also use the path and not all of them think to use their warning bell!



At this point you have to leave the canal and continue to Angel overground. Follow the Jubilee Greenway or Islington Tunnel signs. Look out for the small blue discs on the pathway/roads which indicate you are above the tunnel and New River. Steps or a ramp lead you out at Maygood Street; the next few roads are quiet for you to enjoy before arriving at Angel tube. From Maygood Street cross to Barnesbury Road, into Dewey Road and then into Culpepper Park. Bear right in the park, cross over into Sainsbury's car park, which you walk through, and out the other side. (The Daisy Café has a good cuppa tea!) You are now in White Conduit Street. Turn left into Chapel Street Market, open daily except Monday, (the day I visited!) and described as selling fruit, veg & 'tat'. I'm told it's well worth a visit. Right again brings you into Liverpool Road and to the busy Angel Tube station.

Look out for a slightly larger blue Tunnel Disc 2002 on the ground which tells you are walking over the New River. Since my walk it was great to see the lovely transformation of the area. Methinks you'll return to this part of King's Cross more than once.

Reflections on a trip to the Holy Land

by Fernanda Mee, ICSeniors volunteer

I recently had the opportunity to visit Jerusalem and the Galilee as part of my Theology and Religious Studies degree.



My overall impression is possibly that I came back more baffled than before I went. I thought I had it all mapped out in my mind by various readings, and by following the Israeli-Arab conflict through mainstream media. However, being there proved a lot more complicated than simply reading about it. Just as I imagined, there is conflict, the claiming and re-claiming of land, the disputes over holy sites; however, the encounter with sacred space is a very concrete experience that can throw into disarray all conjectures. To touch, to smell and to look at small details, to listen to languages and prayer or to talk to people is a unique opportunity of learning but also of getting perplexed. The trip was a personal pilgrimage to me, a trip to where it all started, in a way, a sort of homecoming. The author Simon Sebag Montefiore refers to Jerusalem as 'the origin and destiny of humanity'. I was clumsily looking for clues of authenticity at the beginning of the journey but left believing. The beauty of the Galilee, the inspiration found in the solitude of the desert, the passion in the Via Dolorosa, all led me into connecting with the contradictions and frailty of human behaviour. Fr Jamal, a local Catholic priest

and academic from Bethlehem University, said he believes there is a future for Palestine and belief is a powerful feeling. At Tantur Ecumenical Centre, our base in Palestine, I learned that 'meeting God in the Holy Sepulchre, in Jerusalem or Galilee is not so much about walking where Jesus really walked, but about recognising that pilgrims over the centuries have found valid prayer in this place and have made it indeed a Holy Land.'

BEATITUDES FOR FRIENDS OF THE AGED

by Esther Mary Walker

Blessed are they who understand
My faltering step and palsied hand

Blessed are they who know
that my ears today
Must strain to catch the things they say

Blessed are they who seem to know
That my eyes are dim and my wits are slow

Blessed are they who looked away
When coffee spilled on the table today

Blessed are they with a cheery smile
Who stop for a chat for a little while

Blessed are they who never say,
"You've told that story twice today"

Blessed are they who know the ways
To bring back memories of yesterdays

Blessed are they who make it known
That I'm loved, respected, and not alone

Blessed are they who know I'm at a loss
To find the strength to carry the Cross

Blessed are they who ease the days
On my journey Home in loving ways.

copyright / year unknown

City Bridge Trust

The City of London Corporation's Charity



IRISH CATHOLIC
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
COMHDHAIL EASPAG CATTICEACH ÉIREANN

THE IRISH CHAPLAINCY IN BRITAIN
Social Justice for Irish Emigrants | Ceartas Sóisialta do Dheoraithe

PATRON Michael D. Higgins
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

Registered Charity No. 280742

50-52 Camden Square, London, NW1 9XB
Tel: 020 7482 5528

info@irishchaplancy.org.uk

The work of the Irish Chaplaincy in Britain is funded in part by grants from the Government of Ireland, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, and by the support of many generous Friends.