

## **Cloverhill Prison Visiting Committee Annual Report 2003**

We have just completed our third year as the first Visiting Committee to be appointed to Cloverhill Prison.

As outlined in our last report, we continue to meet on the second Thursday of each month. This date can vary sometimes in order to accommodate members who may have other commitments on a particular date. We discuss concerns which prisoners have brought to our attention, our own concerns over various issues and receive a report from the Governor on how the prison has been running over the previous month. The Governor also replies to issues which prisoners have brought up with us at this meeting.

After our meeting, two members of the Committee visit the prison to meet with any inmates who have requested to meet with the Visiting Committee. Two members of the Committee also visit the prison on an unannounced day each month in order to inspect the prison and also to meet with inmates. The intention of the Committee is that inmates should have no longer than two weeks to wait before seeing a member of the Committee, and we feel this is important given that Cloverhill is a remand prison and its population can be transient.

In our first annual report of December 2001, we expressed our concern at the lack of any educational facility. The provision of such a facility was our main priority from our first early meetings in 2001. In our visits to other prisons we were able to observe the benefit to both inmates and prison officers of such a facility. Through continued and persistent endeavours, and with the help of the respective Governors of Cloverhill, we are pleased and very proud that the building is completed. However, whilst the gym is up and running in the new facility, as yet it has not been equipped with furniture and fittings and no teaching staff have yet been assigned. The relevant V.E.C. should be urgently requested to provide staff for the education unit without further delay. At the time of compilation of this report, the Governor is hoping to provide inmates with classes including literacy and music, as well as induction classes for all committals, pending the arrival of teachers. These classes would be provided by prison officers with the relevant qualifications and this action is to be commended. The Committee have been informed that currently furniture is being made in Arbour Hill Prison which will be used to equip the educational unit. We recommend that the school is furnished and staffed with teachers as a matter of urgency.

The prison laundry is housed in a small area of the prison. Prisoners working in the laundry have to eat their dinner at a table in the actual laundry room itself and this is unsatisfactory both from a hygienic point of view and as a matter of personal dignity. Also, as there are a large number of machines in this small area and a lot of heat is generated, the committee is of the opinion that it is vital to provide shower facilities for inmates working in the laundry. As such, the Committee recommends that alterations be carried out here in order to facilitate a separate dining area and a shower room for inmates working in the laundry.

As outlined in our last annual report, a major problem exists with contraband being thrown over the boundary wall. Unfortunately, this issue has still not been resolved despite meetings which the Governor held with the local hospital and the Irish Prison Service. We recommend

that urgent steps be taken to redress this problem which not only affects the running of the prison, but also has an adverse effect on people living in the vicinity of the prison.

We are disappointed to report again that the Visiting Committee still has not received a report on the attempted breakout in July 2001, and in particular the results of the survey which were carried out on the windows arising out of this incident.

The Committee are concerned about the number of persons being remanded in custody and would urge that the judicial system should be looked at with a view to facilitating speedier decisions by the courts.

The Committee are concerned about the lack of back-up services and support in place for prisoners on their release from custody. Although Cloverhill is unique in that it is a remand prison, and therefore release dates are unpredictable, the Committee are of the opinion that prisoners who are released back into the community would be less likely to re-offend if they had support services in place in the community.

The current situation regarding the difficulties in securing transfers to the Central Mental Hospital due to lack of accommodation there is very unsatisfactory. Prisons are not designed to deal with people in need of psychiatric care and we urge that steps are taken to provide accommodation in suitable establishments capable of meeting these inmates' needs.

Probably the next biggest achievement, after the completion of the education unit building, was the setting up of the listener scheme. This scheme was proposed by the Suicide Awareness Committee in June 2002 following a suicide in the prison. The Samaritans were invited into the prison to develop the scheme and a committee was set up including Governor, Chief, Staff, Chaplains, Samaritans and 2 prisoners. At the moment there are 8 prisoners in Cloverhill who have been trained by the Samaritans to be listeners. They are available to any prisoner who wishes to speak to them 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. They all occupy single cells so that other prisoners can come to speak to them in complete privacy and staff facilitate this by unlocking prisoners who wish to speak to a listener. Each listener is available during the day, and are easily identified by their distinctive t-shirts with the listener logo. The listeners themselves have drawn up a roster to provide cover at night. Reports suggest that the take-up on the scheme has been exceptional and it is believed that it has been a major contributing factor in the reduction of suicide and self-harm attempts and greatly contributes to the smooth running of the landings.

All involved are to be commended for their foresight and commitment to this project which is unique in this jurisdiction.

A new creche facility was opened in the visitors' waiting room on 9th August and this is a welcome addition to the service already being made available by the St. Vincent de Paul who provide tea and coffee to visiting families. Everybody involved in this project is to be congratulated.

Kitchen management, staff and prisoners are to be highly commended on achieving an overall A mark in the Cert audit this year. As well as this achievement, the kitchen in Cloverhill also retained the Q Mark Excellence Ireland Hygiene Award with a higher score than last year. We

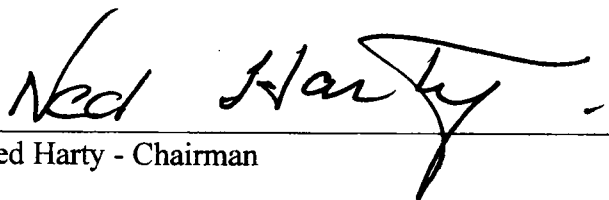
offer our congratulations to everybody who put such effort and hard work into achieving these awards.

In June we visited Mountjoy Prison and the Dochás Centre. We would like to thank Governor Loneragan for the welcome he and his staff afforded us on our visit. Despite the age and condition of Mountjoy we were impressed with the atmosphere prevalent in the prison and with the work being carried out in the workshops there. On the day we visited the workshops were turning out flags and cushions for the Special Olympics.

We were impressed with the both the modern layout and regime of the Dochás which is so unlike any other prison we visited during our term.

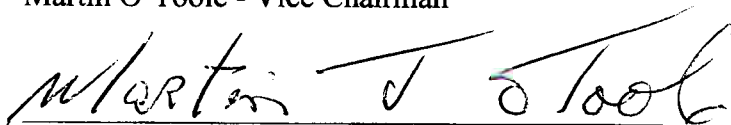
We invited Mr. Justice Dermot Kinlen, Inspector of Prisons, to attend one of our monthly meetings and we enjoyed a visit from him on 10th July. We found his visit to be most informative and worthwhile and we thank him for the time he gave to meet with us and for his help to us as a Committee.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the Governor and staff of Cloverhill for the courtesy and co-operation shown to us over the last year.

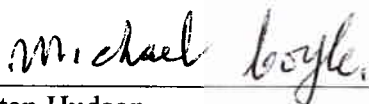


Ned Harty - Chairman

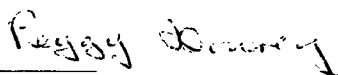
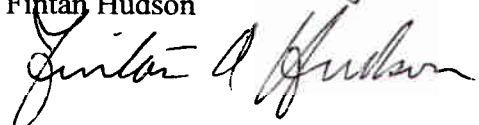
Martin O'Toole - Vice Chairman



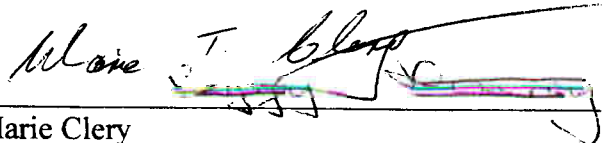
Michael Coyle



Fintan Hudson



Peggy Downey



Marie Clery

*Cait Uí Fhaoláin*

Cait Uí Fhaoláin

*Joe Carroll*

Joe Carroll

*Edward Martin*

Edward Martin

*Edward Moriarty*

Edward Moriarty

*Francis Brennan*

Francis Brennan

*Eugene Murphy*

Eugene Murphy