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COURTS Service News

NUACHT NA SEIRBHÍSE CÚIRTEANNA



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna
Courts Service

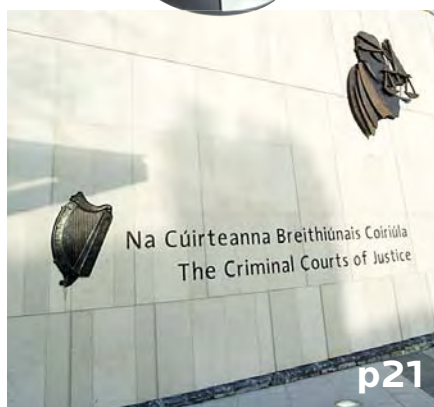
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CRIMINAL COURTS
OF JUSTICE OPEN

REVIEW OF 2009

UPDATE ON MAJOR
PROJECTS



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Welcome

A very Happy Christmas to all our readers.

Another year has come and gone, how many of us kept the resolutions we made last January? While the time seems to have flown, when you read our review of 2009 you might wonder how we fitted so much into such a short space of time. On *pages 21 -24* we look back over 2009 in words and pictures.

The Courts Service was 10 years old in November and in their respective Christmas messages *pages 4 and 5* the Chief Justice and the Chief Executive reflect on the changes which have taken place since establishment.

This Christmas issue is not all about reminiscing. We bring you news of the opening of the Criminal Courts of Justice, *pages 17 -20* and an update from TASC, the project that's examining how we do what we do and how we might do it better, on *page 11*.

Don't forget to bring your copy of Courts Service News to the family get-togethers and you can entertain the folks with the revised versions of some of their favourite Christmas songs, *pages 34 and 35*. When all the hullabaloo is over and you are trying to clear up the mess you might benefit from our tips on *page 34* and then relax with some of our reading and music suggestions on *pages 32 and 33*.

Thank you to all those who contributed articles, photographs and suggestions during the year. We are always happy to hear from our readers at courtsservicenews@courts.ie. We look forward to keeping you up to date with news and events next year.

We wish a peaceful and healthy 2010 to all.

Fiona Farrell



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna
Courts Service

Courts Service News is the magazine of the Courts Service. Contributions are drawn from a wide area and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Courts Service. The editors reserve the right to edit all contributions, including letters.

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Christmas message from the Chief Justice

As we move towards the end of another busy year I wish to acknowledge the excellent service to court users that continues to be provided at a time when the work of the courts has become more complex and challenging and resources are being reduced. It is to the credit of all Courts Service personnel that the frontline service to litigants and others has not been reduced in the current economic environment and in spite of reductions in spending and posts.

I wish to express my gratitude and that of the judiciary to all the staff of the Courts Service for their continued support for and cooperation in the administration of justice in the courts where the volume of cases continues to put increasing pressure on all resources.

To members of the Courts Service Board, and those who have served voluntarily on committees, I am also grateful for their continued input, support and ideas. It is a particular pleasure as Chairman of the Board to end the year on a happy note with the opening of the Criminal Courts complex. It reflects all that is positive, innovative and modern about the courts and the service citizens are entitled to receive.

I acknowledge all the support we receive from the many facets of the legal profession and the wider justice community for the work of the courts.

I extend my gratitude to all who work in and around the courts, not just for the year past, but for the ten years since the Courts Service was established. In doing so I am mindful of the great challenges which face us all in the New Year.

I wish you all the happiness of the Christmas season and hope it is both a peaceful and a joyful one. As we face into a New Year in difficult times I hope it will prove for all a fulfilling one nonetheless.

John Murray
Chief Justice of Ireland



Christmas Message from the CEO

As I approach the first anniversary of my appointment as Chief Executive Officer I would like to thank all those staff who gave me such a warm welcome during my visits to many offices throughout the year - a year that I acknowledge has been difficult both from a personal perspective and a work perspective.

As another year slips by and we head into the holiday season, catch up with family and friends, and remember those who are no longer with us, I would like to mention the challenges the organisation has faced over the past 12 months. In doing so I am mindful of the dedication and professionalism of the staff, who on a daily basis support the administration of justice. It is now just over 10 years since the Courts Service was established. Ten years of modernisation and change. Ten years in which the staff have not been found wanting or lacking in terms of embracing change, modernisation and improving public services.

Our major review project, TASC, will complete its work in the near future. I acknowledge the contribution that so many staff have made to the various project teams established to review how we can deliver better services and to propose how best we can restructure the organisation, not only to make it a better place to work but to deliver improved value for money and improve performance.

The Service cannot afford to stand still and must evolve to meet the needs of a rapidly changing environment. The challenging financial environment gives greater impetus to the need to ensure that our structures, operations, processes, utilisation of technology and deployment of resources are as efficient and effective as possible and that we are best placed to meet the challenges head on.

Public service can often be taken for granted and go unrecognised in terms of public comment. It is during these difficult times that I would again express my deep gratitude to all the staff for their continued dedication and adherence to the highest of standards.

I extend to the members of the judiciary, the Board, members of the legal profession, colleagues of the justice community and agencies every good wish for the season and a heart felt thanks for your ongoing co-operation and support of the Courts Service throughout the year.

Finally I wish the staff of the Service, their families and friends, a very happy and peaceful Christmas and a healthy 2010.

Brendan Ryan
Chief Executive Officer

Youghal District Court Office Move

Youghal District Court Office is now located behind Youghal Courthouse, Market Square, Youghal. The new address is Quay Lane, Youghal, Co. Cork.

Sittings of Cootehill District Court transferred to Cavan

Sittings of Cootehill District Court have been transferred to the Courthouse, Cavan, with effect from 24th November 2009. Cootehill District Court will continue to sit on the 4th Tuesday of each month (except the usual vacation periods) in Cavan Courthouse.

Availability of plain copies of Supreme and High Court orders by email

Attested copy orders of the Supreme Court and of the High Court are required by practitioners for various purposes. However, if a copy order is required for purposes such as the taxation of costs, lodging papers in court for a hearing or simply for record purposes, a plain copy will usually suffice.

The Central Office will supply a plain copy of any Supreme or High Court orders perfected on or after 11th January 2008 in electronic, read-only format to any solicitor who is on record for any party in the case in which the order was made. Plain copies will be supplied as email attachments and can be printed or saved to an electronic file management system.

Practitioners should, in the first instance, check the "High Court Search" facility on the Courts Service website (www.courts.ie) to ensure that the order sought has been perfected. If so, a plain copy of an order will be supplied by the Central Office on receipt of an email containing the following four pieces of information:

- 1.- **The name of the firm requesting the order**
- 2.- **The party for whom the firm requesting the order is on record**
- 3.- **The record number of the case**
- 4.- **The date on which the order was made and perfected**

Information about certain cases, such as in camera cases or cases in the Asylum List, is not available on the website. Applications for copy orders in those cases will be dealt with without requiring the date of perfection to be recited. Orders which are available will be sent by return e-mail or, if not perfected, will be referred by Central Office staff to the relevant registrar.

Email requests that do not contain all of the above information can neither be acted on nor responded to. Email requests should be sent to HighCourtBespeaks@courts.ie

Actions for Possession and Well-Charging Relief

Circuit Court Rules (Actions for Possession and Well-Charging Relief) 2009 came into operation on 8th July last. These Rules apply to proceedings for either (a) recovery of possession of any land on foot of a legal mortgage, or (b) an order declaring the amount due on foot of a mortgage to be well charged on land.

Such proceedings are to be taken by a new form of Civil Bill which, on being issued, will be assigned a return date before the County Registrar. A claim must be verified on affidavit and a copy of that affidavit, together with copy exhibits, must be served with the Civil Bill. Where proceedings are being defended, an appearance must be lodged and a replying affidavit filed and served on the plaintiff.

The Rules set out the various orders which the County Registrar can make on the return date or on any adjournment from that date. These include an order for service on any person other than the defendant(s), an order enlarging

time for entry of an appearance and an order for possession in circumstances where an appearance has not been entered or a replying affidavit disclosing a prima facie defence has not been filed or delivered. The County Registrar can give directions and fix time limits for the filing of further affidavits.

Where a replying affidavit disclosing a prima facie defence has been filed, the County Registrar must transfer the Civil Bill to the judge's list. On the hearing of any Civil Bill, the judge can give judgement or can adjourn the proceedings for plenary hearing.

On 12th November last, the President of the Circuit Court issued a Practice Direction in relation to the operation of these Rules insofar as they concern actions for possession. The Practice Direction provides that, in proceedings for possession of land on foot of a legal mortgage or charge, the return date for the Civil Bill must be not less than eight weeks from the date of issue. Unless

the defendant consents, no order for possession is to be made on the return date and the proceedings are to be adjourned to such date as the County Registrar considers just in the circumstances. A letter to this effect is to be served with the Civil Bill. The letter must also inform the defendant of the importance of attending before the County Registrar should he/she wish to make any representations concerning the proceedings. The defendant should also be informed that a replying affidavit is not required where he/she does not intend to defend the proceedings.

The Practice Direction also provides that where a defendant is not present in court or represented on the return date, the plaintiff should notify the defendant by letter of the adjournment in such manner as the County Registrar may direct.

The Practice Direction (CC11) is available on the Courts Service website (www.courts.ie) ■

New Legislation Facilitates Opening of Criminal Courts of Justice

Legislation has been enacted to facilitate the opening of the Criminal Courts of Justice. The Court and Court Officers Act, 2009 which was signed into law by the President on the 24th November last comprises three main parts.

In Part 2 of the Act, provision is made to allow a person to be placed in temporary custody to facilitate (a) a court appearance by that person, or (b) the participation of that person, as a witness or in another capacity, in a court hearing involving him or her. A prisoner can be placed in the temporary custody of An Garda Síochána while a person lawfully in the custody of An Garda Síochána can be placed in the temporary custody of a prison governor.

Part 3 allows the Courts Service to establish a combined court office. The Courts Service can designate two or more court offices to form part of a combined

court office. For the purposes of the Act, a court office is an office of, or attached to the (a) Supreme Court, (b) High Court, (c) President of the High Court, (d) Circuit Court, or (e) District Court.

The Courts Service can specify the business which can be transacted in a combined court office and can appoint a member of staff or a county registrar to be the office manager.

Section 22 of the Criminal Procedure Act 1967 and section 24 of the Petty Sessions (Ireland) Act 1851 are amended in Part 4 of the Act to allow a district court clerk to take a bail recognisance where a person charged before the court or an appellant can meet bail conditions at the sitting of the court.

New Act to reform and modernise Irish land law

A joint project between the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Law Reform Commission has resulted in a new Act which provides for a comprehensive reform and modernisation of land law and conveyancing law in Ireland.

The Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Act, 2009 was signed into law in July 2009 with many of its provisions coming into effect on 1st December. The Act provides for the repeal – in whole or in part – of about 150 pre-1922 statutes and their replacement (where appropriate) with statutory provisions more suited to modern conditions. It also repeals certain provisions in Acts of the Oireachtas which will no longer be required.

Apart from these statutory provision, much current law and practice relating to land ownership and land transactions is based on the system introduced into Ireland by the Normans from the 12th century onwards. A key feature was the feudal notion of land tenure whereby all land was held from the Crown. The Act abolishes feudal tenure in so far as it survives and updates the law relating to land ownership. It also abolishes various common law rules resulting from court decisions and conveyancing practices over the centuries. Other changes include significant amendments in the area of appurtenant rights (which allow one landowner to do something on a neighbour's land or entitle that landowner to prevent the neighbour from doing something), judgment mortgages and lis pendens.

In relation to mortgages, the Act assimilates the law relating to unregistered land with registered land by making a charge the sole method of creating a legal mortgage. Mortgages by conveyance or assignment of the borrower's estate or interest in the land or by demise in the case of leasehold land are abolished. The Act also deals with the powers and rights of mortgagors (borrowers) and the obligations, powers and rights of mortgagees (lenders). Greater protections are introduced for mortgagors in relation to the enforcement by mortgagees of housing loan mortgages.

Some practical effects of the amendments introduced by the new Act include the need for major changes to Land Registry Rules, Forms and Practices. The new Land Registry Rules, Practice Directions and Legal Office Notices, when available, will be published on the Property Registry Authority website (www.prai.ie).

The registration of judgment mortgages is dealt with in sections 115 to 119 of the Act. The form of judgment mortgage affidavit has been prescribed in the new Land Registry and Registry of Deeds Rules. The original affidavit, when certified in the appropriate court office,

must be lodged in Land Registry or Registry of Deeds as appropriate.

Part 12 of the Act makes provision for the Lis Pendens procedure. Section 121 sets out the types of actions or proceedings which may be registered as a lis pendens. Section 123 provides that a court may make an order to vacate a lis pendens on application by (a) the person on whose application it was registered, or (b) any person affected by it, on notice to the person on whose application it was registered (i) where the action has been discontinued or determined, or (ii) where the court is satisfied that there has been an unreasonable delay in prosecuting the action or the action is not being prosecuted bona fide. The Second Schedule of the Courts and Court Officers Act, 1995 has been amended to authorise county registrars to make an order under section 123 in respect of actions in the Circuit Court.

Rules of Court have been prepared to facilitate the operation of the Act in respect of each jurisdiction.

The Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Act 2009 is available on www.irishstatutebook.ie ■

Major work continues on courthouses despite economic downturn

The reduced funding available has not meant that all is quiet on the buildings front.

Shay Kirk, Principal Officer in the Courts Service Buildings Unit has much positive news about the busy year that's coming to a close:

We continued to progress the Capital Building programme with major work being undertaken on a number of courthouses throughout the country.

Kilkenny courthouse is being refurbished and extended to provide 4 courtrooms with all the necessary ancillary accommodation required to meet the needs of judiciary, staff and all court users well into the future. It is expected that work on this project will be completed in April/May 2010.

Work on the refurbishment of **Monaghan** courthouse is expected to be completed by the end of 2010. A new courthouse in **Kilmallock, Co. Limerick** is part of a joint development with Limerick County Council to provide a local area office, a library and a courthouse. Court sittings commenced in the new courthouse in September. The new facility has a modern courtroom with state of the art technology, accommodation for the judge, court clerk, legal practitioners, all court users and separate holding cells for prisoners.

Work will be completed by the end of 2009 on new court facilities in **Gorey, Co. Wexford** similar to those provided in Kilmallock. This project was developed as part of a joint development with Wexford County Council to provide accommodation for the local authority and a number of State agencies.

Upgrading works took place at **Virginia** courthouse and in **Killarney** where the courthouse was in very poor condition. Substantial works were carried out which will facilitate the continued use of the building for the foreseeable future.

Work was recently completed on the provision of new office accommodation in **Youghal**. New temporary office accommodation

was also provided for the staff of the District Courts in **Limerick** and **Roscommon** as the old offices were over-crowded and lacked proper facilities.

Planning work is continuing on a number of major capital projects at **Mullingar, Wexford** and **Waterford**. The Mullingar project is at tender stage and plans are being prepared for both Wexford and Waterford. It is hoped, subject to funding, that both Wexford and Waterford will be progressed further in the course of 2010. It was also hoped that funding will be available in 2010 to commence work on the Mullingar project.

The opening of the Criminal Courts of Justice building will facilitate the re-allocation of courtrooms in the Four Courts. Rental accommodation at the Kings Inns and the Distillery Building will be vacated with sittings transferring to dedicated courtrooms in the Four Courts and Bridewell Courts. The Courts Service proposes to vacate the Bow Street building in the course of 2010.

A detailed Business Case for the redevelopment of the Four Courts as a Civil Courts Campus was recently submitted to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform for approval. This project will be a major undertaking and the work will have to be phased over a number of years to avoid disruption to court business.

While planning had been underway at a number of smaller venues, the economic downturn and the reduction in capital funding available means that a number of these smaller projects are on hold pending a review of court venues throughout the country. This review is being undertaken as part of the Transforming Administration and Structures in the Courts (TASC) programme with a view to making the most effective use of our financial and staff resources. Any proposals arising from this review will require the approval of the Courts Service Board. ■



Picts. by Christian Richters

Improving statistical information on the work of the courts

A new section on the Courts Service website will facilitate the publication of improved information on the work of the courts on a regular basis. Until now, statistics were published as part of the Courts Service Annual Report. This meant that information was only made available in July.

"This will be of particular assistance to those interested in commercial matters", says Helen Priestley of the Courts Service Information Office. "We will publish information on a quarterly basis on matters such as possession and mortgage suits. We've recently added this information for the first six months of 2009".

"Most people are looking for statistics relating to a particular topic so where possible we've grouped information under 'topics' e.g. murder, rape, personal injury,

commercial, bankruptcy. We've also included a 'trends' section so users can see the increases and decreases in certain types of cases over the years".

"We provide a breakdown of certain Circuit Court cases from around the country and a link back to our Annual Report where

information on previous years can be found".

"This is an ongoing process", Helen says. "We welcome suggestions from court users about information they would like to see included in our new statistics section".



Visit the new statistics section on www.courts.ie.
Send any comments to sitecomments@courts.ie

Courts busy possessions on the increase

Applications for possession to the Circuit Court and the High Court continue to increase as Courts Service figures for the third quarter of 2009 illustrate.

The number of new cases for possession of lands and/or premises issued in the High Court to 30th September 2009 increased from 465 in 2008 to 798, an increase of 58%. Possession orders increased in the same period from 153 in 2008 to 193, an increase of 79%. Mortgages declared well charged decreased from 28 in 2008 to 23 while new cases for well charging relief decreased to 53 from 66 in 2008.

In the Circuit Court orders for possession increased for residential premises from 113 in 2008 to 214 with non residential premises accounting for 242 orders compared to 143 in 2008.

The figures in respect of possession orders do not reflect the full picture on persons losing their property as most mortgage contracts permit the lender to foreclose for non-payment of instalment without a court order. Likewise the figures do not refer to 'home repossessions' exclusively. Orders made by the Courts are for repossession of any type of property. They all relate to an interest in real property, but the property in question

could be a family home, a factory, a farm or a building site.

It's important to note that not all applications for a possession order arise from debt. Applications can arise from a number of different situations, and the exact basis of the claim may not emerge until the proceedings reach an advanced stage whereas the Courts Service data is captured at the point of issue of the summons.

The latest figures are available on the Courts Service website (www.courts.ie)

TASC review

continues at great pace

The TASC review got underway a number of months ago. The project is looking at what we do in the Courts Service, how we do it and what alternative ways we might employ to deliver our services. Project Sponsor, **Seán Quigley**, introduced TASC in the July issue of *Courts Service News*. He gave us an update in October and here gives us further news of the progress being made:

TASC is without doubt the most extensive review ever undertaken into how we deliver our services and how we could restructure the organisation to achieve a better service for court users, to be a better place to work, to improve performance and deliver improved value for money. A number of areas have been examined over recent months. In this regard a number of projects were established under the umbrella of the TASC programme, as follows:

1. Review of court venues
2. Review of role of the County Registrar
3. Service delivery model
4. Resource allocation
5. Human resource strategy

The work of this phase of the programme was to examine a range of options within the overall vision and corporate objectives set out in the Strategic Plan 2008-2011 and also take account of the current challenging economic environment. During the course of the past few

months a huge amount of work has been done by a large number of managers and staff across the Courts Service. The Project Managers and Project Teams in particular have

given very generously of their time, on top of an already busy work schedule, and have made an enormous contribution to

progressing this review. Also the cooperation received from staff in the offices that took part in the two week pilot study, during October, as part of the Resource Allocation project, is very much appreciated.

A very ambitious challenge was set in taking on this exercise, against a very tight time frame. Reports of the findings and recommendations have now been produced and these are now being considered by the TASC Programme Board and the Senior Management Team.

The TASC Programme Board met in November to give initial consideration to the findings. The Senior Management Team met in

early December to consider the findings. It is ultimately a matter for the Senior Management Team to sign-off on the recommendations that will go to the Board.

“ The cooperation received from staff in the offices that took part in the two week pilot study [...], is very much appreciated.”

A briefing will be given to the Courts Service Board at its meeting in December, with the final report due to be submitted to the Board in early 2010. As soon as possible after the Board meeting, we will update all staff and other stakeholders regarding the findings and recommendations emerging from the projects.

We are preparing a comprehensive communications plan to inform our approach to communicating with all stakeholders. We will be operating on the basis that we will make information available as soon as possible. ■

Courts Accounting System

continues to improve customer service

A recipient of the Taoiseach's Public Service Excellence award in 2008, the Courts Accounting System (CAS) continues to deliver major benefits to court users and also is delivering significant efficiency gains for the organisation. As we go to press the final office in the country-wide roll out of the system has just come on stream. This is quite an achievement given the logistics of implementing the system and training staff in 49 court offices around the country. With the last of the court offices now on board, we asked Project Manager, **Shay Keary** and Office Manager, **Hilda McDermott**, to remind us of the difference the new system is making.

One of the major improvements brought about by the new system is the speedy provision of family law maintenance payments. Traditionally payments were made by cheque which had to be hand written in local offices. As part of the Courts Accounting Project we established a central payments office, the 'Courts Accounts Office'. This allowed us to remove the task of writing cheques from the local court staff and shortened the time taken to make payments. As the roll-out progressed, the number of people receiving maintenance payments from the Courts Accounts Office continued to rise. The office is now issuing over 4,000 maintenance payments every week.

The majority of people (84%) now opt to have payments made directly to their bank accounts. This number grew from 65% last year and we are proactively promoting this payment facility to those currently being paid by cheque.

The Courts Accounts Office has also made significant improvements in the collection of fines. The online fines payment facility available on www.courts.ie continues to be very successful with the number of customers availing of the facility increasing steadily. By mid November 14,500 customers have paid over €3.7m in fines online. The online fines payment facility is now available for fines payable in all District Court offices.

In mid August we commenced sending out weekly follow-up reminder notices to defendants with unpaid fines. By mid November this resulted in the payment of over €0.54m in fines from 1,424 individuals.

Support for court staff operating CAS is very important for the ongoing success of the system. The CAS Helpdesk deals with a large number of queries by phone and e-mail every day. Training sessions are held every month in Phoenix House in Dublin.

We are very pleased that the rollout of CAS to all District Court offices is now complete and we look forward to continuing to provide support to all users of the system.

“One of the major improvements brought about by the new system is the speedy provision of family law maintenance payments”

We would like to thank the managers and staff of all District Court Offices for their continued co-operation and support which has resulted in the successful roll out and operation of the Courts Accounting System. ■

Law Reform Commission

considers legal aspects of family relationships

The Law Reform Commission has long been engaged in a project to reform family law. To date several matters have come under the spotlight including the rights and duties of cohabitants, family law courts and the implementation in Ireland of a number of Hague Conventions in the family law area. The Commission's most recent contribution is a consultation paper examining the rights and duties of fathers in relation to guardianship, custody and access to their children and the rights and duties (if any) of grandparents.

Among the interesting provisional recommendations in the paper is one that instead of the current legal terms 'guardianship', 'custody' and 'access', the law should use the terms 'parental responsibility', 'day-to-day care' and 'contact' to give a clearer indication of what is actually involved in this part of family law. The idea is to remove any misunderstanding that parents might have rights involving their children without corresponding responsibilities.

The Commission proposes a statutory presumption that a non-marital father be granted an order for guardianship

(parental responsibility) unless to do so would be contrary to the best interests of the child or would jeopardise the welfare of the child. Submissions are invited on whether automatic guardianship for all fathers should be introduced.

The distinction between birth registration and the allocation of guardianship should remain. This would be accompanied by provisions to encourage greater joint registration of births.

In respect of access the Commission recommends the removal of the current two stage application procedure by members of the extended family. Submissions are invited on whether the categories of persons who can apply for access should be expanded to include persons with a genuine (bona fide) interest.

As in all matters concerning children, the Commission regards the welfare and the best interests of the child as the primary consideration in the context of its Consultation Paper. It suggests that persons other than parents should be able to apply for custody of a child where the parents are unwilling or unable to exercise their responsibilities.

Submissions are invited as to whether the wishes of the child should be considered in making a decision on an application for access by a member of the child's extended family. The Commission also invites submissions on whether it would be appropriate to develop a procedure to extend guardianship to a step-parent.

The Consultation Paper *Legal Aspects of Family Relationships* is available on www.lawreform.ie ■

“The Commission recognises that children have rights and that these rights must be respected and protected in so far as is possible. However, the Commission is also aware that the Constitution and other legal instruments accord rights and responsibilities to parents as well. Therefore any discussion on the legal aspects of family relationships requires a balancing of those rights”
Law Reform Commission

ADDITIONAL REPORTS ON FAMILY LAW CASES TO BE MADE AVAILABLE

As part of the Courts Service project to report on family law over 150 reports were published in *Family Law Matters*. They covered all court jurisdictions and included matters across the entire family law spectrum including divorce, judicial separation, nullity, guardianship, custody, access, maintenance and partition.

Additional reports collected during the project will be available on the Courts Service website (www.courts.ie) in the coming

weeks. As with *Family Law Matters* these cases cover a variety of issues across all court jurisdictions.

The Courts Service took advantage of the relaxation of the 'in camera' rule following the enactment of the Civil Liability and Courts Act, 2004 to make information available for legal practitioners, the media, researchers and the public on the workings of our family law courts. For the first time, reports of the many issues of concern to litigants

and the attempts by judges to resolve them were made available. The project was conducted without identifying the parties in the cases thus protecting the privacy of the families involved. The reports assisted in dispelling some of the misapprehensions surrounding the application family law.

All issues of *Family Law Matters* are available on www.courts.ie ■

Mock Trial winners

scoop international prize

The winners of the 2009 National Mock Trial Competition, Our Lady's College, Greenhills, Drogheda were recently crowned champions of a prestigious international competition. The 'Empire State Invitational Tournament', regarded as the biggest prize in the world of mock trial competitions, was staged in New York in October. Second level school teams from across the United States competed against teams from countries worldwide with the Irish team emerging victorious.

The competition was fierce with the Irish team defeating New Jersey State Champions, Mainland Regional High School in the final. The final decision was made by 13 attorneys serving as jurors. The Chief Justice of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York, the Honorable Raymond J. Dearie presided over the round. "In addition to their incredible

talent, the Irish girls were the heart and soul of this year's Empire," said Assistant Tournament Director David John Hommel, "from their passion in the courtroom, to their enthusiasm on the cruise and at the hotel, this group is truly special".

School Principal, Pdraig O Broin said that parents, pupils and staff at the school were delighted to learn of the victory and added "it goes to show what can be done when dedication, team work, commitment and ability are harnessed effectively".

Our Lady's College earned the right to represent Ireland after winning the annual transition year mock trials competition in May which was organised by Public

Access to Law (P.A.L.) and supported by the Courts Service. Our Lady's College defeated St. Conleth's College Dublin in the final which was judged by Mr. Justice Peter Kelly, Mr. Justice Michael Peart and Judge Mary Collins.

Pictured are the victorious team with their teachers and Chief Justice of the EDNY, Honorable Raymond J. Dearie. ■



NEW ADVOCACY COMPETITION A WINNER WITH THIRD LEVEL STUDENTS

The latest in a line of student law competitions had a very successful start in courthouses around the country recently. The inaugural All-Ireland Advocacy Challenge 'The Advocate' was organised by solicitors McCann FitzGerald in association with the Courts Service and the Northern Ireland Court Service.

Third level students were invited to compete for a prize fund of €3,500 with €2,000 going to the winning team. The aim of the 'Advocacy Challenge' is to promote the articulation of legal responses to the various business issues faced by corporates. It gives students a good opportunity to hone their skills as they prepare for careers in law and business.

The first heats of the competition were held in courthouses in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Belfast on 13th November. Teams from NUI Maynooth, Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, University College Cork, NUI Galway and Queens University Belfast progressed to the next round in early December.



Teams in action in Dublin during the November heats



Students competing in the All-Ireland Advocacy Challenge



The Chief Justice and judges of the Superior Courts in the Round Hall of the Four Courts on the day of the recent retirement of Mr Justice Richard Johnson, as President of the High Court.

Fourth International Conference *of the International Association for Court Administration*

In excess of 200 participants representing 47 countries attended the Fourth International I.A.C.A. Conference in the historic setting of Istanbul recently. Noel A. Doherty of the Courts Service Reform & Development Directorate and Treasurer of I.A.C.A sends this report of what went on:

The outgoing President of the Association, Markus Zimmer, had drawn up a most interesting agenda and had secured the participation of a most interesting line up of panellists for the various topics under discussion. The conference was officially opened by the Honorable Sadullah Ergin, Turkey's Minister for Justice who welcomed the participants and wished them well with their conference.

Given the world recession, perhaps the most interesting topic was the impact on court and justice systems of the global financial crisis. This topic was moderated by Richard Foster, CEO, Family Court of Australia and the main speakers were the Honorable Ales Zaler, Slovenia's Minister for Justice and Mr Greg Walters, from the Administrative Office, of the United States Federal Courts. All three discussed how the current financial crisis was affecting the operation of their courts. A workshop on the same theme was very well attended and the workshop participants who spoke reflected how similar the problems are in managing with less resources. Speakers also

referred to the opportunities created by the present situation forcing public bodies to decide priorities and to focus on delivering services better.

Among other topics considered was the future role of the courthouse building. Given the importance of technology such as video conferencing and electronic evidence presentation, is the traditional courthouse design the most appropriate? We also saw how mobile courthouses work in rural areas in Central and South America.

Interesting presentations were given on the provision of alternatives to traditional dispute resolution. This looked at how such alternatives might be provided through the courts system with the Singapore model of Court Dispute Resolution (CDR), an adaptation of the mediation process, being particularly interesting.

There were also presentations on the areas of prison overcrowding in many jurisdictions and the challenge of administering justice in societies in times of war and civil strife.

Ever consider joining the Public Service Friendly Society ?



As Christmas approaches our thoughts turn to spending. Amidst all the presents and parties we can do a lot of good with our money. For example, ever think of spending some of your salary on the Public Service Friendly Society? You might need its help some day as many of its members are finding out.

"The first effects of the economic downturn began to show in 2008" says Declan O'Brien, Executive Director of the Society which has supported civil servants for over 80 years. In its recent Annual Report the Society revealed that it awarded almost €1 million by way of grants or interest-free loans to Society members in 2008. "There are many members who have been contributing to the Society for many years who may not be aware of the range of services and

supports we offer" says Declan. "They include grants for educational needs, bereavement costs, medical costs or just tight financial circumstances. The Society also assists with financial advice".

The service is completely confidential which can be a drawback when it comes to raising awareness and encouraging new members. The Society has in and around 10,000 members, which is less than a third of the civil service workforce. It would like to attract some of the remaining 66%. Membership costs 0.25% of salary (that's only 25 cent in every 100) which is deducted at source.

For more information visit the Society's website: www.psf.s.ie or telephone: 1800 778787.

Go Green this Christmas

With the festive season in full swing, presents being bought and wrapped, cards arriving in the post, the package mountain is starting to build up. This Christmas why not do your best to 'go green' and recycle as much waste as possible.

Did you know?

- Irish consumers go through an estimated 4 bottles of wine, 9.6 beer cans, 5 soft drink cans, 7.8 plastic drinks bottles and nearly 1 roll of wrapping paper PER SECOND over the festive period.
- 82,000 tonnes of packaging will be consumed.
- If all the wrapping paper was laid out side by side it would cover an area of 89 kilometres by 89 kilometres which is enough to cover half the size of Leinster!

Your local authority will tell you where your nearest recycling centres are and most county councils and local

authorities will organise an area in January where you can deposit your Christmas tree.

It's not just waste that can be recycled. We've all received at least one Christmas present that didn't excite, so instead of leaving it in the back of the wardrobe, why not drop it into your local charity shop. Crosscare have opened a Charity shop on Cathedral Street in Dublin and would be glad to take unwanted Christmas gifts. You could sell unwanted gifts on eBay and donate the money to charity.

There are lots of ways to re-use Christmas cards. Cut the picture from the front, make a small hole, add a piece of ribbon and use them next year as gift tags. Make Christmas tree decorations from them or cut the pictures from a number of cards to make a collage, laminate it and use as Christmas placemats.

So even if it's just re-using wrapping paper or donating gifts it will help to provide a greener and happier Christmas.

Courts Service Board member is new Law Society President

The new President of the Law Society is Mr. Gerard Doherty, a partner in the firm O'Reilly Doherty & Company in Finglas, Dublin. Mr. Doherty, who will serve a one year term, is a member of the Courts Service Board having been nominated by the Law Society in 2008. Educated in Mayo and Dublin, Mr. Doherty a native of Westport, graduated from UCD with a degree in law and qualified as a solicitor in 1973.



Introducing a Pantheon of Justice

Following a once in a century investment of €140 million the Courts Service unveiled the dedicated Criminal Courts of Justice (CCJ) just before the first trial was held there in late November. **Gerry Curran** previews this impressive new arrival:

April 07



Contract signing

November 08



October 09



Courts Service Board meet in new building

November 09



Hand over of building

November 09



Members of the judiciary get their first glimpse of the new courtrooms



Staff and colleagues from The Irish Prisons Service conduct a 'mock trial' to familiarise themselves with the new courtrooms

Measuring 23,000 sq metres, with 450 rooms and 22 courts, the Criminal Courts of Justice (CCJ) will hear all criminal business in the city, from every court jurisdiction – District Court, Circuit Court, Central Criminal Court, Special Criminal Court and Court of Criminal Appeal. In another first, it will house a combined court office for all criminal courts in the city.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Courts Service, Mr. Brendan Ryan BL said the CCJ will create “a future which promises a great change in the axis of activity in our capital’s legal quarter. It is the first State building of such monumental proportions to be built since 1796 – when the Four Courts were first brought into operation”.

Mr. Ryan went on to say that, “the new complex is designed in an iconic format which will come to symbolise our courts system in the 21st century – just as the Four Courts represents its great traditions”.

The CCJ’s functionality will be of great use in the delivery of courts services through the use of innovative design features. It is unique in design and concept providing facilities which more than match those which can be found anywhere in the world. It is uniquely conceived to cater for the needs and organisation of all those



-left to right : Liam Convey, Registrar, Brendan Ryan, CEO, Mr Justice Paul Carney, John Mahon, PPP Unit and Geraldine Hurley Chief Operations Officer

involved in the criminal trial process including witnesses, jurors, victims and defendants.

The complex houses state-of-the-art facilities and support services to enable the judiciary, with the staff of

Quarter, close to current court buildings, the Luas line and Heuston station. It is on the corner of Parkgate Street and Infirmary Road, an important gateway to the city’s civic and business area. Its

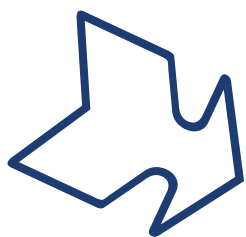
It is uniquely conceived to cater for the needs and organisation of all those involved in the criminal trial process including witnesses, jurors, victims and defendants.

the Courts Service, to introduce improved case-management and a more efficient listing of trials under one roof. The project was delivered via a Public Private Partnership and was delivered months ahead of schedule.

The CCJ is situated on a site on the western side of the city’s Legal

location follows the tradition of providing great public buildings along the river Liffey or visible from the quays.

The CCJ will attract business to and encourage regeneration of and investment in the immediate area. Four to five hundred people will work there each day.



Accommodation in the Criminal Courts of Justice an overview

Entry Area

- 'Great Hall' with sufficient circulation space for safe, comfortable access and exit
- Substantial security presence and security monitoring equipment
- Information/reception desk and separate jury reception desk

General

- Accommodation and facilities for security and jury minding personnel
- Kitchen and restaurant facilities and separate dining for juries
- Parking for prison vans and official personnel

Secure Area

- Cell accommodation for 100 prisoners
- Prisoner reception area with ancillary facilities
- Prison Officer accommodation and facilities
- Control Room and Prison Van Dock

Courts and ancillary facilities

- Sixteen jury courtrooms and six non-jury courtrooms
- Sixteen jury rooms accessible from jury courtrooms in a secure area
- Thirty one consultation rooms
- Circulation spaces for public waiting and safe and efficient access and egress from courtrooms
- Victim support suites and ancillary facilities within a secure area
- Twenty six judges chambers and ancillary facilities in a secure area
- Large jury assembly space in a secure area sufficient to cater for up to 400 people
- Facilities for prosecution witnesses (including vulnerable witnesses in a secure and reassuring area)

Professional Facilities

- Legal practitioners' rooms in a secure area with ancillary facilities including prison video link
- Accommodation and facilities in a secure area for the DPP, Prosecution Solicitors, Gardai and Probation and Welfare Service
- Media room and space for broadcast studio(s)

Staff

- Accommodation and facilities for in excess of 60 staff
- Large combined Public Office dealing with business from all criminal jurisdictions
- Meeting rooms and storage
- Bail Office

Information Technology

- Eleven courts fully equipped with technology and further courts cabled to support full technology use
- All courtrooms cabled to support video conferencing and digital audio recording
- Central communications room and local communications rooms on each floor
- Sound proof booths within technology courts and video conferencing booths adjacent to video conferencing courts
- Computer room and video link rooms for taking testimony from vulnerable witnesses.

Facilities

Entranced via a striking public plaza, the CCJ contains 22 courtrooms, enabled for video-conferencing, digital recording, and electronic display of evidence.

It has public spaces – a ‘Great Hall’ four times the size of the Round Hall in the Four Courts – first class consultation rooms and waiting areas, modern and various sizes of courtrooms and extensive facilities for jurors.

Accommodation for vulnerable witnesses, victims, and relatives are on a par with the best in the world, with greatly enhanced privacy, security and comfort. A special



Criminal Courts of Justice

children’s evidence suite has been specially designed following consultation with children’s charity Barnardos. This will allow remote, safe facilities for children giving

evidence via video conferencing.

There are extensive dedicated facilities for legal practitioners and the media.

This complex sets a new standard for criminal justice facilities in Ireland, operating with a flexibility and security which provides first class accommodation for all court users.

The Courts deal with over 400,000 criminal matters a year. Over half of these are heard in Dublin. You can read about specific criminal matters heard in Dublin in the Courts Service Annual Reports on www.courts.ie.

Background Note

- ✓ - The building is designed to concentrate all central Dublin criminal business in one serviced location. This will involve the transfer of courts and administrative offices from five jurisdictions – District, Circuit, Central, Special Criminal Court and Court of Criminal Appeal – to the new facility.
- ✓ - In particular, there was an urgent need to overcome the security and other implications of continuing with the present arrangements whereby it is necessary to transport prisoners in handcuffs through public areas from one end of the campus to the other and from public streets.
- ✓ - It proved too difficult to organise the improvement of these facilities within the fabric of the existing campus of buildings where criminal trials are held.
- ✓ - The building is designed to overcome the security, service delivery and logistical problems of running criminal trials in a number of sites dispersed throughout the Four Courts campus and central city locations.
- ✓ - The opening of this facility will result in a much improved service to all stakeholders – public, witnesses, jurors, judiciary, professionals and staff. In particular, the facilities currently available for victims, witnesses, jurors, the public and prisoners will be greatly improved in the new facilities.
- ✓ - The Courts Service believes that the effective participation of all stakeholders in the new facility, is provided for as the complex is located within the existing Legal Quarter, within short walking distance / travelling time of the Four Courts campus, and adjacent to major transport links such as the Luas, Heuston Station and major arterial bus routes.

| 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |

Reeling in...2009



As we come to the end of 2009, the year in which the **Courts Service** reached its 10th birthday, we take a look back at some of the landmark events of the year.

10th year

A major event in January was the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer, Brendan Ryan. This was followed by the introduction of a new Senior Management Team structure and the launch of the Courts Service Strategic Plan 2008-2011. The change in leadership coincided with a very changed economic environment for the country. With less money to spend and less staff employed, the Service has demonstrated a pro-active

approach to dealing with these issues while maintaining services to court users.

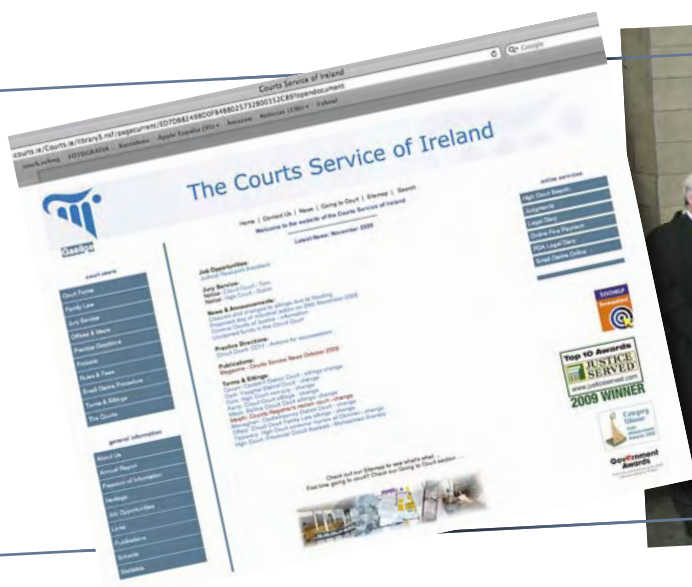
An example of this pro-active approach came with the establishment of TASC ('Transforming Administration and Structures in the Courts'). This major review of the Courts Service got underway early in the year. It is examining how we can become a more effective organisation by improving organisational performance and service delivery



10th year

and ultimately deliver improved value for money for the taxpayer. A number of individual projects were established under a variety of headings including review of court venues, review of role of the County Registrar, service delivery model, resource allocation and human resource strategy. The project has been progressing steadily during the year with groups expected to report before the end of the year. (For more details on the progress of TASC see *page 11*)

many people looking for information, was enhanced during the year. The homepage was revamped to allow an increased variety of information to be displayed. On-line services now appear together with separate sections identifying information for legal professionals and litigants generally. New sections provide improved information for those interested in family law and probate and people going to court for the first time. The website was



Value for money is never off the agenda and a review of expenditure on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) was carried out during the year by external consultants. The review concluded that value for money had been achieved in relation to our investment. Our ICT strategic plan was also reviewed to take account of general economic conditions and budgetary constraints.

We continued to meet our obligations in relation to provision of information to the public. The website, the first port of call for

acknowledged by US Company Justice Served as one of the Top 10 Court Websites in the world in July.

Over 4,000 second level students visited the Four Courts where they met a barrister and sat in on a court hearing to gain a better understanding of court procedures. This opportunity was also afforded to hundreds more students in Drogheda, Dundalk, Letterkenny, Naas, Bray, Carlow, Wexford, Galway, Sligo, Castlebar, Ennis, Limerick, Waterford, Tralee, Clonmel, Nenagh, Cork, Fermoy, Listowel, Clonakilty, Youghal and

facebook bebo

Community TASC

ICT strategic plan

On-line services

Going to Court
Family Law

10th
year

Mallow where court staff facilitated visits to courtrooms by local schools. This type of initiative allows the Courts Service to reach out to large numbers of people at little cost. Community groups studying aspects of law or working with those who have to attend court were facilitated with visits to courthouses and opportunities to discuss their experiences with judges. We saw an increase in the



number of groups from Europe and the US visiting the Four Courts this year and already have a number of bookings for next year.

April saw the launch of Going to Court a DVD and booklet for young witnesses. It was formally presented to Fergus Finlay of children's charity Barnardos by Courts Service CEO Brendan Ryan.

The Courts Service joined with Dublin City Council to host a walking tour of the legal quarter of Dublin in May. Led by historian Pat Liddy, over 700 gathered outside Phoenix House and visited Kings Inns, Green Street courthouse and the Four Courts where they were

10th
year

addressed by Mrs. Justice Susan Denham. Staff of the Information Office improvised as guides when the large group had to be broken up into more manageable numbers. Staff in the other capital opened their doors to the people of Cork on Heritage Open Day which celebrates the history of built heritage. Staff of Cork Circuit Court office doubled as tour guides for the day.

The Criminal Courts of Justice building will open for business well ahead of the original scheduled date of 2010. Rising high above the Dublin skyline this imposing structure is sure to become an iconic building. A wonderful

example of modern architecture, it is the most extensive court building to be constructed in Ireland since the Four Courts at the end of the 18th century. More details of the facilities and the business of the CCJ can be found on *page 17*.

Despite the downturn in the economy the capital building programme continued to make considerable progress. We carry a report from around the country on *page 9*.

An unprecedented number of staff retired from the Courts Service during the year taking many happy memories with them and leaving behind a legacy of commitment to customer service and professional standards at work. We wish them all happy and long retirements and look forward to welcoming them back to our retired staff functions during the year.



“[...] staff retired from the Courts Service during the year taking many happy memories with them and leaving behind a legacy of commitment to customer service”

President Johnson goes out in style

Tumultuous and *Independence* are the words to best relay the flavour of the final day on the Bench of the recently retired President of the High Court, Mr. Justice Richard Johnson. The praise for his service was certainly tumultuous and his rallying call for judicial independence remained firmly in the mind of all those present.

Attorney General Paul Gallagher said Mr. Justice Johnson always dispensed his obligations with immense distinction. He said that Judge Johnson, the son of a renowned judge, also called Richard Johnson, began his legal career in 1960 and after 27 years on the South Western Circuit became a senior counsel. In 1987, he was appointed to the Bench and in 2006 promoted to President of the High Court. He served for more than a decade on the Special Criminal Court, for the last three years as its President.

John D. Shaw, President of the Law Society said it was no secret that it had been a difficult few years for the profession and he thanked the outgoing president for the manner in which he had dealt with these matters. "It is vital for the reputation of the profession as a whole that solicitors who fail in their duties and who do not maintain high standards are dealt with appropriately. You have not been found wanting in this regard," he said.

Tributes were also paid by Michael Collins SC, Chairman of the Bar Council; John O'Malley, Dublin Solicitors' Bar Association; Brendan Ryan, Chief Executive of the Courts Service and Kevin O'Neill, High Court Principal Registrar.

With his usual quick witted humour the judge responded that, "I've got an awful lot of people to thank but of course family is the essential one. They've had to tolerate me when I am maybe not quite as placid as you people have said I am and they've had to tolerate my intolerances, my vicissitudes and my quirkiness. But fortunately they now know what a wonderful person I am which will make all the difference to them".

In his considered remarks President Johnson warned that it would be a bad day for the country if judges did not



remain independent, irrespective of the resentment and jealousy their independence produces. "If we allow the independence of the judiciary be undermined then we will have a situation where the judges will be subject to the same pressure as our TDs, councillors and planning officials are. The public do not want clever judges, they do not want brilliant judges, but they want honest judges and they want judges who they know have not been got at."

He also warned his own colleagues that the "last and most dangerous pressure of all" that could affect a judge was personal ambition and he implored them to serve without fear or favour.

President Johnson was generous in his praise of the Courts Service. "They've done a remarkable job. When they came into being ten years ago there was, to my mind, and I was part of it, a certain degree of suspicion as to what they might do, would they interfere with the independence of the judiciary or otherwise? But they've done a remarkable job".

He thanked and paid tribute to his staff, registrars, tip staff and all others involved in ensuring the administration of justice. He particularly paid tribute to An Garda Síochána Special Detective Unit and the Special Branch, by saying "the people of Ireland should thank them every day for their role against people who were basically making war on the State, civil and subversive." ■



An Taoiseach Brian Cowan, Mr Justice Nicholas Kearns, President Mary McAleese and Chief Justice, John L Murray

New President of the High Court

Mr Justice Nicholas Kearns in Áras an Uachtaráin on the occasion of his appointment by President McAleese as President of the High Court.

Retirements, Retirements, Retirements...

lots of retirements...

As we go to press we've learned of several more colleagues who have retired in recent weeks. With the assistance of their colleagues we hope to include them all in the March issue of **Courts Service News**.

Denis Noonan retires...

After a long career in the public service Denis Noonan retired recently from Clonakilty District Court. He served for forty-three years with the last sixteen spent in West Cork.

Tributes were paid to Denis on his last day in court and at a dinner party in his honour by a wide range of speakers. All recalled a friendly, helpful man whose wealth of experience will be very much missed in the Clonakilty area. Judge James Mc Nulty spoke of how he enjoyed Denis's company and friendship. "I will miss his wit and wisdom". Those sentiments were echoed by colleagues in the District Court, Courts Service Southern Regional Manager Eamonn Kiely, Superintendent Pat Maher of An Garda Síochána, Richard Barrett Chairman of the West Cork Bar Association and State Solicitor, Malachy Boohig. Denis's talents as a union representative were recalled by Tom Mc Kevitt (retired PSEU).

Many of Denis's fellow court clerks travelled to Clonakilty to celebrate with him. They included Thomas Browne (Clonmel), Mairead O'Neill (Youghal), Michael Goulding (Cork) and Aidan Mc Gale who retired himself earlier this year from Killarney



Back: Eamon Kiely, Regional Manager, Edmund Byrnes, Thomas Browne, Mairead O'Neill, Aidan Mc Gale, Michael Goulding
Front: Eileen Lehane, Denis Noonan, Bernie Leonard.

District Court (see below). Courts Service Chief Executive Brendan Ryan also joined in the tributes.

We wish Denis and his wife Josephine a long and happy retirement.

Killarney says goodbye to Aidan McGale



Aidan Mc Gale

Following a career spanning four decades Aidan McGale, Chief Clerk, Killarney District Court retired recently. Aidan began his working life with the former Post & Telegraphs Service in 1962 joining the Courts Service in 1968. He worked in the court offices of Fermoy, Tralee and Donegal before transferring to Killarney in 1977.

He started with the late District Justice John Farrell in Killarney and went on to serve with the late District Justice Humphrey Kelleher and finally with District Justice James O'Connor.

Aidan's passion, enthusiasm and knowledge of the job were the

hallmarks of his long career. His obliging nature, efficiency and good humour were widely appreciated and all court users in Kerry and beyond held him in the highest of esteem. This was obvious from the large attendance of Gardai, solicitors, Court Service staff and numerous friends and family who gathered at the Plaza Hotel, Killarney for his retirement party. Many warm and eloquent tributes were paid to him from a variety of speakers on the night. For his part Aidan recalled a long and happy time in the courts and thanked everyone he had worked with over the years.

We wish Aidan and his wife Mary and his constantly extending family a very long and happy retirement. *Sheila Daly*

Josie Duffy leaves Monaghan Circuit Court

Prior to her appointment as County Registrar in 1988, Josie Duffy practiced as a solicitor in Clones, Co Monaghan. Clones was a town deeply affected by the Troubles. There was a huge Garda presence, a very active Customs and Excise unit and the British Army on border duty. Josie was a prominent figure professionally and otherwise in the town and the stories of her dealings with the Customs in and out of Court are legendary.

On the occasion of her retirement Judge John O'Hagan led the tributes at Castleblaney Circuit Court. He described her work ethic as meticulous; he praised her organisational skills and her warmth and courtesy in dealing with judiciary, colleagues, staff, and members of the public. He also praised her contribution to the developing role of County Registrars. Tributes were also paid by Mairead Ahern on behalf of the County Registrars' Association, John Coyle, Director of Circuit and District Operations, Frank Martin BL on behalf of the Bar Association and solicitor Adrian O'Doherty.

On her official retirement day staff, colleagues and friends gathered in Monaghan Courthouse. Tributes were

Apart from her professional life Josie heads many committees in her native Scotshouse, Clones with the same zeal and enthusiasm as she ran the Circuit Court office. Among her interests are local and county GAA football; she is always a very keen and articulate supporter from

the side line. She is also involved with senior citizens in her locality. The Annual Christmas party is known far and wide ...Christmas dinner followed by dancing to a country and western band. Josie insists on the best and nobody argues.

Josie also has a keen interest in local history but not always what you might read in a history book. She has great gift of recall and can recreate an incident so vividly that you would almost think you had been there. She is a font of local information which she says will appear in her memoirs. We look forward to an interesting read!

We wish Josie all the best for an enjoyable retirement.

Joe Smith



Front Row: Joe Brennan, Geraldine O'Connor, Josephine Duffy, Mairead Ahern and Joe Smith. **Back Row:** Paddy Reilly, Deirdre Lennon, Monica Clerkin, Phil Collins, Alice Hennessy, Pauline Quinn, Mary Stewart, Sheila McArdle, Michelle Sherlock, Majella Kieran, Pat McCarron, Dominic Kane, Brian Maguire and Margaret Connolly.

paid by staff members Alice Hennessy and Sheila Mc Ardle, former Regional manager Joe Brennan and Cavan County Registrar Joe Smith.

Leo Mulvey sails off into retirement

It was appropriate that Leo Mulvey should have his retirement function on the 'Moonriver' - a large purpose built boat that normally plies the Shannon filled with tourists. Leo has had a lifelong love affair with the 'broad, majestic' river and will no doubt spend many more pleasurable hours enjoying his retirement on his own boat which is moored at the quay in Carrick on Shannon.

Leo's District Court career commenced in Carlow in 1970. After a couple of years service there, he moved to Cork, where he met his wife, Ann. They moved to Carrick on Shannon with their young family in 1978. This was meant to be a 'temporary' move. Ann is a proud Cork woman and always maintained strong links with her family, but after 31 years it looks like the move might be a permanent one!

Leo was very popular and highly respected among colleagues, solicitors, judges, Gardaí and the general public. He came to be considered as something of an

expert on District Court procedure. Notwithstanding his technical expertise however, he always saw the value of 'common sense' and if there was a way of cutting through the 'red tape' then that was the road he chose.

He was prominent in his early career as a trade union official. He fought many a tough battle with the 'Official' side during this period and was highly respected as an intelligent and resourceful advocate.

His other great passion is golf. Reputed to be quite a handy player, he served Carrick on Shannon Golf Club in a number of capacities over the years including Captain and President.

Now that he has retired, Leo is free to spend all the time he wants on his

beloved Shannon with maybe the odd foray onto the golf course. Wherever he may find himself, we wish Leo and his family many happy years to enjoy his retirement.

Michael Mc Kenna.



Standing left to right: Brian Maguire, Northern Regional Office; Geraldine Mc Weeney, Carrick on Shannon Circuit Court; Leo Mulvey, Geraldine Cornyn, Carrick on Shannon District Court and Michael McKenna, Chief Clerk Carrick on Shannon Circuit Court, **seated** Judge Denis McLoughlin.

REMEMBERING JUDGE DYMPNA CUSACK

Dympna Cusack, Des Zaidan and I were sworn in as District Court Judges in December 2006. Dympna very quickly got to grips with the job she loved dearly. The administration of justice was very close to her heart. She brought to the job many years of experience as a successful barrister. Her main area of practice was family law. One of the solicitors who briefed her told me that she had a very sensible approach to her clients. She had a solid head on her shoulders.

She brought these qualities to the District Court Bench. She dealt with her cases in a practical and efficient manner, always courteous but firm. Hers was a no nonsense approach. She had the perfect temperament for a judge. Her courtesy was appreciated by colleagues and practitioners alike. During her illness she rang the President's secretary, Dolores Moore, every week to give an update on her situation. She was very anxious to get back to work. It is such a pity that she was taken away at such a young age before she could continue what she loved so much. It was her intention to ease herself back into work as soon as her treatment was finished. Unfortunately it was not to be.

She was called to the Bar in 1986, served for two years on the Bar Council and was a member of the education committee of King's Inns for six years. She was a member of the Refugees



Appeals Commission for three years and served for six years as the vice chair of the Employment Appeals Tribunal.

Above all she was a wonderful raconteur. This was because she had a passionate interest in people. She was never short of words among friends and colleagues and yet retained an absolute loyalty to confidentiality. Even in the depth of her illness she was always enquiring about our families. When I had two new grand children she came to our house with presents even though she had been in hospital the previous day.

However the greatest love of her life was her family. She was immensely proud of all of them. Paul and the children came into any conversation with Dympna. But when the grandchildren began to arrive she was over the moon. Just seventeen days after her death twins, a boy and a girl, were born to her son Peter and his wife Silvia. If only she had survived to see them.

Dympna is survived by her husband Paul, sons Peter and John and daughter Julie, son in law Burak, daughters in law Silvia and Lisa, and grandchildren Max, David, Nese, Roberto and Sofia.

Requiescat in Pace.

Paddy McMahon

REMEMBERING JUDGE BENEDICT DALY

When Benedict Daly was appointed to the District Court in May 1981 it was as a temporary District Justice. In those days District Court judges were called 'Justice' and there was provision for appointment in a temporary capacity. His appointment was made permanent in July of that year.

During his time on the Bench he sat mainly in the civil courts. Court clerks remember a man who was always courteous to staff, practitioners and the public. Elisha D'Arcy recalls Justice Daly's work in the Rent Court. He was always very courteous to the public many of whom were people of advanced years in a distressed state never having been inside a courtroom before". Jim McKibbin worked with Justice Daly in the civil courts and in the family courts. "He was a gentleman who was always very courteous and treated everyone with respect. I will always think of him as a decent caring person".

Brendan Murphy may have been the first court clerk to sit with Justice Daly. "He was assigned to the Children Court

located at the time in the Upper Castle Yard in Dublin Castle. I recall him reading a book called 'Juvenile Justice in Ireland' which would generally have covered all of the areas he was likely to encounter when dealing with his new charges. Preparation and attention to detail was a hallmark of his career on the Bench. He liked to be fully informed so he could afford people less fortunate every consideration and opportunity to better themselves.

He retired from the Bench in August 1988 and continued to work in a voluntary capacity for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Former judge of the Supreme Court Mr. Justice Frank Griffin and his son Judge Gerard Griffin of the Circuit Court were among the large attendance at Justice Daly's removal in Rathfarnham recently. He was predeceased by his wife Doreen and is survived by his daughters Mary and Ann.

Oíche Nollag

This seasonal poem by Brian Ó'Tiomáin of the Office of Wards of Court was written in Irish. The English translation is provided.

Titeann tost ó na réalta
i lár na h-oíche bheannaithe

*Silence falls from the stars
into the heart of a holy night*

I gcroílár an tosta
Ar an taobh thoir den domhan
Cloistear leanbhín ag caoineadh
A chéad deora ar thalamh

*In the midst of the silence
On the far side of the world
An infant is heard crying
His first tears on earth*

Tá súile na réalta ag lonradh
Ag caoineadh le teann áthais

*The eyes of the stars are shining
Weeping with joy*

Breathnaíonn beithigh an stábla anuas le h-iontas
A anáil ag bronnadh teocht na h-oíche nollag
Ar an leanbhín sa mháinséar
Slánaitheoir an domhain ina steilleabheatha

*The stable animals look down in wonder
Breathing warmth into this holy night
And onto a new born baby
The saviour incarnate*

Cloistear hosannas ag tuirlingt
Breathnaíonn na beithigh thuas chuig na réalta
Tá macallaí na n-aingeal ag titim
Ar nós sneachta ón bhflaitheas

*The animals look to the stars
Hearing hosannas from afar
Echoes of the angels dropping
Like snow from heaven*

In áit éigin sa bhFásach
Tosaíonn na Magi ar oilithreach
Agus tosaíonn trí Rí ag cuardach
Don réalt is gile sa spéir

*Somewhere in the wilderness
The Magi start to walk
And three kings begin searching
For the brightest star in the sky*

November Mass

There was a large turnout as always for the November Mass held for deceased staff and members of the judiciary and for deceased relatives of staff and the judiciary. This annual event is organised by the Courts Service in conjunction with the Property Registration Authority of Ireland.



*Relatives of the late Judge James Scally with
Mr Justice Nicholas Kearns, President of the High Court*



*Maura Clarke, PRA, Mary Mangan, PRA, Frank Carroll,
retired PRA, PJ Lennon, retired PRA and Alan Rispin, PRA*



*Dorcas Kavanagh of Wicklow Circuit Court Office
with her husband Noel and daughter Niamh*

Take a break:

ISTANBUL

With nothing but clouds on the horizon in Ireland, why not plan a city break far away from all the doom and gloom. Noel A. Doherty suggests Istanbul, the only city embracing two continents - Asia and Europe and the former capital of three empires – Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman:

With direct flights operated by Turkish Airlines between Dublin and Istanbul, Istanbul is worth considering for a city break. While flying time is a bit long at approximately four and a half hours (with a two hour time difference), there is certainly plenty to see and do on a short visit.

Istanbul is a bustling city of fourteen million people. It is modernising rapidly but retains its great sense of history. The historic centre is Sultanahmet, an area easily explored on foot, which may be just as well, given the horrendous traffic in the city. In Sultanahmet, you can visit Topkapi Palace, for many years the residence of the Ottoman sultans. Topkapi is now a museum which can be explored at leisure, while strolling through the various courtyards and admiring the wonderful views.

Also worth a visit is the Hagia Sophia or Ayasofya, a cathedral dedicated in 537AD by the Emperor Justinian and which became a mosque following the conquest of Istanbul in 1453 by the Ottoman army. Now one of Istanbul's main tourist attraction, you can visit and admire this vast and most impressive building with its fine mosaics and frescos from its

Christian period which have been gradually uncovered and remain in good condition.

A "must see" is the Yerebatan Sarnici (Basilica Cistern), a tremendous feat of engineering, also built by the Emperor Justinian, comprising 336 columns spaced at four metre intervals. The attendant may even allow you to feed the fish. Prior to its restoration, the cistern could only be explored by boat but walkways have been installed.

Fancy buying a carpet! There are lots of people anxious to sell you one and not all at fixed prices. Bargaining is a way of life here whether with the carpet sellers or the many traders in the Grand Bazaar, also worthy of a visit.

A relaxing way to spend a few hours is on a cruise on the Bosphorus. You can take a cruise which stops at various villages along the route before finishing at Anadolu Kavagi, a fishing village where you can enjoy lunch or have a wander (a hike really) up to Yoros Castle for some magnificent views.

All in all, Istanbul is worthy of serious consideration for that city break.

Out of the Office with...

Jeannette Troy of Dublin Circuit Criminal Court

■ What is your outside interest?

I sing with a small, four-part vocal harmony group called The Musical Suspects. We are together almost 10 years and would class ourselves as a group of friends who love to get together and sing, whether there is an audience or not! From the original 10 members we have grown to 18. We come from varying backgrounds, but all with a similar passion for music and singing.

■ How long have you been singing?

I have always loved singing. I began in primary school and continued in choirs in secondary school. I joined the Glasnevin Musical Society in 1995 and was involved with AIMS (Association of Musical Societies). After leaving the Glasnevin Musical Society The Musical Suspects were formed. Our musical director, Niamh McDonagh is continually coming up with fabulous and eclectic arrangements, which are always interesting and fun to learn.

■ Memorable moments over the years?

We have a great time both rehearsing and performing and have enjoyed singing in fabulous venues including the Guinness Hop Store and the National Concert Hall. We have performed at our own members' weddings and in the American Ambassador's Residence for a July 4th celebration. We have also performed in the National Concert Hall to support St. Michael's House. In 2008 we performed a lunch-time concert at the John Field Room. It was our first solo performance in the Concert Hall and was a sell-out success.

We took part in a number of competitions in 2008. In December we came 2nd in the Lyric FM Christmas Choir Competition and then won the "Xmas Factor" competition on Today FM's Tony Fenton Show. The prize was to sing on the Tony Fenton Show Christmas Special, which was a really fun experience. We also supported the Harlem Gospel Choir in the Draócht Theatre in Blanchardstown. We have performed our Christmas Concert in St.



Anne's Church on Dawson Street every year since our establishment.

■ Plans for the future?

We'll be performing our annual Christmas Concert in St. Anne's Church on Dawson Street on Friday 11th December at 8pm. It is a great way to get into the Christmas spirit. We will also be singing in Arnotts Store on Henry Street on Thursday 17th December between 6pm and 8pm, to raise money for the Simon Community. We will be performing concerts throughout the Christmas period for some groups who have supported us throughout the year.

We have nothing definitive planned as yet for 2010 but as it is our 10th anniversary we will definitely be doing some exciting performances to celebrate.

Me and Orson Welles



“How am I ever going to top this?”

Uttered towards the end of the film as the irrepressible and over-confident Orson Welles basks in the glow of the public's reaction to his latest Broadway play, it's unfortunate that the same cannot be said for Director Richard Linklater's latest. While fantastically enjoyable in its own right, *'Me and Orson Welles'* lacks some of the passion of his earlier works. By far the biggest compliment is saved for unknown English actor Christian McKay, who plays Welles. His study of the famed director's character and mannerisms has paid off handsomely – he commands the screen when he's present, with his booming voice and towering stature. It's a shame then, that whenever he's off screen, the action becomes a little flat (which is a testament to the power of McKay's Welles as opposed to uninspired acting on the part of the others).

Me and Orson Welles tells the story of 17-year-old New Yorker Richard Samuels, played by tween heartthrob and *High School Musical* popette Zac Efron, as he dreams of becoming an actor. A chance encounter with a 22-year-old Welles outside the Mercury Theatre in Manhattan one evening, leads to him being cast in the young director's production of "Julius Caesar" in 1937. Under the watchful eye of Welles, we see the play begin to take shape, albeit slowly and seemingly against all odds. The film revolves around Samuels' relationships with other cast members and his blossoming romance with the theatre's production assistant Sonja Jones (Claire Danes), as well as his fractious one with Welles.

If McKay's Welles is authentic, boombastic and downright obnoxious, Efron's Samuels isn't quite as memorable. Sporting a mid-noughties Californian twang - you'd half expect him to pull out an iPod mid-sentence – he never quite fits into the time period. Although to be fair Efron is not a bad actor, and there are glimpses of potential throughout, when he has to leave his Disney-trained comfort zone.

ME AND ORSON WELLES

Director: Richard Linklater

Starring: Christian McKay, Zac Efron, Claire Danes

Rating: 12A

Release: December 4th

Some of the most entertaining scenes come as Welles is directing his cast on stage. Never one to admit wrongdoing in any walk of life, he criticises every action taken by his crew down to the speed of their walk while, at the same time, claiming their ideas as his own. It's through this that we can see how many works of genius came from his pedantic and self-obsessed mind.

A solid supporting cast serve as support to McKay's Welles, with one scene involving George Coulouris (Ben Chaplin) and Welles particularly entertaining as the actor struggles with his nerves before the curtain comes up. Welles remedy is to tell him exactly what he wants to hear, that his acting skills came from God himself before filling him up with Dutch courage. Brilliant.

Overall *Me and Orson Welles* is a solid film – one that you'll find pleasant of a Sunday afternoon. It really comes to life when McKay is on screen, which is often - although you'll be wishing it was all the time. It's just a pity that the director didn't see the egotistical irony in the title and make the film all about Welles. Now that would be something that's hard to top.

Aidan Kelly

Rating: ***



The Performance

by Shirley Bassey

When Gary Barlow, the Pet Shop Boys, KT Tunstall, Rufus Wainwright, Tom Baxter and Richard Hawley are lining up to contribute original songs for a new album, you know that a legend is getting ready for a big new release. When they have to 'audition' in person rather than send a tape and a few sheets of dots, you realise it is a once in twenty years recording. When the album is showcased via the BBC Electric Proms series you know it has to be a recording by a Dame. When the sleeve of the album is already exhibited in the National Portrait Gallery in London, the Dame has to be Shirley Bassey. DSB to her fans.

The desperation of the opening ballad *Almost There* is so engrossing and hope shattering that it almost makes you feel sorry that you haven't experienced such depths of lost maybes. The reliance on fairytale

references and lyrics in the Wainwright penned the *Apartment* is cool – especially when DSB phrases her take on the word apartment, almost like a live Rufus himself. *This Time* by Take That's Barlow gives DSB a chance to show off her unique ability to inhabit a song – a testament to what has made her the best for five decades and a lesson to the Karaoke Sharons who try to pass as diva songstresses on reality and talent shows.

Despite some pastiche sounding efforts to recreate a couple of Bond themes by some of her older friends and writers, this album is for anyone who likes DSB; or has a fondness for the great songbook of the 50's or hipster efforts of the 60's; or to anyone who appreciates a natural singer having an honest to goodness wonderful time with a great band and great new songs. The final track, the *Performance of My Life* – is what the album, the singer, the band and the career were waiting on – maybe as a sign off – but a great one.

Gerry Curran



A Twilight Falls

by Aisling O'Neill

Having never had a soft spot for overly mannered, Mary O'Hara style Irish music I wondered what Aisling O'Neill's transition from High Court Registrar to Irish chanteuse would sound like – given that the sleeve of her first album is soft, attractive and a little fey. Well I got my answer in spades when she showcased the album by singing several numbers live at a recent charity premier of her work.

She has a superb live voice, pronounces with a crisp lilt, and presents as a confident and talented artist - not at all out of place in front of a large audience. She displayed poise and control in abundance and won over the crowd who snapped up copies of *As Twilight Falls*. The offering contains classics such as *Raglan Road*, *She Moved thro' the Fair* and *Carrickfergus* together with some lovely adaptations of the works of WB Yeats and favourites from Jimmy MacCarthy.

Gerry Simpson's production shows off

Aisling's great commitment to the songs and the audible enjoyment in her voice and approach. This is one for the Christmas parcel for far off places or as a stocking filler which will gently narrate over the few winter days after Christmas. As

for Aisling well I feel we may have to share her with Bunratty Castle in coming seasons.

Some of the proceeds of the sale of the CD will go to assist the Laura Lynn Children's Hospice. The album is available from Aisling herself at 01 8886576 or 087 1419893 or by email at Aisling.O'Neill@Courts.ie. It can also be purchased in the Four Courts – in the Barristers Tea Rooms and in the shop in the Law Society Building.



Gerry Curran



Team of Rivals

The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln



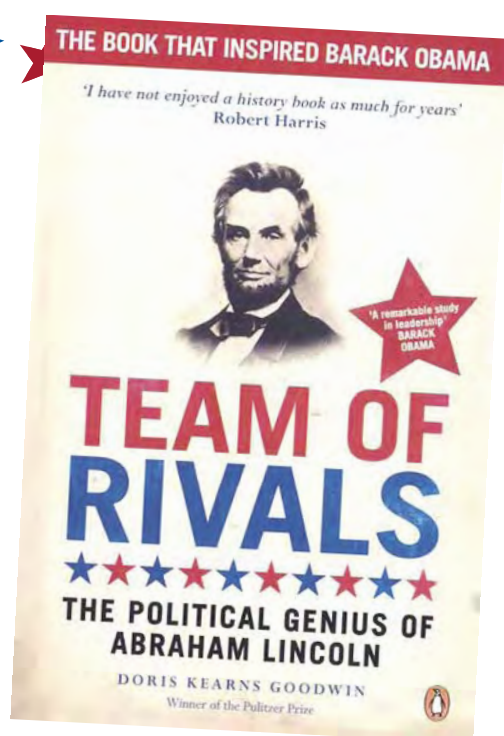
This multi-awarding tome is certainly my book of 2009. While the author explores the origins of Abraham Lincoln, widely regarded as one of the greatest American Presidents, her main concern is with how he presided over a cabinet of very able but also very strong willed men and managed to prevail ensuring the survival of the Union.

The Team of Rivals referred to in the title were the four contenders for the Republican nomination for Presidency in 1860. They were Lincoln himself, of course, William H. Seward, Salmon B. Chase, and Edward Bates. Lincoln was the least known of the candidates but for a number of reasons, including the fact that his rivals, being better known than Lincoln, had foes as well as friends, he won the nomination. The author provides excellent biographies of each of Lincoln's rivals, examining their political philosophies and their strengths and weaknesses as politicians. It would be fair to say that each had a poor opinion of Lincoln a small town lawyer from Springfield, Illinois who was largely self taught.

Ms Kearns Goodwin demonstrates how shrewd a judge of character Lincoln was and how, recognising the great strengths of his rivals, determined to bring them into his cabinet. Indeed, William Seward, perhaps, the most disappointed at not winning the nomination, became a very close friend and adviser to the President.

Also of great interest is Lincoln's relationship with Chase who headed up the Treasury. Chase was a fiercely ambitious man and saw himself as a contender for the nomination in 1864. He briefed against the President but Lincoln, although well aware of what was happening, retained Chase in the cabinet, eventually making him Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court.

Inevitably the Civil War, which commenced within a few weeks of Lincoln's election, is at the centre of the story. Although the Union forces were superior in number, the Confederate armies, under the command of such generals as Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, inflicted a series of heavy defeats on the



Union Army, even advancing to within a short distance of Washington D.C. early in the war. The Union was unlucky in its generals, especially in McClellan, Commander of the Army of the Potomac who, popular with the soldiers and indeed in society, showed a remarkable reluctance to engage the enemy. Eventually Lincoln removed McClellan but it was not until he put Ulysses S. Grant in charge that the major advances which won the war were made.

Ms Kearns Goodwin provides a fascinating insight into the character of Lincoln. Many of his fellow cabinet members, and, indeed, commentators outside the cabinet, often urged him to move more quickly, notably with the Emancipation Proclamation, but the author shows how Lincoln prepared the ground very

carefully and ensured that public opinion was ready to accept his various initiatives.

This is a hefty tome (750 pages of text) but is fascinating in its detail of politics in mid 19th century America. From 1850 onwards, civil war looked inevitable but what was much less inevitable was that a leader would come forth who would win such a war, abolish slavery and preserve the union. The last word might be left to Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of State for War, who initially had little time for Lincoln but later came to admire him greatly. When Lincoln died on the 15th April 1865, Stanton proclaimed "Now he belongs to the ages".

TEAM OF RIVALS

The Political Genius Of Abraham Lincoln

by Doris Kearns Goodwin

Penguin Books, 2009

■ Noel A. Doherty is a Principal Officer in the Courts Service Directorate of Reform & Development



Get on with enjoying Christmastime!

a leftovers guide

The week between Christmas and New Year's can be a hectic dash between bargains, the races, avoidance of relatives, and fighting off the after effects of too much of everything. The good news is that there's sure to be lots of leftover food to be used – allowing you excellent chances to eat off hangovers and stave off the tiredness of real cooking and the weather. Here are a few tips to make the most of your leftovers.

Turkey and Rice Bake

- 3 cups of cooked rice (not brown rice)
- 3 cups chopped cooked turkey
- 16 oz frozen peas or French beans or mixed baby veg, thawed in a colander
- 17 oz. jar of Alfredo sauce
- 1/2 cup soft bread crumbs

Preparation:

Preheat oven to 180C or gas 4. Mix the cooked rice, turkey, thawed veg and Alfredo sauce in large bowl. Place in 12"x 8" glass baking dish and sprinkle with the bread crumbs. Bake for 45-50 minutes until casserole bubbles at the edges and bread crumbs are browned. Serve with a side salad or big chunks of crusty toast, or

some of those left over mashed spuds livened up with a few scallions chopped and stirred through.

Turkey, Leek and Peas

- 300 ml turkey or chicken stock (you can use stock cubes)
- 400g cooked turkey cut into 1-2 cm strips
- 1 large leek, rinsed and finely chopped
- 300 ml double cream
- 1 tbsp wholegrain mustard
- 1 tbsp chopped parsley or 1 teaspoon of dried
- 225g frozen peas, cooked
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

Preparation:

Pour the stock into a saucepan and bring to the boil. Simmer rapidly until reduced by two thirds. Meanwhile, cook the leek in a pan of boiling salted water for 3-4 minutes, or until just tender. Drain well and keep warm. Add the cream, mustard, parsley and peas to the reduced stock. Then stir in the cooked turkey and leeks and heat gently to warm through. Season well with salt and pepper and serve straight away in bowls, with left over boiled potatoes.

Alternatively mix the cooked leeks, peas and turkey with an already mixed and on the cooker packet of potato or mushroom soup. Bring to the boil, simmer for five minutes, season with only pepper or maybe a hint of nutmeg – serve with bread.

Songwriters competition



THE CELTIC TIGER CAROL

(To be sung to the tune of "Deck the Halls")

What's your problem?, don't be funny!
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la
Can't you see we're making money!
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la

Economic Fundamentals?
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la
Silly senseless incidentals!
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la

What's your problem?, this ain't funny!
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la
Can't you see there ain't no money!
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la
Economic Fundamentals
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la

Really really quite essential!
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la

What's your problem, justice?, fairness?
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la
That's for losers, not for players!
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la
Can't pay mortgage?, can't pay rental?
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la
Get up off your fundamental!!
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la

Tom Kinirons,
Examiner's Office,
WINNER



Congratulations to Tom Kinirons, Examiners Office, photographed here being presented with his prize by Helen Priestley, Information Office.



Did you know how the tradition of hanging a stocking up for Santa began?

A nobleman had three daughters and after his wife died he was distraught and squandered all his money and property. He had to down size to a peasant's cottage, along with his daughters. As time passed, he worried about getting his daughters married as he had no money for dowries. One day, St. Nicholas of Myra came through the village and heard of the man's plight. Knowing the father would be too proud to accept money from him St. Nicholas waited till dark and then, went to the nobleman's house and threw three bags of gold coins down the chimney. The daughter's stockings were hanging by the fireplace to dry. The bags of gold coins dropped into the stockings. The family woke up to find the money in their stockings. The father used the money as generous dowries for his daughters. Soon the villagers came to know of St. Nicholas' generosity and started hanging their stockings by the fireplace.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF OTHER INTERNATIONAL TRADITIONS:

1. In this country on New Years Eve people eat 12 grapes, one for each month of the year, to bring good luck.
2. Where do children hang their stockings up on 6th December to await gifts which are left for them by 'Betana'?
3. What do Spanish children leave on the doorstep on the 6th January, the feast of the Three Wise Men?
4. In this country, the children leave out a bowl of porridge for 'Tomte' and he brings them gifts on the night of 24th December.
5. What country celebrates 'Knut's Day', and on what date?
6. In the Japanese tradition of Sumo Wrestling, if you are 'yokozuna' are you:
(a) grand champion (b) noble opponent (c) referee
7. On Palm Sunday in Finland who would you expect to call to your door?

Answers should be sent to courtsservicenews@courts.ie or by hard copy to Fiona Farrell, Information Office, 6th Floor, Phoenix House, Smithfield, Dublin 7. Closing date for answers Friday 12th February 2010.

IT'S THE 'FLU

(To the tune of 'Let it Snow')

Oh the pain in my head is frightening,
It's like I've been struck by lightning
I've pains in my muscles too
It's the 'flu it's the flu it's the flu
I can't stop my nose from running
And both my ears are buzzing
And now my eyes are streaming too
It's the 'flu it's the flu it's the flu
When I finally got to sleep, I snored like a
giant blue whale
The vibrations that rattled the bed, hit ten
on the Richter Scale
Oh I think that the worst is over
I only need to wear one pullover
My temperature has come down too
Goodbye 'flu, goodbye 'flu, goodbye 'flu

Ann Moore
Citizens Information Board
RUNNER UP

MERRY RECESSION EVERYONE

(To the tune of 'Merry Christmas Everyone'
by Shakin' Stevens)

Economy is falling,
All around us,
Banks were playing,
Having fun.
Now it's the reason,
For debt and credit crunching,
Merry Recession everyone.
No time for parties or celebration,
People striking all year long,
No time for presents,
Or exchanging kisses,
Just time for queuing to sign on.
We're gonna have a budget tonight,
Brian's gonna get that cash from the public
sector pay
Our purses will be tight.

Wages swaying, bankers praying,
All the talk of pay cuts, we hate to hear,
How I wish that Cowen would cut his own
wage,
And the Celtic Tiger will come back next year.
We're gonna have a budget tonight,
Brian's gonna get that cash from the public
sector pay
Our pockets will be light.
Economy is fallin,
All around us,
Banks were playing,
Having fun,
Now it's the reason,
For debt and credit crunching,
Merry Recession everyone,
Merry Recession everyone.

Carmel Ray
Dublin City Council
RUNNER UP



Through the lens



Mary Murphy of the High court Official Assignee's Office and formerly Information Office with her husband Jason on their wedding day in September



Pat Conlon, Western Regional Office and Eva Avery, formerly Information Office and Western Regional Office, pictured at the recent conferring of BA degrees in Personnel Management CIPD facilitated by Galway/Mayo Institute of Technology



3rd Year students from the Ursuline Convent, Thurles during their tour of Nenagh Courthouse



Visitors to the Courts Service from the Georgian High Counsel of Justice



Family law students from Ballymun Community Law Centre visiting Phoenix House