

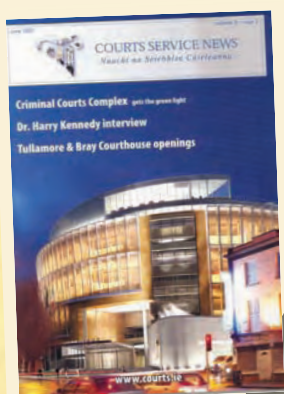
COURTS Service News

NUACHT NA SEIRBHÍSE CÚIRTEANNA



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An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna

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INTERVIEW WITH
NEW C.E.O.

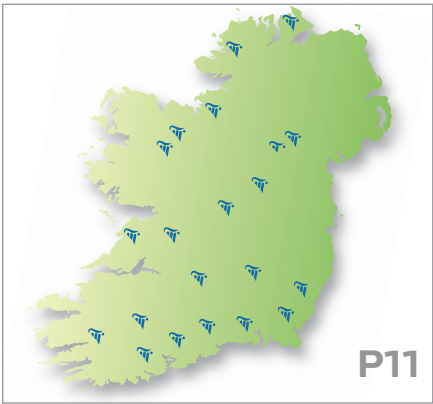
10 YEARS OF
COURTS SERVICE NEWS

NEW SENIOR
MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

TRANSFORMING
PUBLIC SERVICES

FAMILY LAW MATTERS -
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE





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Welcome

Sure signs that Spring is well and truly here: daffodils, Cadbury's crème eggs and the March issue of *Courts Service News*. In this first issue of 2009 we start off with lots of newness, regeneration and transformation.

Gerry Curran interviews the 'new broom' Chief Executive Officer, Brendan Ryan, and we get some insight into his plans and hopes for his term as CEO pages 6 and 7.

The new Strategic Plan 2008 – 2011 is published page 12 and details of the new Senior Management Structure in the Courts Service can be found on pages 8-10.

We publish an introduction to the Irish Sentencing Information System (ISIS) page 15 and from further a field we bring news of courts from Spain, India and Australia on page 22.

A new phase in the modernisation of the Public Service has commenced. Corita Goulding, Department of An Taoiseach, tells *Courts Service News* what is planned on page 17.

We preview the next issue of *Family Law Matters* and feature three articles closely connected with that area of law. Suzanne Brennan and Éimear Fisher tell us about COSC's new website and their recent media campaign page 13. Aidan Browne, Chief Executive of the Children Acts Advisory Board tells us about developments in the area of special care page 14 and Frank Brady, Director of Legal Aid at the Legal Aid Board, talks about the increases in their workload on page 16.

Having looked back over 10 years of the Courts Service in our Christmas issue, we have another decade to celebrate. *Courts Service News* itself is in its 10th year. Aidan Kelly reports on how it has evolved from the A3 newsletter to the current A4 magazine. The time is coming for it to evolve further to keep pace with advances in electronic/digital developments as we report on pages 18 -20 and 23.

In a first we have a simultaneous review of a book and the film inspired by the book on page 31 and our quiz follows in the same vein on page 35. On pages 29 and 34 you can read about the non-work activities of some of our hardworking staff. And for those of you who haven't already looked at the back page first 'Through the Lens' brings you some photographic evidence of how productive and busy our staff have been recently.

If you are involved in an interesting hobby or project please let us know and we would be happy to include you in future issues of *Courts Service News*.

Fíona Farrell

Fiona Farrell



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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SUPERIOR COURTS

S.I. NO. 529 OF 2008

Rules of the Superior Courts (Residential Institutions Redress Act 2002), 2008. These Rules prescribe the procedure to be followed in respect of applications under subsections 14 and 15 of section 13 of the Residential Institutions Redress Act, 2002 (added to section 13 by section 34(e)(iv) of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Amendment) Act, 2005), and ancillary matters.

S.I. NO. 551 OF 2008

Rules of the Superior Courts (European Orders for Payment), 2008. These Rules insert a new Order 42C in the Rules of the Superior Courts, which order facilitates implementation of Regulation 1896 of 2006 (Regulation (EC) No. 1896/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 creating a European order for payment procedure).

S.I. NO. 562 OF 2008

Rules of the Superior Courts (Amendment to Order 118), 2008. These Rules amend Order 118 of the Rules of the Superior Courts 1986 in order to provide opening hours of the public offices of the High and Supreme Courts from half past ten o'clock in the forenoon to one o'clock in the afternoon on Christmas Eve.

S.I. NO. 10 OF 2009

Rules of the Superior Courts (Criminal Justice Acts 2006 and 2007), 2009. These Rules contain amendments to a number of Rules of the Superior Court to facilitate the operation of certain provisions of the Criminal

Justice Acts 2006 and 2007. In particular these rules amend Order 58 (Appeals and References to the Supreme Court), Order 84 (Judicial Review and Orders Affecting Personal Liberty), Order 84B (Procedure in Statutory Applications), Order 85 (Central Criminal Court), Order 86 (Court of Criminal Appeal) and create Order 138 (Applications under the Criminal Justice Act, 2006).

S.I. NO. 15 OF 2009

Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) (Amendment) Regulations, 2009. These Regulations provide for a decrease in the fees payable under the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme to solicitors for attendance in the District Court and for appeals to the Circuit Court, and for a decrease in the fees paid to solicitors and counsel in respect of essential visits to prisons and other custodial centres (other than Garda Stations) and for certain bail applications, as follows: 2.5% with effect from 1st February 2009.

CIRCUIT COURT

S.I. NO. 188 OF 2008

Circuit Court Rules (Jurisdiction, Recognition, Enforcement and Service of Proceedings), 2008. These Rules make provision for the extension to the Kingdom of Denmark of Council Regulations 1348 of 2000 (on service of judicial and extrajudicial documents in civil and commercial matters) and 44 of 2001 (on jurisdiction, recognition and enforcement of judgments in civil and commercial matters).

S.I. NO. 189 OF 2008

Circuit Court Rules (Trial), 2008. These Rules

amend the Circuit Court Rules to provide that a notice of trial for the Dublin Circuit shall firstly be completed in the Circuit Court Office before being served and to require at least 21 days notice of the date fixed for trial to be given to the parties.

S.I. NO. 191 OF 2008

Circuit Court Rules (County Registrar), 2008. These Rules amend the Circuit Court Rules to empower a County Registrar to make an order for the delivery of a further and better statement of the nature statement of the nature of a claim or defence or counterclaim, or further and better particulars.

S.I. NUMBER 585 OF 2008

Circuit Court Rules (Consumer Protection Act 2007), 2008. These Rules create a new Order 72B of the Circuit Court Rules to facilitate the operation of section 71 (Civil relief by way of prohibition orders), 72 (Prohibition orders against code owners), 74(Right of action for damages in respect of a prohibited act or practice), 81(Compensation orders) and Schedule 6 of the Consumer Protection Act 2007.

DISTRICT COURT

S.I. No. 583 of 2008

District Court (European Small Claims) Rules, 2008. These Rules insert a new Order 53C in the District Court Rules, which Order facilitates implementation of Regulation (EC) No. 861/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 July 2007 (OJ L 199 of 31 July 2007, page 1) establishing a European Small Claims Procedure.

Changes in Court Rules Committees

In our last issue, we outlined a number of amendments to legislation relating to the courts introduced by the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2008.

Not least among those amendments were changes in relation to the Rules Committees of the Courts. The role of the Rules Committees, which are independent statutory bodies, established by the Courts of Justice Act, 1936, is to make rules for the regulation of court practice and procedure.

Pursuant to section 20 of the 2008 Act, the Registrar of the Supreme Court has become an ex officio member of the **Superior Courts Rules Committee**. Prior to 1st October last, when the changes came into effect, the Registrar was secretary to that Committee.

In relation to the **Circuit Court Rules Committee**, the county registrar for Dublin continues to be an ex officio member of the committee but is no longer secretary. The 2008 also provides

for Chief Executive Officer of the Courts Service to nominate a county registrar, other than the county registrar for Dublin, to be a member of the Circuit Court Rules Committee. Patricia Casey, County Registrar for Carlow, has been nominated in that regard.

In relation to the **District Court Rules Committee**, Michelle Johnston, Deputy Chief Clerk, Dublin Metropolitan District Court, has been appointed to that Committee in place of Liz Hughes.

The Courts Service now provides secretarial, clerical and administrative support to each of the three rules committees on a statutory basis under section 18 of the 2008 Act. This support will be provided through the Directorate of Reform and Development and Liz Hughes of that directorate has been appointed to be secretary to each of the rules committees.

End of year reports of each of the Rules Committees are provided in the Courts

Service Annual Report. These include details of membership of the committees, the number of meetings held and amendments to Rules of Court passed by the Committees and concurred in by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. These amendments are introduced by way of statutory instruments.

The District Court, Circuit Court and Superior Court rules are available on the Courts Service website, **www.courts.ie**. The rules include all court forms. Many of these forms are also available in a dedicated 'court forms' section on the site.



Making it easier to bring a EUROPEAN SMALL CLAIM

If you want bring a small claim against someone in another EU country, new regulations just made the task a little bit easier for you:

The new 'European Small Claims Procedure' is an alternative method of commencing and dealing with civil and commercial matters in respect of a small claim in cross-border cases up to a value of €2,000. It is provided for in Regulation (EC) No. 861/2007 and the District Court Rules 1997 and 2008 – Order 53C.

A cross-border case is one where at least one of the parties lives in a Member State of the European Union (excluding Denmark) other than the Member State of the court dealing with the claim.

The service will be provided in Ireland through the District Court by the District Court Clerk, called the Small Claims Registrar. You don't need to involve a solicitor. The procedure will be mainly dealt with by correspondence although a

hearing before a court can be held if the court thinks it is necessary. Where possible, the registrar will negotiate a settlement without the need for a court hearing. It's worth noting that you can't make a claim on-line.

A judgement given in a Member State in the European Small Claims Procedure will be recognised and enforced in another Member State and the enforcement procedure will be governed by the law of the Member State where the judgment is to be enforced. You can request a certificate concerning a judgment from the court at no extra cost.

For further details including how to make a claim, enforce a claim and download a claim form, visit the 'Small Claims Procedure' section of www.courts.ie



European Order for Payment Procedure

Regulation (EC) No 1896/2006, which came into effect on the 12th December 2008, introduces a European Order for Payment Procedure. The purpose of the Regulation, which applies to cross-border cases concerning uncontested claims in civil and commercial matters, is to simplify, speed up and reduce the costs of litigation and to permit the free circulation of European orders for payment throughout Member States.

A cross-border case is one in which at least one of the parties is domiciled or habitually resident in a Member State other than the Member State in which the proceedings are instituted. It should be noted that where the defendant is a consumer, proceedings must be instituted in the Member State where the defendant is domiciled. It should also be noted that the procedure is available in respect of liquidated amounts.

To facilitate the operation of the new procedure, Rules of Court have been introduced. These are contained in S.I. No 551 of 2008, Rules of the Superior Courts (European Orders for Payment) 2008. Also, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, has regulated for the procedure by S.I. No. 525 of 2008, European Communities (European Order for Payment) Regulations 2008.

In Ireland, applications for European Orders for Payment are made to the High Court by delivery of the completed form (Form A in the form prescribed in Annex 1 to the Regulation) to the Central Office. The functions of the High Court under the Regulation are to be exercised by the Master of the High Court.

A defendant may lodge a statement of opposition to an application in which case the claimant shall be notified and, where the claimant has not explicitly requested the proceedings to be terminated in that event, the proceedings shall be either remitted to the Circuit Court or District Court or transferred to ordinary civil proceedings in the High Court. The proceedings will be remitted to the Circuit Court where the original claim could have been prosecuted in the Circuit Court and to the District Court where the original claim could have been prosecuted in the District Court.

A European Order for Payment which has become enforceable in the Member State where it is made shall be recognised and enforced in the other Member States without the need for any declaration of enforceability.

For further details including Form A of the Regulation visit 'EU Forms' in the 'Courts Forms' section of www.courts.ie.

A genuine appreciation of people...

This is the general view of what it is **Brendan Ryan** brings to his new job as CEO of the Courts Service. His ability to allow people the space to do their job, aligned with his own likeability, accounts for the warmth of feeling towards him since his recent appointment.

That's all very well until, like any CEO, he has to get down to brass tacks. *Courts Service News* met up with Brendan earlier this month to ask not just how the first few weeks of the job have been, but also to enquire as to what made him apply to be CEO of the Courts Service in the first place?

"Well I had been working in the Courts Service for over 27 years. I've been involved in many of the major changes that have taken place in the courts over the years and I felt I still had a lot to contribute to the organisation's future. I was confident that I had the necessary attributes to undertake the duties of the CEO".

"It's a period of changing times - the former chief executive PJ Fitzpatrick was retiring - and I felt that my experience and knowledge of the organisation could be brought to bear as we strive to continue to change and improve in what are undoubtedly challenging times".

He explains that his "initial reaction was one of delight, surprise, shock, exhilaration, exuberance, all at one time. It marked the culmination of 27 years of work so it meant a huge amount to me and my family. Obviously I

was conscious of the fact that excellent candidates both within and outside the organisation had also applied and I must admit I thought of them during that period - but I was just honoured to be chosen by the Board of the Courts Service to be the CEO".

Reaction of wider Justice Community

'Nothing but positive', is his summing up of the reaction to his appointment. "I feel the appointment has been very well-received particularly amongst the staff and the judiciary because of the fact that they've known me over a long period of time and they are aware of the strengths I bring to the table. They also know that I'm a committed Courts Service official. I've dedicated my professional life to the Courts Service and my commitment to the ongoing development of the Service is unquestioned."

"Since I started in the Courts in 1981, I've always received great support from all staff that I've dealt with, no matter what jurisdiction or location. The loyalty, dedication and efficiency of the staff I've worked with over the years enabled me perform the tasks that were

assigned to me. For that I am very grateful".

He is very proud to be a member of the Courts Service organisation. Having worked in the courts for so long he observed that the people who worked in the courts over the years across all jurisdictions were often shackled and held back by the lack of opportunities to progress the organisation. The Courts Service has enabled these highly motivated staff to make their mark and contribute in such a positive manner to the undoubted achievements to date.

Of the overall Service today he believes, "We've put in place the

Since I started in the Courts in 1981, I've always received great support from all staff that I've dealt with, no matter what jurisdiction or location.

structures needed, initiated a lot of reforms, and have been very fortunate with our budgetary allocation over the years. We've undertaken a significant amount of work. Both staff and court users have benefited from these

Once there is a unified criminal courts office in Dublin, we will look at how we will provide a single civil office in the Dublin area.



changes. Our extensive building programme has enabled us to provide appropriate facilities in a large number of venues around the country and our ICT systems are enabling us to transform service delivery. We also have proper governance and management structures in place and appropriate reporting. We've achieved a huge amount over the past nine years and I'm very proud that I've been part of that comprehensive change process.

Looking To the Future

In a nutshell he has a simple drive for his seven year term of office: "I would like to continue the work that has been undertaken so successfully to date – continue the reform of procedure and processes; the roll out of infrastructure (both facilities and ICT); reform the manner in which we provide services to aid court users and put the needs of the customer first."

"In that regard a new criminal court complex will open in Dublin early next year and we are aiding the drafting of legislation that will create the first unified criminal court office which will join distinct criminal jurisdictions into one unified administrative body. There is a compelling case for this project in that we will create greater efficiencies and best use of our resources."

"Once there is a unified criminal courts office in Dublin, we will look at

how we will provide a single civil office in the Dublin area. In parallel we must now seriously review the manner in which court business is transacted outside of Dublin – and indeed where it is transacted - and the question is *how* we achieve the changes required and not *if* such a change is required. Providing a single point of contact for those we interact with on a daily basis is, I believe, the cornerstone for future success."

Changes in circumstances since becoming CEO

Brendan tells us of the changes which have occurred in his work since his appointment. "When I was a Director I was constantly involved in the ordinary day to day matters that came with such a task – particularly as Director of Corporate Services which carried a wide ranging brief. The role of CEO is completely different. The word 'isolation' comes to mind. You are somewhat remote from the day to day operations of the organisation and that carries its own dangers. I have always throughout my career kept my fingers very much on the pulse of the organisation and I will make it my business to ensure that this contact continues. It is something I'm working on and in this regard I intend to visit offices throughout the length and breadth of the country when an opportunity arises."

You have been warned!

Brendan's wide and vast 27 years experience in the courts ranges from, as Administration Manager, organising the delivery of 600 tonnes of Peat Briquettes annually to keep the fires lit in the Four Courts in his early days to becoming the CEO this year;

Married with two children, Brendan holds a Barrister-at-Law degree and both a B.A. and H.Dip from University College Cork.

From 1994-1996 he was Secretary to the Committee formed to celebrate the bicentenary of the Four Courts. From 1995 - present he has acted as the Secretary of the Judicial Appointment Advisory Board.

He was the first Director of Corporate Services of the newly established Courts Service appointed in 1999. During that time he had various responsibilities including Estates and Buildings, ICT, Judicial Support and the Information Office.



New Management Structure for Courts Service

The new year brings not only brings a new CEO (see page 6 and 7) but a revision in the management structure of the Courts Service. The number of directorates has been reduced from seven to five and two new Assistant Secretaries join the team:





NUALA MC LOUGHLIN remains as Head of Supreme and High Court Operations Directorate.

The function of the directorate is to:

- Manage the offices of the Supreme Court and High Court and the Judges' Library
- Provide support to the judiciary and
- Manage the CCMS Programme which is a project to modernise and standardise civil and family law processes



The former Finance Directorate has been joined with Human Resources to form the new Resource Management Directorate under the management of **SEAN QUIGLEY**.

On the financial side the directorate is responsible for

- Budgetary control and financial management including the preparation of the annual Appropriation Account
- Funds accounting, courts accounting, procurement and risk management

The human resources functions of the directorate include:

- All activities associated with staffing from recruitment to retirement
- Induction, probation, pay related matters, promotion and performance management
- Initiating and facilitating of organisational change initiatives through partnership committees and other fora
- Supporting heads of directorates and others in ensuring the effective implementation of major change initiatives
- Ensuring that staff have the necessary skills to competently carry out their roles and responsibilities and the development of staff through a range of courses



JOHN COYLE has recently been promoted to Assistant Secretary and moves from the former ICT Directorate to head up the Circuit and District Operations Directorate.

This directorate:

- Provides administrative support and resources for the circuit and district courts
- Manages support to the circuit and district court offices
- Arranges for the transfer of staff between districts
- Manages accommodation requirements
- Provides a support service to court offices on procedural matters and
- Makes orders in respect of court areas, court districts etc.
- Liaises with court officers



The newest member of the Senior Management Team, **PAUL BURNS**, takes over from John Coyle to head up the Infrastructure Services Directorate which includes ICT and Estates and Buildings.

Its main ICT functions are:

- Delivering information systems which support the attainment of the business objectives of the Courts Service
- Providing and managing new information systems
- Providing modern nationwide communications infrastructure and
- Providing e-Government services

The other functions of the directorate include:

- Planning for existing and future accommodation needs for all areas within the Service
- Planning and developing capital building projects and refurbishment work
- Preparing and costing capital building and maintenance programmes
- Fitting and maintaining court facilities to modern standards, to include access for the disabled
- Ensuring best safety, health and welfare standards in all buildings and offices and generally managing the Four Courts complex

Also under Paul's remit is the Health & Safety Co-ordinator and the Public Private Partnership unit which is responsible for the implementation of the Courts Service Public Private Partnership Programme and delivery of the Criminal Courts Complex.



NOEL RUBOTHAM continues as head of Reform and Development Directorate with the addition of the Information Office.

This directorate has responsibility for

- Legislative affairs
- Preparation of proposals for modernising legislation on court administration and simplification of court rules and terminology
- Identifying of opportunities for improvement of procedures and practice of court offices
- Assessment of implications of information technology and e-government initiatives for court rules and practices
- Examination, in consultation with other directors of the Courts Service, of proposals for new legislation affecting courts administration
- Provision of secretarial, clerical and administrative support to the Superior, Circuit and District Courts Rules Committees
- Information Services

The Information Office

- Provides information on the court system to the public
- Maintains and develops the Courts Service website
- Co-ordinates, prepares and publishes material in relation to the work of the courts
- Develops programmes to enable schools and other community groups obtain information about the court system
- Provides a report in writing to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on the activities of the Courts Service
- Addresses interest groups on matters relating to the work of the courts and
- Collates statistics on the work of the courts



The newly formed Office of the CEO is comprised of some units which were formerly in Corporate Services (Secretariat, Judicial Support, Internal Audit and Media Relations Office).

The Secretariat

- Provides secretarial and administrative support for the Courts Service Board and for the Chief Executive

- Has responsibility for the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act, 1997 and the Data Protection Acts 1988 & 2003 (as they refer to the Courts Service)
- Liaises with directorates, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and other government agencies and public bodies in relation to matters such as parliamentary questions, observations on government memoranda, reports, general correspondence etc.

The Judicial Support Unit

- Provides administrative and secretarial back up for the Judicial Appointments Advisory Board and to the Judicial Studies Institute Board
- Deals with all queries in relation to the judiciary

The Internal Audit Unit

The Internal Audit Unit conducts audits across the full range of activities of the Service including financial, operational, information and communications technology, capital building and governance.

The Media Relations Service

The Media Relations Service is a single reference point and source of information for international, national and local media including television, radio, internet and print.

Paul Burns Joins The Courts Service

Paul Burns joins the Courts Service as head of the Infrastructure Services Directorate from the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform (DJELR). Paul worked in the Department of Finance up until the year 2000, where he managed expenditure control, amongst other things.

After that, he spent the last eight-and-a-half years in DJELR. With several years working in the immigration division, and the last two-and-a-half years focused on the Garda division, he hopes to bring vast experience and a positive attitude towards change to his new position.

"I was attracted to the Courts Service initially because I could see that it was a very dynamic and forward-thinking organisation. Having worked in Justice for many years, I was aware of the record of the Courts Service and the very good reputation it has gained."

Paul is looking forward to his new role in the Infrastructure Services Directorate and to continuing the good work set out by his predecessors. However, he acknowledges that he's taking up the responsibility at a difficult time.

"These are challenging times for the whole economy. We have to curtail our spending in all areas so naturally capital projects will see some effects. Even with that in mind, we already have several major projects in the pipeline, including the new Criminal Courts Complex in Dublin. This is a huge investment and is very exciting for the organisation as a whole."

"As head of the Infrastructure Services Directorate, I will continue to provide building and ICT services for everyone in a coordinated way. I've met many people already and I look forward to getting round to meeting more over the coming months and years, I am really looking forward to heading up what will be a very challenging and fulfilling new role".



Money May Be Tight

But the Building Goes On

The Courts Service Capital Building Programme continues around the country in line with plans made and commitments given. **Shay Kirk** of our Estates & Buildings Unit takes us around the country to report on how the work is progressing:

Work was recently completed on the refurbishment of **Thurles** courthouse and court sittings resumed on the 26th January 2009. The new courthouse has two courtrooms and all the necessary ancillary facilities to meet modern demands.

Work is nearing completion on the provision of new court facilities in **Gorey** as part of a joint development with Wexford County Council to provide civic amenities in the town including a library, County Council Offices and HSE facilities. It is expected that work will be completed on this building in March with a view to court sittings commencing in April 2009.

Work is also progressing on the refurbishment and extension of **Kilkenny** courthouse. This is a major project and involves a substantial extension to the courthouse. It will provide for an additional two courtrooms and modern office accommodation for the staff of the Circuit and District Court offices. Additional facilities will also be provided including judges' chambers, a legal practitioner's room, jury facilities, consultation rooms, victim support room and holding cells for prisoners. The building will also be fully accessible for people with disabilities.

Work commenced on the refurbishment of **Monaghan** courthouse towards the end of last year. However, the contractor has gone into liquidation and work has

been stopped on the site. We are making arrangements to engage a new contractor and expect that work will soon recommence on this project. The work will take approximately one year to complete.

We propose to refurbish and extend **Mullingar** courthouse and will seek tenders for this work shortly subject to funding being made available. Temporary accommodation has been identified in the town and this will be leased and fitted out as soon as sanction is obtained to proceed with this project.

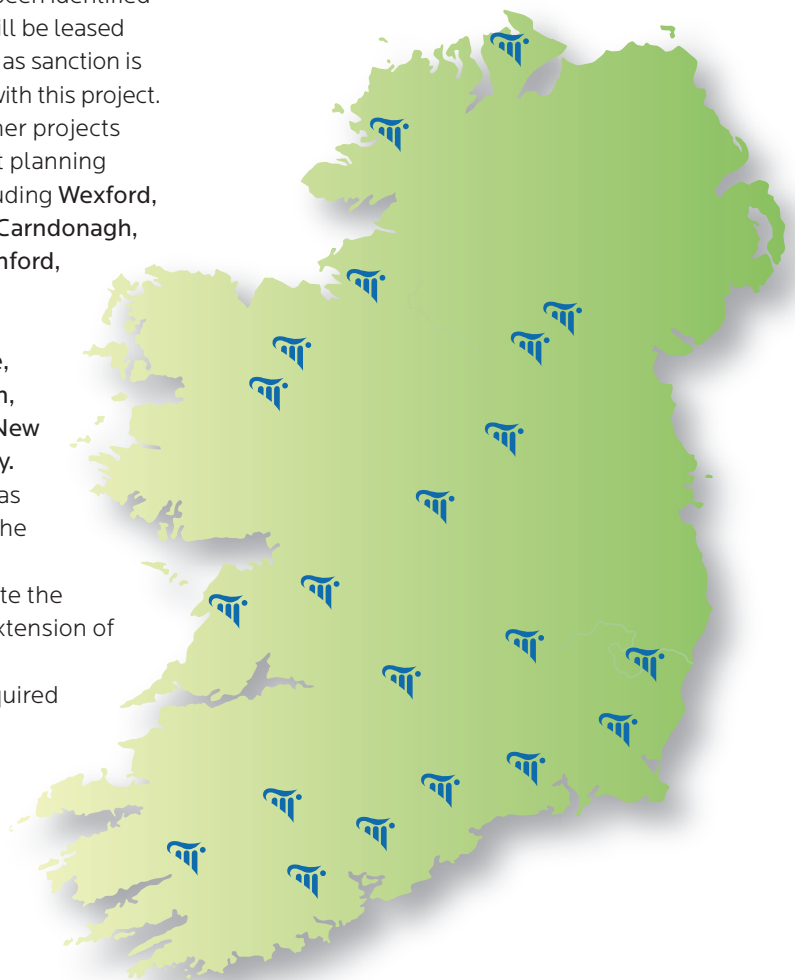
There are many other projects around the country at planning stage at present including **Wexford, Waterford, Wicklow, Carndonagh, Manorhamilton, Swinford, Ballinamore, Tuam, Bailieborough, Ennistymon, Killaloe, Birr, Bantry, Macroom, Youghal, Tipperary, New Ross and Enniscorthy.**

Additional space was recently acquired at the rear of **Wicklow** courthouse to facilitate the refurbishment and extension of the building.

A site has been acquired in **Wexford** at the Borough Council Offices at Wigram Place. Consultations have taken place with court users and

plans are being prepared at present. We hope to complete the planning process on this project in the course of 2009.

Sites were also acquired recently at the rear of the courthouse in **Clonakilty** to facilitate the refurbishment and extension of the courthouse and a site was recently acquired in **Dungloe** to provide a new court building in the town.



New Strategic Plan puts need of court users first

The latest Courts Service Strategic Plan aims to build on the successes of the past nine years according to **Sean Quigley**, Head of the Resource Management Directorate.

The new plan, the fourth Strategic Plan published by the Service, covers the period 2008 to 2011 and sets out priorities and objectives for those years.

Acknowledging the great strides which have been made in modernising the Irish courts system to date Sean says that the Courts Service, in addition to building on recent successes, is guided by a vision of what the Courts Service might look like in 2020.

The Courts Service Act, 1998 requires the Board of the Courts Service to prepare a Strategic Plan every three years. Sean points out that "apart from the statutory requirement there are sound business reasons for producing a plan as well". These include the promotion of strategic thought and action and the direction of energy of all employees to what is really important within the Courts Service. "It also improves decision-making so that important decisions can be considered through the prism of strategy, not the glare of urgent activities". "And it enhances performance by ensuring that the entire organisation is focused on achieving overall goals and processes are aligned for decision making, resource allocation, and performance management".

"We engaged in an extensive consultation process to prepare this plan", Sean says. "In particular a series of workshops were held with managers and staff across the organisation. There was excellent engagement at these workshops, which augers well for a successful

implementation of the plan as we go forward".

"We have a very clear focus on what our core objectives are ('serving court users and 'supporting the judiciary'). Everything else we do has to be aligned and focused on achieving these core objectives. We've set out our Operational Priorities for the next three years.

They are:

- Putting the needs of court users first
- Supporting the Judiciary
- Improving access to the courts
- Improving understanding of the courts
- Transforming service delivery
- Being an employer of choice"

The changing economic environment requires all public bodies, including the Courts Service, to deliver improved value for money. This has been confirmed by recent Government decisions regarding levels of public expenditure.

"There is a strong emphasis in the plan on performance management, accountability and delivering value for money. The plan also highlights the need to review our structures to ensure they are appropriate to meet the expectations of court users in a rapidly changing environment", Sean says.

"In consultation with the judiciary we will continue to promote and assist the reform and development of court practice and procedures. We will also promote regulatory reform and simplified and standardised procedures to improve access to the courts and court offices to further

improve service delivery. We will also promote and assist legislative and procedural reform that will seek to reduce the costs of litigation".

And we don't stop at that. The need to consult with court users remains very much to the forefront of how the Service will operate into the future. "We will continue to engage with court users through our user groups to inform them of new developments and obtain feedback and suggestions from them on new developments and existing services", Sean says.

"The transformation from where we are now to the vision will be an evolutionary process. We will target resources at the key priorities and the key services required for an effective courts administration that provides value for money".

It's an ambitious programme but one which the Service is ready and willing to take on.



Continuing to shine a light on our FAMILY LAW COURTS



The Courts Service Family Law Reporting Project will conclude with the publication of the Spring 2009 issue of *'Family Law Matters'*. This seventh issue in the series brings more reports of what's happening in family law courts around Ireland as **Fiona Farrell** of the *'Family Law Matters'* editorial team explains.

Among the matters featured is domestic violence. In addition to a series of reports from District Courts in Dublin and around the country we feature statistics from the Courts Service Annual Report 2007 to illustrate trends and developments in domestic violence applications.

We talk to Éimear Fisher, Executive Director of COSC - The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence. She outlines their role and discusses their recent media campaign. You can read an abridged version of our interview on this page.

We also hear from Aidan Browne, Children's Acts Advisory Board about special care while Frank Brady of the

Legal Aid Board discusses his Board's role and the increase in their workload. Again you can read abridged versions of our interviews in this issue of *Courts Service News*.

In addition to reports from the District Court, reports from the Circuit and High Court continue to demonstrate the variety and complexity of cases which come before the family law courts every day. The effect of the down turn in the economy and in property prices is adding to the difficulties for the courts in trying to be fair to all parties when making proper provision in maintenance, separation and divorce cases.

This has been a very interesting and rewarding project to work on. We have

shown that with adherence to a protocol and by ensuring anonymity for the parties involved it is possible to report on family law cases for the benefit of all the community. A number of people contributed in no small way to the success of the project. We would like especially to thank the reporters who attended in court and the judiciary, staff, legal profession and litigants who facilitated them.

Previous issues of *Family Law Matters* can be accessed on our website www.courts.ie in the publications section. There are a limited number of hard copies available on request from publicationsunit@courts.ie or from the Information Office 01 888 6457.

'YOUR SILENCE FEEDS THE VIOLENCE'

You may have heard this line on the radio recently or noticed the posters on bus stops and other prominent locations. It's part of a media campaign by COSC – the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence – to help victims of domestic violence:

Éimear Fisher, Executive Director of COSC says that "15 per cent of women and 6 per cent of men experience severe abusive behaviour of a physical, sexual or emotional nature from a partner at some point in their lives and less than 25 per cent of those severely abused report to An Garda Síochána. A nationwide survey conducted by COSC found that, while most people were aware of domestic and sexual violence, they wouldn't know where to report it."

As a result, COSC developed a nationwide media campaign featuring stark images of abuse in the home. The tagline 'Your Silence feeds the Violence' sat at the bottom of pictures of smashed lampshades, messy rooms and broken banisters. "Reaction to the campaign has been strong so far", says Éimear. "Recovery is extremely difficult and that's why the services are there. Victims need time and people who understand their situation and not judge them at all. It's one of the key points. That level of support that keeps the victims at heart is vital."

Suzanne Brennan from the Communications Unit in COSC tells *Court Service News* about a new website www.cosc.ie where you can find information on the wide range of services available to victims of the crimes of domestic and sexual violence in Ireland. This is the first time in Ireland that this information is provided in a single website. It is aimed at the general public who may be concerned about a friend, neighbour or work colleague, victims of domestic and sexual violence, and those working in the sector.

The word 'COSC' means to 'stop or prevent'. Established in June 2007 its key responsibility is to ensure the delivery of a well co-ordinated "whole of Government" response to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. The work of COSC covers issues relating to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence against women and men, including older people.

The information on the new website allows victims, their family and friends to quickly identify the services available to

them in their area. Basic advice is available from the website itself but COSC is clear that the real experts are those working in frontline services. The website provides information to make it easier for those concerned about domestic and sexual violence to contact their local services for further advice and support.

Another purpose of the website is to assist with the sharing of information across the State and NGO sectors. Those working in related areas can now access information on COSC's policy, research and communications activities. Information on progress in developing the National Strategy on Domestic and Sexual Violence and on funding programmes is also available.

To find out more about COSC's work and developments visit

www.cosc.ie where you can subscribe to the regular COSC newsletter. Visit the 'What's New?' section of the website to sign up to receive this newsletter by email. The newsletter will contain updates on all COSC's ongoing projects and funding news.

Any comments or suggestions as to how www.cosc.ie could be developed to further assist you in your work would be welcome by e-mail to cosc@justice.ie

[The full text of the interview with Éimear Fisher can be read in the forthcoming issue of 'Family Law Matters'.]



Getting the Information on Domestic and Sexual Violence

Do you know someone who is or has been the victim of domestic or sexual violence? Do you know where to get information to help them?

Dealing with the special care needs of children

Aidan Kelly talks to Children Act Advisory Board (CAAB) Chief Executive, Aidan Browne about the organisation and provision of special care services for children in Ireland

Special care refers to a place of detention where troubled youths are placed by order of the High Court. There are three special care units around the country - one in Dublin, one in Cork and one in Limerick. All are run and funded by the Health Service Executive and all are uniquely designed to simultaneously ensure the child's protection and protect the staff from allegations. CAAB are hoping to move away from special care units in the future, focusing instead on early intervention and rehabilitation programmes.

The number of girls in special care has always been a cause for concern for the CAAB. According to Mr Browne, many females end up in the units after being subjected to sexual crimes. "Girls tend to be more vulnerable. The reason for this is girls tend to 'act in' when they are troubled, while boys tend to 'act out'. They are more likely to be heading off to the psychiatric side of things than boys." However, he is happy with the drop in the number of females in special care units and says a lot of this is a direct



Special care refers to a place of detention where troubled youths are placed by order of the High Court.

result of the actions of the judiciary.

"In 2007, Mr. Justice Sheehan said we should be chasing the perpetrators of sexual crimes, rather than the victims. He said that if you take away the other side of the risk, there will be a reduction in the number of girls seeking help"

One initiative CAAB hope to put in place is to follow a cohort of children for whom an application for special care was made. They will examine what happens to those who go through the system and those children who don't go through the system to see if there are any differences. "That piece of research will be very useful moving on into the future and one that I am looking forward to being a part of", said Mr Brown.

The board also publishes guidelines on the qualifications, criteria for appointment, training and role of any guardian ad litem appointed for children in proceedings under the Child Care Act, 1991.

This is abridged version of an interview with Aidan Browne which will be published in 'Family Law Matters' Spring 2009 issue.



Introducing the Irish Sentencing Information System

The Irish Sentencing Information System (ISIS) comprises a steering committee with a judge from each court jurisdiction and Professor Tom O'Malley of NUI Galway. It is tasked with planning for and providing information on sentencing in Ireland.

Information is currently gathered from the Circuit Criminal Court in Dublin and Cork and the District Court in Dublin.

Barristers **Brian Conroy** and **Paul G. Gunning** explain how ISIS works:

The Irish pilot system doesn't simply imitate one of the various sentencing schemes created abroad, but aims to take what are considered to be the best aspects of each and combine these with modifications to suit the Irish legal landscape. Details of a broad range of sentences handed down in respect of offences dealt with before the Circuit Criminal Court are posted on a searchable database that is intended to become available as a reference tool. It is intended that the extent to which and the way in which a judge uses the database will be a matter entirely within his or her own discretion.

Collating Data

Researchers are employed on a part-time basis to gather sentencing information on foot of their attendance at court hearings.

They only deal with matters in relation to which they are privy to all of the evidence put before the sentencing judge. Data is not collected regarding, for example, sentencing matters which were adjourned for probation and welfare reports to a sitting of the court for which a researcher was not present or where a researcher was not present on the first date on which evidence was heard. This is because there is a possibility that certain important details pressed at the hearing in such cases would not be recorded.

The researchers have access to relevant case files to fill in any gaps in the information available from the oral evidence tendered before the court. This option is used sparingly by the researchers, on the basis that it is the matters actually tendered before the court that are relevant to the sentence

handed down. However, recourse to the file is useful in cases where, for example, certain evidence tendered is not clearly audible in court.

Significant efforts are made to ensure that the data is representative of sentencing practice in general by collecting information from as broad a selection of judges as possible, thus avoiding a situation where the final database simply reflects one judge's approach to sentencing. Furthermore, it is intended to collect information relating to as broad a range of offences as possible.

The Data Collected

The majority of data collected to date relates to the Circuit Court. Many of the matters included relate to the "common or garden" offences that sentencing

Circuit Court judges deal with on a day-to-day basis: robbery, burglary, unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle contrary to s.112 of the Road Traffic Act 1961, possession of controlled drugs for sale or supply contrary to Section 15A and/or Section 15 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977, assault causing harm and/or serious harm, and

before the Circuit Court relatively rarely, including the following: using a false instrument contrary to s.26 of the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act 2001, child neglect, making a counterfeit social welfare travel pass, illegal importation of tobacco products contrary to the Customs Consolidation Act

effect on the quality of the information made available, as all matters relevant to the sentencing decision are recorded. In order to distinguish between the various database entries, and for ease of reference, each database entry is given an identifying number.

Other courts

A pilot exercise to gather information in Dublin District Court commenced in January 2009.

The database is intended to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. It is not envisaged that the courts should be in any sense bound by the sentencing precedents available on the database, but merely that they should be able to derive assistance from them.

The manner in which the sentencing information is collected and stored is required to comply with Data Protection legislation. Accordingly, neither the name of the accused nor the number of the indictment on which he or she is sentenced is stored in the database.

criminal damage. There are a smaller number of sentencing matters recorded involving offences that, while somewhat less common, are certainly within the ordinary experience of most Circuit Court judges who deal regularly with criminal matters: possession of child pornography, dangerous driving causing death, indecent assault, making threats to kill, possession of ammunition and/or firearms, reckless endangerment and violent disorder. Finally, certain of the sentencing matters recorded involve offences that come

1876, corruptly receiving funds, failing to file tax returns, breaches of the Environmental Protection legislation, breaches of the Companies Acts and keeping a brothel.

The manner in which the sentencing information is collected and stored is required to comply with Data Protection legislation. Accordingly, neither the name of the accused nor the number of the indictment on which he or she is sentenced is stored in the database. This would not appear to have any appreciable

ISIS COMMITTEE

- Mrs. Justice Susan Denham
- Mr. Justice Michael Peart
- Mr. Justice Esmond Smyth
- Judge Miriam Malone
- Professor Thomas O'Malley

LEGAL AID BOARD – assisting family law litigants

The Legal Aid Board provides free legal advice and representation to clients who qualify under their assessment criteria. **Luke O'Neill** spoke to Frank Brady, Director of Legal Aid at the Legal Aid Board about how their service helps clients taking family law cases:

The Legal Aid Board covers almost every area of civil litigation, with very few exclusions. Cases in the family law area make up a large proportion of their work.

"Over the years there would be very few people who would have come to us with a civil law problem which would not have come within the remit of legal aid. We take a lot of what might be referred to as test cases," says Frank Brady.

The Legal Aid board has 30 offices around the country with solicitors who are directly employed by them. They employ 90 solicitors in their general law centres around the country and another 20 solicitors who deal with cases related to refugee appeals.

Mr. Brady says that their centres have noticed a significant increase in business over the last 18 months. This has been coupled with a reduction in their resources, posing a challenge to the board. They have noticed that demand is up by around 15 per cent.

The Legal Aid Board has been trying to move people away from seeing the court as the obvious solution by looking at structured forms of negotiation.

"We have for example an external consultative panel where we have structured interaction with agencies such as the Family Mediation Service and the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) and we would refer people who come to us to those services. And we would see that process as an important part of providing a totality of a service to clients," says Mr Brady.

"If somebody comes to us with a problem it may be a legal problem but the best solution for them may not be going to law it may be mediation or another kind of structured negotiation," he adds.

"The priority is that we want to look at doing things differently and trying to direct people away from court. And we also want to look very critically at the way we do business and not just come along criticising the courts. Because we can probably do business better. We have prepared reports on our law centres and our head office and risk assessments, all with the intention of enabling us to provide a service at less cost."

The full interview with Frank Brady will be published in the forthcoming issue of *Family Law Matters*.

‘New measures to CHANGE AND TRANSFORM our public services’

A new phase in the modernisation of our Public Service was launched by the Taoiseach, Mr. Brian Cowen, T.D., at the end of last year. This amounts to a radical overhaul of our Public Service, and will change the way the Public Service is managed and how it does its business as **Corita Goulding** explains:

The package of measures launched by the Taoiseach included:-

- The Government Statement on Transforming Public Services;
- The Report of the Task Force on the Public Service ‘Transforming Public Services’; and
- The first Report of the Organisational Review Programme (ORP).

We are all aware of the importance of the Public Service and of how modernising the Public Service must be an ongoing process to ensure that we continue to meet citizens’ needs and continue to make a valuable contribution to the success of our economy and our society. This package of measures provides our Public Service with the means to change - the imperative for change has never been greater than it is today, and the challenges never more significant. It represents a challenging agenda for transforming the Public Service. Its implementation will be lead and driven by the Taoiseach, as chair of the Cabinet Committee on Transforming Public Services. In addition, a Programme Office, based in the Department of the Taoiseach, is being established to support organisations in their change efforts and to support the Government in driving, co-ordinating and monitoring progress in implementation.

This new phase includes putting the citizen/user of public services at the centre of our work, greater use of technology and the internet to deliver services to the public, greater sharing of information across public service organisations; and the greater use of shared services.

It means greater involvement of the citizen in the making of policy and in the design and delivery of services,

offering choice to citizens in how they access public services, and making it easier for them to identify and benefit from those services most relevant to their needs. It means publicly setting out the standards of service the public can expect from us, publishing catalogues of services available to particular groups of users of public

services, and publishing a list of all public services available by county. It means the Public Service thinking as one and working together more effectively, and a single talent pool and labour market for the entire Public Service. It means addressing underperformance, being more accountable as individuals and organisations, and having flexibility in allocating people and resources to new priority areas wherever they arise across the Public Service.

In addition, the Organisational Review Programme (ORP) has been extending. Within 36 months, all Government Departments and major Offices will be reviewed. Already under the pilot ORP, the Departments of Agriculture, Fisheries, & Food, Enterprise, Trade & Employment, and Transport have been reviewed. This



review entails an assessment of the capacity of individual organisations to meet their challenges and commitments over the coming years by

It means greater involvement of the citizen in the making of policy and in the design and delivery of services

looking at issues such as strategy; leadership; customer service; innovation; resource management; and engagement of stakeholders. Further details of this programme together with the first ORP Report are available at www.orp.ie

FURTHER INFORMATION

Full details of the new programme for transforming public services are available on www.bettergov.ie (the website dedicated to the modernisation of the Public Service). In addition, hard copies of the Government Statement, and reports are available on request from Ms. Bridget Estridge, Department of the Taoiseach at: (01) 619 4234 or by email at Bridget.Estridge@taoiseach.gov.ie

Celebrating ten years of **COURTS SERVICE NEWS**



For many it was the first communication they had ever received about their workplace - written with them in mind and delivered to their desk.

Ten years ago when we started *Courts Service News (CSN)* it was different in size, colour, content and approach. Although at first it may have been a little formal in manner - it was a real first. For the first time people working around the courts and for the courts had a publication from which they could learn of the work, business, plans, changes and developments in the operations of the courts, and the then new Courts Service.

For many it was the first

communication they had ever received about their workplace - written with them in mind and delivered to their desk.

It was never the intention that CSN would be an official organ of the Courts Service - giving official central news only. We've tried in the past decade to include many views and varying news about the justice community - including features on developments in the area of juvenile justice, improvements and operations in the area of family law

and discussions with a wide variety of people from the providers of probation services to the vulnerable, to the homeless boy on the verge of breaking free from a life of crime. We've interviewed many people from our own Chief Justice and Chief Executive Officers to visiting justices and officials from various parts of the world.

Our varied approach has included asking you our readers what it is you like and don't like in regular surveys. Over the years we've

featured matters you told us you like - regional, local and national news together with news of an international interest in our 'Around the World' section. We've had a series of heritage and history pieces - with great responses to our publication of old photos with help from readers in identifying many featured in them.

Many of our heavier items have been balanced with quizzes, social and sports club reports and competitions. Along with these we've included pieces of interest on the extra curricular activities of people who work with us. We've tried to provide not only a staff magazine but a publication with something of interest for everyone in the justice community.

Our style has also changed from A3/Berliner sizes to a more metro size now - with a graduated layout replaced by a more modern modular approach - making it easier to read especially when travelling - an activity many of you reported as your favourite way to read CSN. Our mast head has gone from departmental green, to the official Courts Service blue logo, then to a more abstract transparent treatment of the logo and now presented in a clean, of this century, font.

These changes have been made to keep the publication fresh in attitude. Our mode of delivery has changed with many of you receiving CSN in either PDF format or by way of links to our website. This e-zine approach has not only helped us



Dan Boland delivering Courts Service News in the early days

Our varied approach has included asking you our readers what it is you like and don't like





The team behind Courts Service News in its infancy, Helen, Alan and Barbara.

maintain the publication and distribution in these frugal times but has also allowed us expand to whom and when we can send it. An ever expanding audience awaits us through the electronic delivery of the magazine and through its placement on our website www.courts.ie – where both current and archival copies can be found.

For those who still prefer hard copy we have maintained our quality of publication. With your

continued input and reading of CSN we look forward to another decade of keeping you informed of the world of providing court services and information.

We're always delighted to hear from you and look forward to receiving many more contributions in the years ahead.

Please let us know if you would like to receive CSN electronically. We're only an email away. Contact us at: CourtsServiceNews@courts.ie

With your continued input and reading of CSN we look forward to another decade of keeping you informed of the world of providing court services and information.



Welcoming Visitors on our Outreach Programme

Community groups continue to avail of the Courts Service Outreach Programme which includes an opportunity to visit the courts and meet with judges and staff. Recent visitors included **Northside Community Law Centre** and **St. James's Hospital**.

Northside Community Law Centre is an independent community based legal centre serving Dublin North Central and Dublin North East. It works to protect and develop the legal, social and economic rights of individuals and groups. The Centre provides free information, advice and representation to individuals and groups who otherwise would not be able to get legal services, and works to give power to the community through education, research and campaigns.

The Centre runs a Family Law Matters course, accredited at FETAC Level 4. The course gives a basic understanding of the rights and entitlements of the child and family under Irish and international law, and helps students to become better informed about the legal framework through which family matters are dealt with in the Irish legal system

Students on the course met with recently appointed Judge Dermot Dempsey of the District Family Law Court and discussed the operation of a court office with Eoin Manning and Seamus Glackin. They also visited a criminal court in the Four Courts.

St. James's Hospital is one of biggest hospitals in the country. Students undertaking a Post Graduate Higher Diploma in A&E Nursing through Trinity College Dublin visited the Four Courts to gain an insight into the operation of the court system. This knowledge will assist them should they be called to court to provide evidence in relation to a patient they have cared for. The 12 month course, overseen by a clinical facilitator, exposes the students to all aspects of A&E Nursing.

The visit included sitting in on cases in the Central Criminal Court and the custody courts in Dublin District Court. Reaction to the visit was very positive with the facilitator vowing that they would be back again.



From Left: NCLC – Seamus Glackin, Judge Dermot Dempsey and Eoin Manning (in the centre of group) with visitors from Northside Community Law Centre on recent visit to the Family Law Office at Dolphin House.



Students from St. James's Hospital pictured on a recent visit to the Four Courts, with John Quirke, Courts Service Information Office.

And from further a field...



Kosovo Chamber of Advocates (seated) during their visit to the Courts Service in December 2008. Helen Priestley, information Office and Kieran Falvey BL in the background.



Warwick Soden - Registrar and Chief Executive of the Federal Court of Australia and Ms Megan Greenwood, CEO & Principal Registrar, Supreme Court of New South Wales with John Mahon, Public Private Partnership Unit.



Justice Officials from Bosnia & Herzegovina on a study tour February 2009



The Drug Treatment Court

Celebrations at the Drug Treatment Court

Words of encouragement, tribute and congratulation were heard at the Drug Treatment Court's recent graduation ceremony. Judge Bridget Reilly was joined by Mrs. Justice Susan Denham and Judge Patrick McMahon to mark the occasion.

Welcoming those in attendance, Judge Reilly said it was an inspiring day, because graduating were two men "who have given great joy and pride to many people". "Today marks the end of the first part of the journey for these young men," added Judge Reilly. "They are now on what I like to call the main road. They now have the opportunity to make a good life better".

Every participant on the Drug Treatment Court is assessed and a programme is agreed which suits them individually. Judge Reilly said that it was her firm belief that every

person who took part in the programme stood to gain. Participants must bring structure into their lives out of chaos, something which was not an easy thing to do. The court heard warm tributes to the graduates from Gardai working at the court, from the Probation Service and from the Education co-ordinator.

Addressing those present Supreme Court Judge Mrs. Justice Denham said of the programme, "it is not an easy option, it requires great courage and self determination".

As she wished the graduates well for their future, Judge Denham commented that earlier in the day she had the honour of seeing some students graduate from Trinity College, and for both set of graduates these few words were appropriate. "Though we live in a world that dreams of ending / that always seems about to give in / something that will not acknowledge conclusion / insists that we forever begin". - Brendan Kennelly - Begin.

■ The Drug Court Treatment Programme operates from Court 50 in the Richmond Court complex in Brunswick Street, Dublin 7. Details of the programme are available on the Courts Service website at www.courts.ie



AROUND THE WORLD



Facebook used to serve defendants in Australian court case

In what is believed to be a world first, the Australian Capital Territory Supreme Court recently allowed service of a default judgment using the social networking website, Facebook.

Lawyers in Canberra were given permission to use Facebook to serve the court documents after they used the internet to trace the defendants in the case. They had defaulted on a loan and failed to appear in court to respond to the proceedings.

Facebook has attracted some 140 million users worldwide since it began in 2004. Users can "poke" their friends – an electronic tap on the shoulder. They can also affix messages or attachments on a friend's "wall" – an area of the Facebook page.

This is not the first time Australian courts have used technology to assist in the service of court documents. They

have previously given permission for people to be served via e-mail and text messages.



India: So we think we have backlogs?

The Irish Independent recently reported that according to the Chief Justice the High Court in New Delhi, India, is so behind in its work it could take up to 466 years to clear the enormous backlog. The court gets through cases in an average of four minutes and 55 seconds but still has tens of thousands pending, including over 600 that are more than 20 years old.



Some interesting approaches in Spain

The 'Costa Blanca Leader' reports that the work on the recently opened law courts in Torrevieja was the result of a barter between the builder, who did the work in exchange for a piece of land. The courts were built at a cost of €5.2 million. The paper also reports that during the

inauguration ceremony Valencian president Francisco Camps was asked to provide more security for judges (in the form of a metal detector) and two further law courts to enable them deal with the enormous workload they have accumulated. The president pointed out the progress which Torrevieja has made since 1999 when there were no law courts whatsoever. Today there are nine.

But despite this good news for Torrevieja it appears that the Spanish judicial system is in dire straits. Spanish judges recently staged an unprecedented strike to call for more resources for courts they say struggle under an intolerable workload using outdated technology. Reuters reported that at least 63 per cent of Spain's roughly 3,500 serving judges joined a one day protest, to be followed by another stoppage in June unless their demands are met. The government says it is doing what it can to modernise the courts and that judges do not have the right to strike.

Courts Service News

Do you still want a copy?



The results of a recent survey conducted with our staff show that the majority are happy to receive *Courts Service News* via our website. We are interested to find out the preferences of all our other readers.

Courts Service News is posted to our website www.courts.ie. From now on all readers who provide us with an email address will be notified as each issue is published. Only those readers who make a specific request will receive a hard copy.

If you would still like to receive a hard copy of *Courts Service*

News please email courtsservicenews@courts.ie, write to *Courts Service News*, Information Office, 6th Floor Phoenix House, Smithfield, Dublin 7 or phone 01 888 6457/6459.

To be included on our email list please send an email to courtsservicenews@courts.ie.

Courts Service Golf Society

'Enjoyment is our first priority'. The society caters for all levels and standards and new members are always welcome.

This year's Captain is Declan Power from the Family Law Office, Phoenix House.

The first outing will be in Kilkea Castle on Wednesday the 8th April, 2009.

Members who wish to book their place on the timesheet can contact Rob Rogers at 01 8886396, or at rrogers@courts.ie



RETIRED STAFF

Come to our Summer Evening in Smithfield

The annual Summer Evening in Smithfield will take place in May. Retired staff will be notified of the details closer to the date. We look forward to seeing you all there for the usual night of song, chat and laughter.

REMEMBERING MR. JUSTICE KEVIN HAUGH



"He was highly respected both as a barrister and as a judge. He was a barrister's barrister, and much loved. He was an extraordinarily clear thinker with a very analytical brain. He was the best man to charge a jury without a book or a note."

Mr. Justice Kevin Haugh died suddenly on 29th January aged 64. He was born into a legal family, his father Kevin served as attorney general and later as a judge of the High and Supreme Court. The younger Kevin attended Castleknock College in Dublin and studied law in University College Dublin before qualifying as a barrister in at the King's Inns. He was called to the Bar in 1966 and became senior counsel in 1983. He was elected a bencher of the King's Inns in 1994.

He acted in a number of high profile cases both as prosecuting and defence counsel. One of the best known cases was that of Brendan O'Donnell who murdered Imelda Riney, her son Liam and a local priest Fr Joseph Walsh. Kevin Haugh was the prosecuting counsel and O'Donnell was convicted in 1996 after unsuccessfully seeking to plead insanity. As a judge he made a landmark decision restraining the

prosecution of Charles Haughey on charges of obstructing the McCracken Tribunal following comments from Mary Harney, the Minister for Health, suggesting that he was guilty.

In March 1998, he was nominated to the Administrative Tribunal of the United Nations. The following year in a vote by the General Assembly he topped the poll and this led to him serving two four-year terms in New York and Geneva.

In October 2005 he was nominated by the Cabinet for appointment to the High Court in anticipation of his appointment as chairman of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission. Last year he indicated to the Government that he wished to return to the Bench; he was looking forward to this eagerly hoping to sit on the Central Criminal Court where he could put his vast experience to use.

A leading criminal senior counsel said 'He was highly respected both as a

barrister and as a judge. He was a barrister's barrister, and much loved. He was an extraordinarily clear thinker with a very analytical brain. He was the best man to charge a jury without a book or a note". Senior Counsel Michael O'Higgins in his tribute in the *Sunday Independent* described him as 'a good colleague and a great barrister'. He was also a fine judge who never made the mistake of being judgemental".

He loved travelling and was immensely sociable, his major interest was hot air ballooning. He is survived by his wife Annette, his children Sarah, Bob and Geraldine and three grandchildren.

A full obituary to Mr. Justice Haugh appeared in the *'Irish Times'* on 31st January 2009. Extracts are published here with kind permission of the *'Irish Times'*.

REMEMBERING PATRICK HENRY PEARSE (PADDY) WALDRON

Patrick (Paddy) Waldron who died recently will be fondly remembered by many in the Four Courts. Born in Limerick in 1917, Paddy went to school in Dublin, first in Muckross, and then in the Catholic University School (CUS) where he distinguished himself in hurling and in cricket, as well as academically. Mar a bhí ag go leor eile dá mhuintir, bhí spéis aige sa Ghaeilge agus bhí sé bródúil go bhfuair sé marc níos airde i scrúdú i gCraobh Dhomhnach Broc den Chonradh ná cuid eile dá mhuintir a thuill gradam níos airde ar ball. But his interest was much more in West Clare with his relations than in the Gaeltacht and he was to spend 72 consecutive summer holidays there, always trying to be at the races on Kilkee strand. Family circumstances did not permit an immediate entry to third level education and Paddy joined the civil service. Working in the Four Courts, he was able to study law in TCD and was called to the Bar at the King's Inns in 1948.

In the relaxed Four Courts of the day, he was also able to pursue sporting interests, mostly notably as a cricketer with Merrion CC, where he still headed the batting averages up to the advent of professionalism. He had the honour of playing for the Gentlemen of Ireland in 1946 and 1947 and would probably have done so earlier but for other events which stopped international sport. Plus he had a huge interest in horse-and dog-racing.

And these interests were shared with Noreen Durkan, from Swinford, Co Mayo, who also worked in the Four Courts. She was called to the Bar with Paddy in 1948. She was the 28th woman to be called to the Bar and achieved a Victoria Award and higher marks than some who were to become judges. Later, she was Assistant Probate Officer; later again, Paddy himself became Probate Officer.

In 1961, they married and Noreen resigned, as the civil service required at the time, and as was her



Paddy with Noreen Durkin when they were called to the Bar in 1948. They married in 1961.

own wish. There was a tragedy when their first child, Conor, was stillborn. Then arrived Paddy (Jr), John and Rónán. Sadly, Noreen was to die in 1978 at the early age of 57 before she could know of their achievements

Paddy had retired from the Courts in 1977 as Probate Officer, having previously worked in the Taxing Masters' Office, the Office of Wards of Court, the Examiners' Office, the Supreme Court Office, the Office of the Court of Criminal Appeal and the Central Office of the High Court (where he also served as Admiralty Marshall).

He was proud of his kinswoman Georgina Frost, the first woman to hold public office in what was then the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland as Clerk of Petty Sessions in Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare. He cooperated with Joanne Rose in researching this story and how it made legal history, including opposition from officialdom in Dublin to Georgina's repeated election by the local magistrates, an appeal to the House of Lords, the passage of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919 on the eve of the final judgment and the abolition of the Petty Sessions Courts after independence.

He was also connected by marriage to Kathleen Talty from Rahaniska, Co Clare, and published the story of the cake baked by Kathleen which contained the key which allowed De Valera to escape from Lincoln Jail on 3 February 1919.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.



Paddy on holidays in Carrigaholt, Co Clare

REMEMBERING JUDGE CONOR MAGUIRE

Conor Maguire was born in Dublin in 1922 into a family steeped in law and politics. His mother was Nora Whelan from Co. Wexford. His barrister father, Conor Alexander Maguire, was instrumental in setting up the Sinn Féin courts system during the War of Independence, later became a founder member of Fianna Fáil and, from 1946 to 1961, was Chief Justice. He was also one of the first judges of the European Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg.

After schooling at Belvedere College, the younger Maguire studied law at UCD and the King's Inns. He became very active in Fianna Fáil, serving on the national executive. Called to the Bar in 1944, he practised on the Western Circuit

The arts played a huge part in Conor's life. After his retirement, being well known for his encyclopaedic knowledge of modern big band and jazz music, he was asked to fill in as a presenter for 10 weekly musical programmes on RTE's Radio 1 in 1988.

and took silk in 1959, when he was called to the Inner Bar by his father in his role as Chief Justice. He became a judge himself in 1964, and was appointed to the Midland Circuit of the Circuit Court.

After Ireland joined the then European Economic Community (EEC) on 1st January 1973, he was appointed a counsellor in the Office of the Director of Competition at the EEC's headquarters in Brussels. An aspect of his work which he considered important in this role was the introduction, with colleagues from the UK, of the principles of common law. He became in time an enthusiastic Europhile. He returned to Ireland in 1982 to become

director of the EU's office in Dublin and held the position for four years.

The arts played a huge part in Conor's life. After his retirement, being well known for his encyclopaedic knowledge of modern big band and jazz music, he was asked to fill in as a presenter for 10 weekly musical programmes on RTE's Radio 1 in 1988. Those 10 weeks became 11 years, with the show, *In the Mood*, building a loyal and widespread audience. His producer, Tom McGrane, said that when they had a special request programme every six weeks, letters would arrive from all over Ireland and Britain. "Conor prepared his scripts with a legalistic thoroughness", McGrane said. "He would go to the ends of the earth to find a snippet of information about an artiste to introduce a special request". He also played a significant role, as Chairman of the Films Appeals Board from 1965 until 1973, in the liberalisation of film censorship in the Republic.

In his private life, Conor Maguire was motivated by a strong Catholic Christian faith, and involved himself quite heavily in charitable commitments. He and his wife, Katriona (nee Delahunty), worked as brancardiers at Lourdes. He was also a trustee of the Cheshire Foundation in Ireland, and a board member of its home in Shillelagh, Co. Wicklow. He served three years as president of the Irish section of World University Services, and from 1992 until 2007 was president of the



Picture Above: Conor Maguire presenting big band music programme *In The Mood* on RTE Radio 1. Photo: Courtesy of The Irish Times

Irish section of the European Cultural Foundation. He also served a term as president of Wicklow Rotary Club and was a trustee of the replication plot at Glasnevin Cemetery.

A keen golfer, he played in a fourball which included the late president Patrick Hillery, a close friend. He was also a keen gardener and won prizes at Arklow Horticultural Society for grapes he grew on his small farm at Three Mile Water in Brittas Bay.

He is survived by Katriona, their daughter Cliona (Fox), and sons Conor and Kieran.

This is an edited version of an obituary which appeared in the *'Irish Times'* on 19th January 2009. Published with kind permission of the *'Irish Times'*.

Remembering Bernadette Kiely

Bernadette Kiely was a member of staff in Limerick Circuit Court Office from April 2006 until her untimely passing last November. She began her career in Dublin Castle and worked in Middleton, Henry Street (Limerick) and Bruff Garda Stations before joining the Courts Service. She is survived by her loving husband Dom and son Kevin.

In her short time in this office her benevolent personality made a huge and lasting impression on us all. We think of Bernie as always smiling, ever helpful, kind and open. She is greatly missed.

May her gentle soul rest in peace.



Judge Victor Blake



Judge David Kennedy with his wife Laura and their children



Judge Heather Perrin pictured with her husband Albert and her daughter Sybil.

New District COURT JUDGES

■ **Mr. Victor Blake has been appointed a judge of the Dublin Metropolitan District.**

Prior to his appointment Judge Blake was a solicitor with his own practice in Lucan, Co. Dublin. He has many years of experience in all areas of law including conveyancing, chancery, wills and probate, common law, contract, tort, criminal and planning.

■ **Mr. David W. Kennedy B.L. has been appointed a judge to the Waterford District (District No. 24).**

Judge Kennedy graduated as a barrister-at-law from the Honourable Society of Kings Inns in 1993. He devilled in Dublin for one year following which he practiced on the South Western Circuit. His practice comprised mainly of tort, opinions on title and personal injury litigation.

■ **Ms. Heather Perrin has been appointed a judge of the Dublin Metropolitan District Court.**

Judge Perrin attended Trinity College, Dublin and The Incorporated Law Society, Blackhall Place where she qualified as a solicitor in 1983. She has practiced as a sole practitioner since 1994 covering all areas of law including conveyancing, litigation, family law, probate and criminal.

NEW CHIEF CLERK FOR NENAGH DISTRICT COURT

Martin Hanton has recently been appointed Chief District Court Clerk in Nenagh. Martin started his career in the Courts Service in the Circuit Court office in Clonmel and for the past eight years has been District Court Clerk in Thurles.

New Face At The Media Information Office

Aidan Kelly has joined the Courts Service as part of the Media Information Office. He replaces Luke O'Neill as Assistant Media Officer and will work closely with Mr Gerry Curran on a day-to-day basis.

Originally from Edenderry in County Offaly, 21-year-old Aidan recently graduated from Dublin City University with a BA in Journalism. He joins us from Dublin radio station, Dublin's 98, where he worked as a newsreader and reporter over the past year.

As part of this work, Aidan has covered a wide range of topical issues, from the Referendum on the Lisbon treaty and the American Presidential election to the Oxegen music festival. He has interviewed key public figures including the leaders of all major political parties and has travelled to Brussels for a European Union leaders' summit.

For his degree, Aidan also studied in the United States in West Virginia University, where he enrolled in the prestigious Perley Isaac Reed School of Journalism. During this time, he also worked in the local town radio station and newspaper as a reporter.

A keen reader, Aidan has a strong interest in politics, law, media and travel. He has travelled extensively throughout the United States and Europe and would eventually like to travel to South America and Asia. Aidan is delighted to join the Courts Service at an exciting time.

"I'm looking forward to my new role and meeting new people. It involves huge responsibility and requires quick action in a fast moving media world. Everyone has been very helpful and friendly so far and I look forward to working with and assisting people during my time here."



Colleagues Bid Farewell to Jimmy Elston

Phoenix House was the venue for a big send off recently as Jimmy Elston retired after nearly 27 years in the courts.

New Chief Executive Officer, Brendan Ryan recalled meeting Jimmy on his first day in the Four Courts in 1982. "I'll remember Jimmy as a committed worker with a great temperament", he said. Jimmy worked initially as tipstaff to Mr. Justice Ronan Keane, who later became Chief Justice. When the judge was appointed to the Law Reform Commission Jimmy took up a position as a service officer. He spent many years in the photocopying room in the Four Courts before transferring to Phoenix House.

Jimmy's legacy in the Four Courts will be as much for his dedication to his trade union as to his dedication to his work. Former general secretary of FUGE, Michael Coffey recalled Jimmy's work on behalf of his colleagues. "I could always rely on Jimmy to keep me up to speed. He did great work both as an executive member and as chairperson of the court branch". His reliability and tenacity were also recalled by Head Service Officer, Joe Hanlon and colleague Pat Dempsey.

As for Jimmy, he said he didn't regret a day he'd spent in the courts. He



Jimmy and his wife Mary.

commented on the great friends he'd made and said that he intended to keep in touch with many of them. "I've met so many kind and helpful people in my

time here. It was a nice place to work".

We wish Jimmy, his wife Mary and all his family health and happiness for the future.

REACHING OUT TO THOSE IN THE GREATEST NEED



John Gaffney of Tullamore Circuit Court recently travelled to Nyenga, Uganda to visit a hospital set up by two former pupils of St. Camillus College, Killucan, Co Westmeath. John and five other past pupils have formed a committee 'The Camillian Ugandan Relief Project' to help support the work of the hospital.

The 'Camillian Ugandan Mission' was set up in Nyenga 9 years ago by two Irish Priests, Fr. Tom O'Connor and Fr. Tom Smith. The mission deals with people suffering from HIV/ AIDS. Extreme poverty is abundant and with the onslaught of the AIDS epidemic, Uganda's problems are great. Since 2002, St. Camillus past pupils and friends have contributed towards the restructuring of an out patient's hospital, the establishment of a jeep/ambulance service to the outer regions and various other development projects.

HIV/AIDS destroys the immune system and victims succumb to the numerous viruses and diseases. In 2004, Fr. Smith introduced the Anti Retroviral Treatment (ARV) scheme and with regular treatment, good nutrition, and hygiene, there is no reason HIV/AIDS victims can't have full life expectancy. This regime of treatment is also proving very successful in the prevention of the transmission of HIV/AIDS between mothers and babies. Eighteen local staff are employed in Fr. Smith's clinic. For those unable to travel to the clinic an out-reach ambulance goes to them. There are 4 clinics per week on a 4 week cycle, so patients registered with these remote clinics have the opportunity to be medically checked once a month.

The clinic is currently treating 1,150 patients with HIV/AIDS including 150 children. Only 6 of these children have a parent surviving. I could not get over the good humour and "get on with life" attitude of the men and women I met. No long faces, lots of smiles and despite the poverty, a willingness to share. On one

occasion a meal was prepared in our honour - a very humbling experience as these people have very little to give.

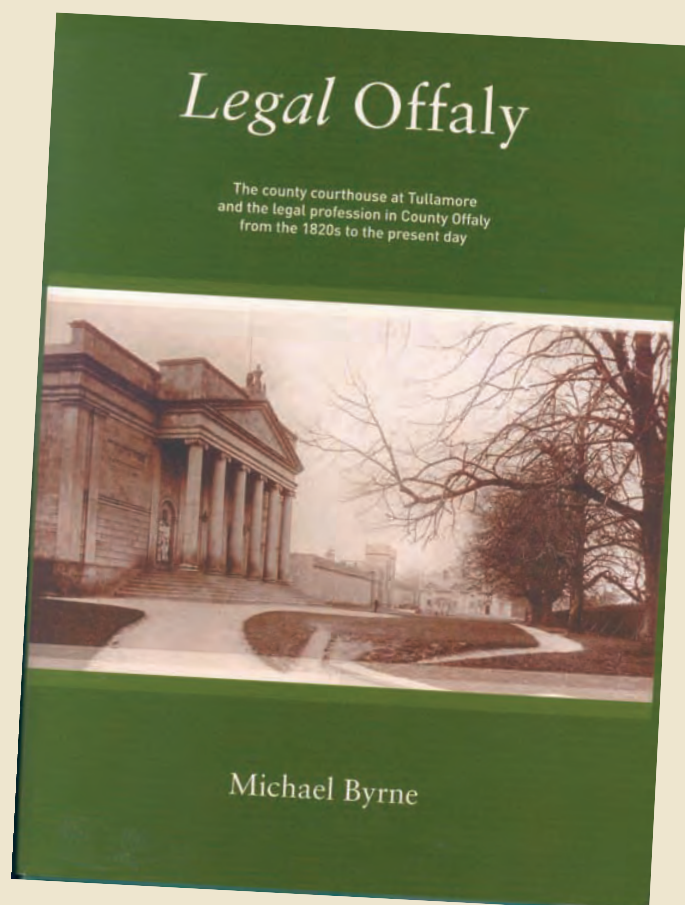
We visited the refugee camps outside Jinja. According to another former schoolmate, Fr. Frank Monks, who had been to refugee camps and slums throughout most of the Third World, these equated with the worst he'd seen. Dirt, disease, everything about the place made you want to scratch. In the slums I witnessed the proliferation of home-made distilleries where the women produce a lethal brew to sell to the men for a few pence to help feed their children. The consumption of this brew leads to violence, rape and the further spread of HIV/AIDS. In the middle of all this children run around, barefoot, half naked and exposed to every ailment going.

We were shown around by Mary Kafco, a remarkable lady whose husband, a noted professor, was murdered by Idi Amin's soldiers. Despite being widowed with 10 children, she threw herself into setting up relief centres, schools and various FAS-type projects to save young women from the vice industry by teaching them skills such as dressmaking, hairdressing and catering. This allows them to set up micro businesses so they can become self sufficient and in turn improve their lot and that of their children. To help her work the Camillian's have funded fresh water schemes and rented small factory units as workshops and teaching centres. However there is a dire need for increased medical intervention in these areas. And it is in these camps we are hoping to focus our attention in the foreseeable future.

Anyone interested in contributing to this project or finding out more about it can contact John Gaffney, Tullamore Circuit Court Office, 057 - 9321205 or you can make direct contact with the Camillian's through Fr. Frank Monks, St. Camillus House, Killucan, Co. Westmeath.

LEGAL OFFALY

LEGAL OFFALY – The county courthouse in Tullamore and the legal profession in County Offaly from the 1820s to the present day (Michael Byrne; Esker Press for the Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society, €30)



This is a book of history and record. It is a beautifully presented and illustrated book containing a wealth of interesting information and photographs. It is impressive in its thoroughness and paints a detailed landscape, in which the development of Irish legal and social culture has matured over the centuries. Even though it is specific to Offaly, the nature of such changes are doubtless mirrored throughout our country's history.

In his foreword to the book, An Taoiseach Brian Cowen T.D., himself an Offaly man and a solicitor, notes that "buildings are part of the story and what is also important are the character sketches of those who have helped shape the law and have offered interpretations and guidance at local level... "

In his preface to the book, Mr. John Shaw, President of the Law Society of Ireland 2008-09 notes "....studies such as this, on our own profession, demonstrate the achievements made by our predecessors in the promotion of law and justice in the local community over a lengthy period".

The idea for this book was prompted by the refurbishment of Tullamore Courthouse which was officially reopened in April 2007. The author is a historian and a well known and respected solicitor in Tullamore. It is a book that one can dip in and out of and find that many hours have passed unknowingly as the history of the courthouse, legal system and characters of the county unfold. It includes a most interesting account of the laying of the foundation stone of Tullamore gaol in 1826 which was used by Lord Tullamore to begin the campaign for building

a new courthouse in the town. The author tells of the raising of funds for the building of the courthouse, the difficulties in the removal of the assizes to Tullamore from Philipstown (now Daingean) and includes many pieces of correspondence from the 19th century.

Over and above the actual courthouse building, the legal system and legal profession in Offaly are chronicled. Biographical notes are given for solicitors who have practised or currently practice in Offaly. The book contains information on many of the old firms and families who held prominent positions in law, business and public life over the decades.

Not only is the solicitors' profession carefully chronicled, so is that of the judiciary and Bar. It is interesting to note that two former Chief Justices were members of the Midland Bar - Mr. Justice Thomas F. O'Higgins and Mr. Justice Thomas A. Finlay.

At the launch of **Legal Offaly** at Tullamore Courthouse on the 5th December 2008, in his last public engagement as CEO of the Courts Service, Mr. P.J. Fitzpatrick said that "texts such as this one open a door on our collective, unattainable past – our history".

To read this book and examine the photographs it contains is to gain an understanding of our place in that history which is made daily in our courthouses and in the people we meet. It is a worthwhile addition to the reading material of anyone interested in such history.

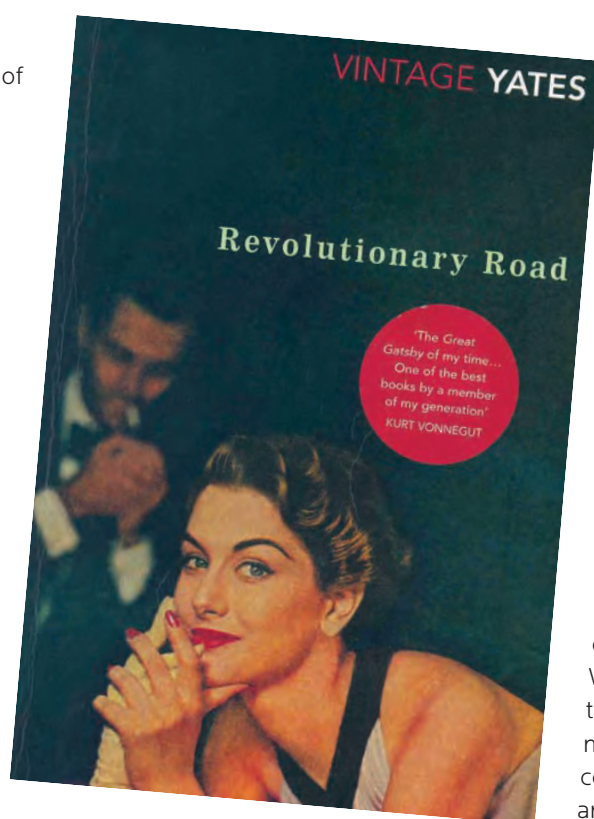
■ Verona Lambe is a solicitor and the County Registrar for Offaly.

Revolutionary ROAD

Set in the early 1950s, the drama of the novel centres around Frank and April Wheeler who live on Revolutionary Road within commuting distance of New York city. We first meet the couple at an amateur theatre production of *The Petrified Forest* in which April is playing one of the main characters. The production is generally agreed to have been a disaster and on the drive home Frank and April row. This is definitely a relationship in difficulty. While Frank and April both saw themselves, unlike their suburbanite friends whom they looked down on, as special and destined for greatness, it is beginning to dawn on April that they are not that different to their friends and neighbours. Frank had spent a brief period in Paris after World War Two and drifted in and out of jobs when he returned to New York. His father, with whom he had a difficult relationship had worked with Knox Business Machines, and eventually Frank starts there in a job which he tells everyone he despises. However, when April suggests that they move to Paris so that he can find out what he really wants to do, he is unenthusiastic as first but then begins to warm to the idea. However, it is April who really wants to escape from her life at home, seeing it as their last chance to avoid settling for the ordinary.

Coincidentally, as Frank is being lined up for promotion, April discovers she is pregnant with their third child. She still wants to go to France but Frank suggests they wait a couple of years. Events run a very dramatic course from here.

The novel offers a bleak view of suburban life in the 1950s. While people were doing well enough materially, there was great pressure to conform to a certain lifestyle. Husbands worked in jobs that they did not enjoy while wives were home makers. However, even the Wheeler's friends show discontent while there acquaintances, Mr. and Mrs. Givings have their own difficulties with an adult son, John, who has mental health problems. Indeed, it is this son, who, on a number of occasions, exposes the



truth of what the characters are really feeling.

Having just finished reading the novel, I went to see the film in the Lighthouse Cinema in Smithfield. Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio play April and Frank. The film captures the story very well, showing the tension between April and Frank right from the beginning, in the aftermath of the dreadful production of *The Petrified Forest*. In a scene at the beginning, the film shows to great visual effect, the conformity of the time. Frank, besuited and behatted, stands at the train station, one among twenty or so other besuited and behatted men. When the train arrives in New York, there are hordes of similarly dressed men walking through the station concourse, emerging on to the street and heading to their various offices.

As in the novel, John Givings, exposes the truth of the lives of the characters, asking Frank why he has settled for a job he says he hates so much and also identifying the flaws in April's character.

The supporting cast are all excellent and I would certainly recommend the film as a faithful adaptation of a very interesting novel.

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

REVOLUTIONARY ROAD

(Richard Yates; Vintage Books, £7.99)

First published in 1961 and nominated for a National Book Award in the United States in 1962, Richard Yates' first novel was reissued in 2007. It has recently been made into a film starring Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio



Singapore is a slick and visually arresting city, even when experienced through jetlagged eyes, writes **Luke O'Neill**.

Singaporeans are utterly pleasant. In the taxi from the airport the driver offered to be my personal chauffeur for the next 23 hours. Given the inherent cynicism of my Irish nature, I refused (he was probably being nice) and instead we settled on a booking to the airport the following day.

At the hotel I was greeted by the manager, the guest relations manager, two porters and a photographer. Bleary-eyed I was ushered under the Pan Pacific Hotel's gold logo and told to smile for the camera. I thought I had been mistaken for someone else.

I was then followed/shown to my room. Once inside I was given a demonstration of the room's admittedly impressive facilities. As if I had just recovered from a partial lobotomy I was shown how to use everything including the kettle. You put water in and push the button, by the way.

The porter left. Still dazed by the hyper-pleasantries, I took the elevator down 36 floors and went exploring. Soon enough I happened upon the world's largest underground fountain. Plonked in the middle of a road it didn't look like much from the outside. Inside a series of impressive water patterns and gushes spiralled downward. All lit up they were a nice omen for the rest of my reconnaissance stroll.

The city itself rises up along a set of quays and marinas. Large gleaming, often reflective skyscrapers dwarf the quaint foot bridges in the Clark Quay area. There are some grand state buildings to be found here. It is also where much of the hustle of the city presents itself to the first-time visitor. A large observation wheel akin to the London Eye is a gaudy presence but it manages not to take away from the aesthetic juxtaposition of sea and reflective towers.

FACT ABOUT 'SINGAPORE SLING'

The 'Singapore Sling' was first served in 1915 at the Long Bar of the Raffles Hotel. The ingredients are gin, Cointreau, cherry brandy, Dom Benedictine, pineapple juice, Grenadine, Angostura bitters and limes.

My visit coincided with the impending Chinese New Year. The quays were decorated with hanging lanterns and this added to the pleasant atmosphere. This might have heightened my feeling that Singapore is a very safe, clean city. Chewing gum is banned to prevent it ruining the pavements and there is a visible but not ominous police presence.

Now most people in a new city for the first time would have taken in some authentic Singaporean cuisine or gone in

search of the much talked about 'authentic touristic experience'. I did neither. With the aid of Google

on a mobile phone I was able to find Singapore's one and only Manchester United café bar.

As bizarre experiences go it was difficult to beat. The café serves as a local hangout for avid Singaporean fans of Man United. They played novelty Manchester United songs in which Liverpool were inevitably the main

target. They were strangely outdated though –

Steve McMenamin came in for some vitriol despite having not played for Liverpool for the best part of a decade. I was the only Westerner there. This made it all the better and I was content to spend the next two hours communicating in Keanes and Cantonas.

Given the late hour of my arrival and the deceptive cancelling effect of beer and jetlag, I was shortly after left with two options: much needed sleep or a nightclub. Impaired judgment led me to Zouk, allegedly one of the best nightclubs in Asia. I had the pleasure of paying €25 admission. From what followed I learned that five hours' sleep is insufficient for an onward journey to Sydney.

When my taxi driver picked me up at the arranged time the following (same) morning, he said "late night?"

U2: NO LINE ON THE HORIZON

MUSIC LABEL: INTERSCOPE



U2 fans, you can rest easy. Despite earlier assertions from Bono and co that it would be their “most experimental” album yet, *No Line on the Horizon* is brash, safe and unmistakably one of their own.



Now I must admit, while I'm not the world's biggest U2 fan, I can appreciate, and even love, some of the flashes of brilliance they have shown in their long career. No Line, in that respect, disappoints – there's simply nothing revolutionary to shout about.

For a band that's built its reputation as the ultimate stadium rockers in the past decade, it's surprising to see that this, their twelfth studio album is anything but epic.

The biggest change is while most of U2's past albums have been driven blindly forward by Bono's vocals, *No Line* sees him take a back seat to the Edge's trademark guitar riffs. This is nowhere more evident than on the first single *Get on Your Boots* and *Stand up Comedy*. Both tracks prominently feature fast, pulsating strings over a somewhat unnaturally subdued Bono.

And it works to a certain extent. I've never been a huge fan of Bono's raspy voice and the Edge's more prominent input gives the songs a certain urgency. On the flipside, however, it can leave them sounding slightly isolated and distant.

Much has been made of the band's supposed North Africa-

inspired sound on this album but apart from background pipes in the title track and the name of the song *FEZ – Being Born*, there's little to suggest that the recording of part of the album in Morocco did much to shape the sound. Chaabi fans need not apply.

These experimentations don't last long, however, and for much of the rest of the album, it's business as usual. Echoes of the band's past hits can be heard in many of the cuts- the title track in particular sounds like it could be from either of their previous two albums.

It's not all bad though. *Magnificent* is an infectious tune, - starting off with Killers-esque synththesisers and marching band drum before settling down in style to sound like a modern-day *In the name of Love*. *Get on Your Boots* is definitely a grower, despite woeful first impressions and *Unknown Caller* sounds like a band brimming with confidence.

In short there's nothing as rip-roaring as *Vertigo* or revolutionary as *Discothèque* on this release but it does have it's moments of brilliance. U2 fans will lap it up – the rest of us will wonder what all the fuss is about.

Rating: ★ ★ ★

■ Aidan Kelly is the Courts Service Assistant Media Officer

Out of the Office with..... Grainne O'Regan

Gráinne O'Regan, Wards of Court Office

What is your hobby/sport?

Wheelchair rugby, which is a sport for quadriplegic athletes (i.e. players have some impairment in all four limbs.) Over the years I've been involved in the coaching and administrative side of things. Nowadays I'm a referee which is good fun despite the jibes from players when decisions go against them.

How did you get involved?

Through school. One of my teachers asked for volunteers to help out at the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) National Championships in 1988. What was supposed to be one weekend has stretched to 21 years!

How did you get involved in wheelchair rugby?

I've been involved in many different wheelchair sports but when Garrett Culliton (currently a wheelchair rugby player who was injured playing rugby union) wanted to start

a wheelchair rugby team in Ireland, having seen it played at the Atlanta Paralympics in 1996, I was excited at the chance to develop the sport.

Have you had much success over the years?

Being involved in the development of the team from a stage where we didn't even have proper rugby chairs to being ranked 15th in the world has been a great achievement. Also coming back from the Rugby World Cup in 2007 being able to say we beat the French in Paris was sweet.

The Irish team are the current holders of the wheelchair rugby Triple Crown.

Any other memorable moments?

Refereeing in Paris during the Rugby World Cup. We played outdoors, a first for wheelchair rugby, in front of a huge crowd. It was a totally surreal but fantastic experience.



Hopes for the future

This year sees the European Championships in Denmark. Ireland hosted the European Qualifying event last month (20th-21st Feb) in which they won all their games to qualify top of the group and take their place at the European Championships this coming October. We aim to improve our world ranking at this competition. Long term the goal is to qualify for the Paralympics or World Championships. Personally I'm planning to travel to the World Championships in Vancouver in 2010.

■ The wheelchair rugby team have a website www.gaelicwarriors.com for more information on the sport.



Christmas Jumpers!

The Finance Office and the Accountants Office in Phoenix House organised a charity event for Christmas whereby members of each office assisted in the creation of festive themed jumpers. The Accountant's office creation (pictured on the right) was voted the winning jumper by public vote. Congratulations to members of both offices who raised a sum of €333 for charity.

Quiz Time

Now that you've read Noel A. Doherty's review of the novel and the movie *Revolutionary Road* by Richard Yates, test your knowledge of some well known films and the authors of the books which inspired them.

1. Name the movie inspired by a Thomas Harris novel which brought a new meaning to the phrase 'having an old friend for dinner'.
2. All the President's Men released in 1976 was based on a novel written by whom? (Clue- there were two of them)
3. Irvine Walsh wrote the book which was adapted into a movie, the title of which suggests hanging around Heuston or Connolly stations.
4. 182 years after her death her novel *Mansfield Park* was made into a movie in 1999.
5. Anyone who saw the movie remembers the child's spinning head and the 'pea soup' being spattered all over the place but who wrote 'The Exorcist'?
6. Life is like a box of chocolates for the main character but who was that character and who created him?
7. *Slum Dog Millionaire* is based on the novel *Q and A* by which writer?
8. An Oscar of a different sort was the main character in the 1993 movie based on a novel by Thomas Keneally.

Answers should be submitted by email to courtsservicenews@courts.ie or by hard copy to Fiona Farrell, Information Office, 6th Floor, Phoenix House, Smithfield, Dublin 7.

October Quiz Winner



Miriam Stack winner of the October quiz being presented with her prize by Eamonn Kiely, Courts Service Southern Regional Manager

The answers to the Christmas Quiz:

1. Snow white and the seven dwarfs
2. (i) Hyacinth – Keeping Up Appearances
(ii) Rodney – Only Fools and Horses
(iii) Marina – Last of the Summer Wine
3. The guns fired cream/custard
4. Terence – Aubrey (either name was accepted)
5. Somewhere over the rainbow
6. Howard Keel
7. John Voight
8. Scaramanga
9. Mobile Army Surgical Hospital
10. (i) Milk Tray
(ii) Denim Aftershave
(iii) Shredded Wheat



Ronan Power, Taxing Masters Office being presented with his prize by Fiona Farrell, Information Office.

And the winner is... Ronan Power, Taxing Masters Office.

Congratulations Ronan.



Congratulations to Marie Mac Aree, Cork District Court on graduating with a Diploma in Psychology of Criminal Behaviour from UCC, pictured here with her husband Conor.



Patricia Hickey with daughter Aisling on her 1st birthday.



Judge David McHugh addresses a group of young visitors to the Chancery street courts as part of the Night Time Tours project run by An Garda Síochána.



Congratulations to Helen Thornton, Summons Office on her graduation from the LLB Hons. Degree in Irish Law course, Griffith College, Dublin



Pictured at the last sitting of Dunmore Court were (front) Judge Geoffrey Browne, Patti Mulkerrins, Court Registrar, Supt. Marie Skehill, solicitors Evanna Joyce, Danny McGrath, Tony Canney, David Higgins, Tony O'Doherty, George Bruen, (back) Con Harlow, Evan O'Dwyer, Tom O'Sullivan and James Glynn. Photo courtesy of The Tuam Herald

Through the lens