

Shelton Abbey Visiting Committee

Annual Report 2006

Shelton Abbey is an open Prison with dormitory type accommodation catering for 60 offenders. There are 3 prisoners serving life sentences and 2 of these have single room accommodation.

We held a total of 12 meetings this year, all of which were well attended even though the committee only had 10 members. All members arrived early for each meeting and were available to meet with offenders and dealt with any queries at the meeting. As always a very good relationship was kept with offenders and other agencies within Shelton Abbey throughout the year. There were a number of re-appointments and new appointments to the committee during the year.

All the uncertainty which was prevalent in 2005 regarding the future of Shelton Abbey was lifted and turned around to one of certainty with the building of new accommodation for offenders and proposed new education unit. The appointment of Industrial Supervisor Tom Gregan and Assistant Industrial Supervisors Declan McCabe on the Farm and Declan Jordan on the Garden was another positive move and created work and training for a large number of offenders. The instalation of a new poly tunnel on the Farm will give a great opportunity for training in flower and plant propagation.

As part of the new building work the old pre fabricated school building was demolished and a temporary building was built in another area to facilitate the school. Hopefully a proper permanent structure will eventually be built to provide this most important service.

As always the education unit provided some excellent training for offenders with classes in Woodwork, Art & Craft, Computers, French, Maths, Music, English, Literacy, Cookery, Physical Education and Pottery. This was all provided by a Supervising Teacher who has 2 full time and 6 part time teachers giving day and evening classes. There were a large number of offenders provided with Safe Pass Course to enable them to work in construction on release. Fork Lift Training and Driving lessons in both car's and trucks were also provided through the Education unit. They also had an "Anger Management" course which was attended by 8 offenders and was very successful and will be ongoing.

The Chaplain Sr Pat Egan looked after the spiritual needs of the offenders and will make contact with their families when required. She at times takes offenders out on visits to their homes or to visit family graves. Fr. Eamon Crossan PP in Avoca attends every week to say mass. A number of offenders were allowed out to attend Church of Ireland service in the local church when requested.

Probation & Welfare Officer Catherine Doyle attends Shelton Abbey daily and caters for the welfare needs of offenders. She will assist them in making out employment applications and setting up interviews. She also works closely with the Education unit and assists in setting up suitable courses for offenders with FAS.

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The doctor attends daily to look after the health of the offenders and see new committals on arrival here. They work alongside medical officer Tom Dillon and inform him of any medication required or further treatment needed.

The monthly review meetings are a necessary part of the running of Shelton Abbey it organises programmes for offenders and is attended by a member from IPS Operations, Head Teacher, Probation & Welfare Officer, Chaplain, Governor, Chief Officer and some officers who discuss each person and make recommendations accordingly.

We visited the kitchen occasions before the meetings and are always impressed that it continues to provide excellent meals and is always kept spotless, once again this year it achieved the hygiene award. The offenders working take great pride in their work and attend the hygiene course set out for them by the chef in charge.

More that 390 offenders were transferred to Shelton Abbey throughout 2006 and while there was improvement in the number of long term offenders coming here it would be more settling if this number could be increased to facilitate more intense courses and training. This would be more important when the numbers increase up to 80 after the new building is completed. Drug testing is carried out on a very regular basis and offenders who are found to be positive are in most cases returned to the prison which they were transferred from.

There were no major incidents during the year. There is a good relationship between staff and offender's. During the year Chief Officer Teresa McCormack was promoted to Assistant Governor in Castlerea and was replaced by Robert Gillespie who transferred here from Mountjoy. Officers Noel Doyle and Patrick Dunne retired during the year. It was great to see that a psychologist was appointed to attend Shelton during the year, she comes here once a week and it has made a very positive impact on those who attend her clinic.

All except 3 offenders were released last Christmas, unfortunately one offender died during his period of Temporary Release from a suspected drug overdose. All the others returned on time.

Finally we would like to thank Governor Cramer, Asst Governor Corcoran and all their staff for the courtesy and kindness shown to us throughout the year.

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Mr. P. Fitzgerald Chairperson

Mr. J. Murphy

Mr. J. Byrne

Ms. C. Douglas

Mr. H. O’Keeffe

Ms. O. Doyle

Mr. P.J. Sheridan

Mr. S. Quirke

Mr. M. Hanrahan