

Horseleap/Streamstown 9CA

Guild Year Book

June 1st, 2008

May 31st, 2009

Bantracht Na Tuaithe



Some of our members!



Back row, L to R: Maureen Hannify, Attracta Colgan, Elizabeth Brady (Federation Treasurer), Phil Brennan (Information Officer) Sheila Keegan, Gerardine Farrell, Nuala Reid, Eileen Robbins
Front row, L to R: Betty Keegan, Lily Casey, Maura Walsh, Kathleen Darcy, Bridie McCormack, Breege Moran, Maureen Farrell, Mary Fox and Ber Ennis.

Our Guild comprises of 26 members of varying interests and hobbies. We meet on the first Wednesday of the month in our local Community Centre, but our first meetings were held back in 1985 in a prefab. In June 2008 our Committee comprised of President – Attracta Colgan, Secretary – Gerardine Farrell, Treasurer - Sheila Keegan.



L to R Gerardine Farrell, Attracta Colgan and Sheila Keegan



The aims of the ICA are:

To promote the rights and development of women in Ireland and Internationally

To bring women together in Fellowship and Friendship

To develop and improve the wellbeing, knowledge and skills of women

To support social and recreational activity around members

June

We started our year by doing the Womens Mini Marathon 2008 on June 2nd. Our ladies travelled from Streamstown by bus. On arrival we had our picnic by the Grand Canal as we had lots of time to spare before assembling for the Marathon which began at 3pm. There is generally a large turnout with approximately 35,000 ladies in all doing the marathon for various charities. After a little drizzle, it turned out to be a fine day. We had a very enjoyable walk, and we all passed the finish line Thank God.



*Back Row L to R – Attracta Colgan, Bridie McCormack and Eileen Robbins
Front Row L to R – Helen Elliffe, Maura Walsh, Ber Seery, Betty Keegan, Eilish McDonnell and Gerardine Farrell*

During the previous few months, we had good fun training for the day. We usually met at the Four Roads of Donore, Streamstown, and took different routes. One of our routes took us to McLoughlins' Mill which was used to mill corn up until the late 1960's. It is now no longer operational. The owner currently engages in the farming of a variety of fowl, which we admire on our walks.



L to R: Betty Keegan and Maura Walsh



Variety of fowl at the old mill

We also ventured onto the new N6 Kilbeggan-Athlone Dual Carriageway before it opened.
Now we were making history!



L to R – Helen Elliffe, Bridie McCormack, Betty Keegan, Ber Seery, Maura Walsh and Attract Colgan

Some evenings we had a picnic in our village of Horseleap after our walk, at the very



L to R – Attracta Colgan, Betty Keegan, Maura Walsh, Ber Seery, Bridie McCormack.

picturesque spot close to our “horse” on the green. The following is a little of the background to the horse:-

“The 12 foot high bronze statue of the prancing horse that stands on the village green was actually made in Italy by Ferrari. In the nineties the Ferrari formula one racing team made a present of one of these statues of its famous logo to each of their F1 drivers. This one was shipped to Ireland in 1999 to be given to Eddie Irvine who had finished as runner up in the

World championship for Ferrari that year. It was stored in a barn in County Tyrone and was to be a surprise to Irvine. However just before this was to take place Irvine told Ferrari he was leaving them to join the Jaguar team. Ferrari never told Irvine about the statue and it stayed in the barn for a year until a local farmer from Horseleap was up in Tyrone buying cattle and was told about it. A delegation from the village was then dispatched to make the case that they had the ideal home for this statue and that they wished to purchase it. They bought the statue for a fee less than it cost to make and it was erected in 2000.”



Statue of horse in Horseleap

Our June Meeting held on the 4th began, as usual, with the Blessings of God on our work before us and our song, My Land. We talked about the Mini-Marathon, finalised arrangements for the trip to Delta Gardens, Carlow on July 2nd, and the up coming Set Dancing competitions, Leinster & World Fleadh (both being held in July).

Our guest at the meeting was local man, Pat Carton, who is a Chinese Medical Practitioner. He gave us a talk on Chinese Medicine and the treatments he provides. His approach was quite casual as he pulled over a three legged stool chatting away, bringing back memories of years gone by when we use to milk cows from our three legged stools. We were all so engrossed in what he was saying that when he banged his foot off the floor (to check if we were listening) we nearly jumped out of our skins. We were intrigued by his talk - he told us that he could establish all of the information required to diagnose illness through observation, external examination and questions. The four basic categories of diagnostic observation are looking, listening, smelling, and touching. Simply by employing these four areas of investigation, he can accurately assess physical and emotional imbalances of the internal organs and with treatment then re-establish harmony in the body. His main form of treatment is acupuncture.

Also on that night we voted on the sale of ICA Headquarters, 58 Merrion Road, Dublin, as did all the Guilds at their June meeting. The majority of votes were for the sale, as the ICA is in financial difficulty, and it was felt that this would help the situation.

We then finished our meeting with a cuppa. This would be our last meeting until the following September – though we still had plenty activities planned for the summer!

July

On July 2nd, a beautiful fine day, 26 of our members hired a bus to Delta Gardens, Carlow. One of our members gave a report on the outing:-

It has been said that the Delta Gardens are “An oasis of peace and tranquility”. The members who took part in this venture would whole heartedly agree with this description. It is a garden centre with a difference. While stocking a wide variety of plants and shrubs for commercial purposes it is also a place to visit just for its beauty. Chelsea Gold Medal winner, Mary Reynolds, had designed one of the gardens. Scattered throughout the gardens, were some unique tree sculptures by Martin Monks, commissioned by Carlow County Council and on loan to Delta. We wandered round the gardens at will taking in the splashing fountains, waterfalls, enjoying the scent of the herbs and perfumed plants and visiting the time clock and other monuments dotted through the gardens. The peace in the surrounding garden was described by all as therapeutic and it was agreed that it was a very serene place to visit. The centre has a policy of employing people with special needs. They made us very welcome and served us with tea and scones. Everyone had a lovely time. There’s an old Japanese saying “If you want to be happy for a while get a wife – if you want to be happy forever get a garden”.





L to R: Ursula McCormack and Betty Keegan

Later on we went shopping in the town, everyone came back with full shopping bags. A nice meal on the way home finished our outing.

Horseleap Streamstown Guild was lucky last year to have received a grant of €1,000 from Westmeath VEC. This money was put towards various courses such as Aqua Aerobics and Healthy Eating and for educational trips such as our trip to Delta Gardens; it was also to contribute towards costs associated with our set dancers as they attended the various competitions. The following is a report on our set dancing exploits!

Some of our members were interested in set dancing and a group was formed. Having earlier in the year won the County Fleadh in set dancing we qualified to take part in the Leinster final in Dundrum(taking 2nd place), we qualified again to take part in the All-Ireland in August and not satisfied with the All Ireland we went onto compete in the World Fleadh in Portlaoise. From hearing of our success we were highly sought after to perform for Local Community groups such as, Young at Heart, Kilbeggan and a fund raising Bar-B-Que in Ballycumber Community Centre. We entertained visitors in Kilbeggan Distillery and Temple Spa, Horseleap. We had previously taken part in the set dancing competition for the Patsy Lawlor Cup in Abbeyleix earlier in the year.



*Back Row L to R – Dympna McCormack, Helen McCormack Eileen Robbins, Eileen McCormack
Front Row L to R – Eilish McDonnell, Gerardine Farrell, Ber Ennis, Bridie McCormack*



*Back row L to R – Bridie McCormack, Aine Burge and Dympna McCormack
Front row L to R – Helen McCormack, Eileen McCormack, Ber Ennis, Gerardine Farrell, Eilish McDonnell and Eileen Robbins.*

August

Everyone takes a rest from ICA-busy doing their own things from holidays, weddings, gardening and relaxation etc.

September

September comes around so soon and off we go again – on 3rd, we held our meeting. We received a letter from National Executive updating us on the proposed new Constitution which is designed to enable us to reinvent the ICA for the 21st Century. We were also informed that Central Office has been put on sale and there have been a number of viewings.

Karen Grennan gave us a talk on relaxation and taking care of our skin – and how to look young and beautiful and to look after our feet and hands – massage them with cream etc. “Use the cream – not leave it in the jar”.

During the next few weeks we did a course – “Healthy food made easy”. We all participated in both the cooking and tasting each night – Karen Scarnicchio, our teacher, spoke about the importance of food pyramid – she advised us to use it every day for healthy food and watch our portion size – and to drink plenty of water regularly. On the last night of the course we had Cara Cunningham, Dietician as a special guest who spoke to the group and answered any queries. Afterwards Karen presented us with our Certificates.

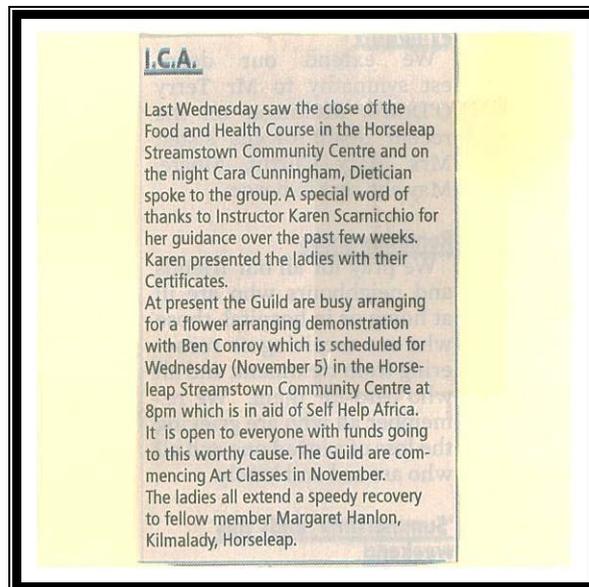


Back row L to R – Eilish McDonnell, Maureen Robinson, Eileen McCormack, Maureen Hannify, Ber Seery, BridieMcCormack, Mary Fox, Helen Elliffe, Eileen Robbins, Rose Cummins.

Front row L to R – Maura Walsh, Betty Keegan, Mary McDonnell, Aine Burge, Nuala Reid, Ber Ennis.

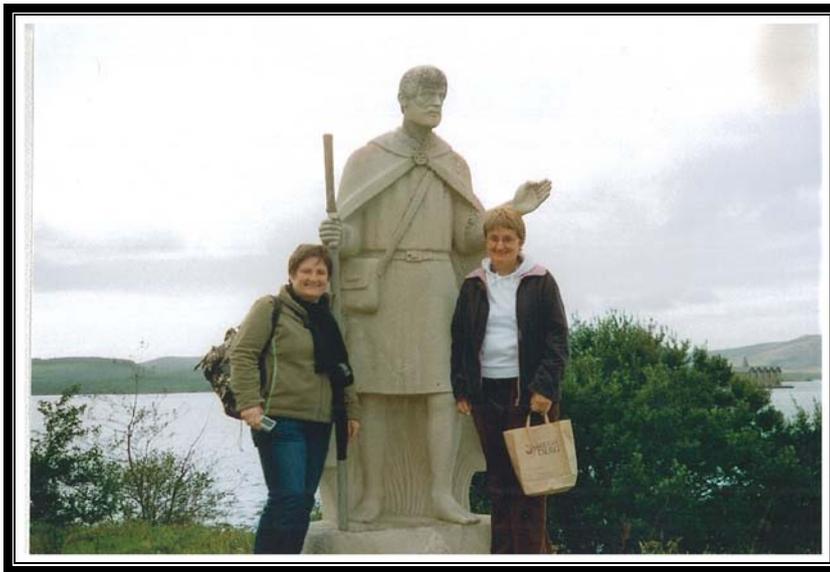


Karen Scarnicchio making presentation to Attracta Colgan, President



Taken from the Westmeath Examiner

Having looked after our general wellbeing and appearance, we decided to take care of our souls – so we took a bus to Lough Derg on September 16th, for a day trip. On the way we joked that we were already starting our penance with both the rocky road and being on a cold bus! It had been a first for most of the group to visit the island and it was a lovely experience. As well as enjoying the beautiful scenery and quiet atmosphere on the island we also fitted in some prayers. Our prayers were answered when one of our pilgrims announced, on the way home, that she had a new grandchild, weighing 9lbs 7oz!



Bridie McCormack and Helen Elliffe



Lough Derg

October

As a Guild, we attend most Federation Meetings, and participate in as many competitions as possible. On October 1st at the meeting held in Mullingar, Horseleap/Streamstown Guild won the Autumn Harvest Platter, the Nancy Ball Cup (41 marks out of 45).



Our winning entry in the Harvest Platter



*Judge - Bill Humle presenting trophy to Committee members
Back row: Attracta Colgan, Sheila Keegan and Gerardine Farrell,
Front row: Gwen Carter, Westmeath Federation President, and Maureen Farrell*

October was a very busy month with discussions on our proposed new Constitution. All the Guilds were asked to vote on the proposals and we forwarded our submission forms for the amendments to the draft ICA constitution together with some proposals for consideration. On October 22nd the Council meeting was held in Hudson Bay Hotel, Athlone. On that day a Gem Pack sponsored competition for an 8" round Light Fruit Cake took place – 86 cakes

were entered. There was a beautiful aroma, like being in a bakery! The entry from our Guild came from Ber Ennis.

Light Fruit Cake (8 inch round tin)

Ingredients

8ozs Demerara Gempack sugar
8ozs butter
8ozs plain flour Country kitchen
2ozs self-raising flour Country kitchen
3ozs Gempack cherries washed, dried and halved
2ozs Gempack ground almonds
1ozs Gempack nuts chopped
3ozs Gempack mixed peel
10ozs Gempack fruit
4 eggs
3 tablespoons of whiskey
Oven temperature elec 160c, 325f, gas mark 3

1. Grease the tin lightly and line on the bottom and sides with double greaseproof paper. Sieve the flour and self-raising flour twice onto a sheet of greaseproof paper.
2. Cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
3. Beat in the whisked eggs gradually, adding a little of the sieved flour with each addition after the first
4. Toss the cherries in the ground almonds.
5. Fold in the remaining flour and fruit including the tossed cherries and chopped nuts, then stir in the whiskey, brandy, rum or milk
6. Fill the mixture into the prepared tin and smooth the top with the back of a wet tablespoon.
7. Bake in the pre-heated oven for approximately 2 hours. Cover with paper or foil for the last ½ hour to prevent the top from becoming too brown.
8. Test by pressing the top of cake lightly with the fingers-it should feel firm. Thrust a warm skewer into the middle of the cake, if it comes out clean, with no uncooked mixture clinging to it, then the cake is ready
9. Leave in the tin until cold then turn out and remove papers. Wrap the cake in greaseproof paper and foil, then store in a cool dry place.



Ber Ennis

At the Council meeting in Athlone, our delegates met Netta Crowley, Kildare Federation President. She spoke out against the proposal of the Government to withdraw Medical Cards from Senior Citizens, on behalf of members of the ICA.



Netta Crowley, Kildare Federation President



L to R - Attracta Colgan, Betty Keegan (Horseleap/Streamstown Guild), Kathleen O'Connor & Friend from Offaly Federation

A speaker at the Council Meeting went into the origins of the ICA, “Coras na Mban” 1910 – Womens Movement, Marla Society USA, Canada – Womens Institute – this lead us to research our origins.....

Irish Countrywomen's Association was set up as the Society of United Irishwomen by Anita Lett in Bree, Co. Wexford, in 1911. It was based on the co-op movement as carried out by the Irish Agricultural Organisation. Early patrons included Horace Plunkett and Ellice Pilkington. The association saw as its mission the reform of Irish society through the improved home lives of its rural people. It became the Irish Countrywomen's Association in 1935.

In 2010 we will celebrate the Centenary of the founding of ICA.

At that meeting we met our President Carmel Dawson, Zara Brady and lots more – it was nice to have the Council meeting held in Westmeath.

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A Coffee Morning was organised, funds raised for Westmeath Hospice, a very worthy cause. They got a good response with €500 being collected. The ladies donated homemade scones and jam to be served on the day with Tea and Coffee (which was kindly sponsored by Bewleys).



L to R – Ber Seery, Eilish McDonnell, Nuala Reid, and Sheila Keegan

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November

On the night of November 5th, we had a Flower arranging demonstration with Ben Conroy. The theme was seasonal so it included an assortment of Christmas arrangements, using both fresh and silk/dried flowers. He demonstrated with great ease the making of the arrangements and then raffled them. All proceeds went towards Self Help Africa. As this was an open event, it was nice to see so many local ladies attend the demonstration. We occasionally hold open events hoping to encourage new membership.



We all went home determined to put into practise what we had seen during the demonstration – with Christmas just around the corner – some lovely presents could be made as well as home decorations!



Group at Open Night



Some of our most senior members – L to R: Kathleen Darcy, Lily Casey and Margaret Hanlon

Our Guild was informed that the ICA meeting in the Gresham was cancelled and we were advised to forward our vote on the amendments by post.

On November 17th some of the Guild members travelled to Athlone, to participate in the competitions night. The first, a recipe for a main course, lunch for 4, using Gem Pack Rice, was held in which Ber Seery from our Guild took the prize with Thai-Style Beef Stir Fry (the next stage of this competition being held in An Grianan in February).

Thai-style beef stir-fry

Serves 4

For the Gem basmati rice:

- 2 cups Gem basmati rice
- 1 tsp salt
- ¼ oz butter
- 400g beef fillet, trimmed and cut into thin strips
- 1 garlic clove, peeled and chopped
- 2cm knob of fresh root ginger, peeled and chopped
- ½ red chilli, trimmed and roughly sliced
- 150g chestnut mushrooms, trimmed and thinly sliced
- 1 carrot, peeled and thinly sliced on the diagonal
- 1 red pepper, cored, deseeded and sliced into thin strips
- 150g mangetout
- 2 spring onions, trimmed and sliced on the diagonal
- Sea salt and black pepper
- 3 tbsp sunflower oil
- Handful of Thai sweet basil (or coriander) leaves to garnish

Sauce:

- 2 tbsp light soy sauce
- 3 tbsp oyster sauce
- 1 tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 tsp caster sugar
- 1 tsp cornflour
- 3-4 tbsp water

Gem Rice:

Preheat the oven to 140 degrees C (275 degrees F)

Bring large saucepan water to the boil. Add pinch salt, stir, cover and boil rapidly for 5 mins., or until rice is nearly cooked. Strain rice. Place in serving dish. Stir in butter. Cover and put in pre-heated oven for at least 15 mins. When ready to eat,

fluff up rice and serve.

Stir Fry and Sauce:

Have the beef and all the aromatic ingredients and vegetables ready before you begin to cook.

For the sauce, mix all the ingredients together in a small bowl and set aside.

Lightly season the beef strips with salt and pepper.

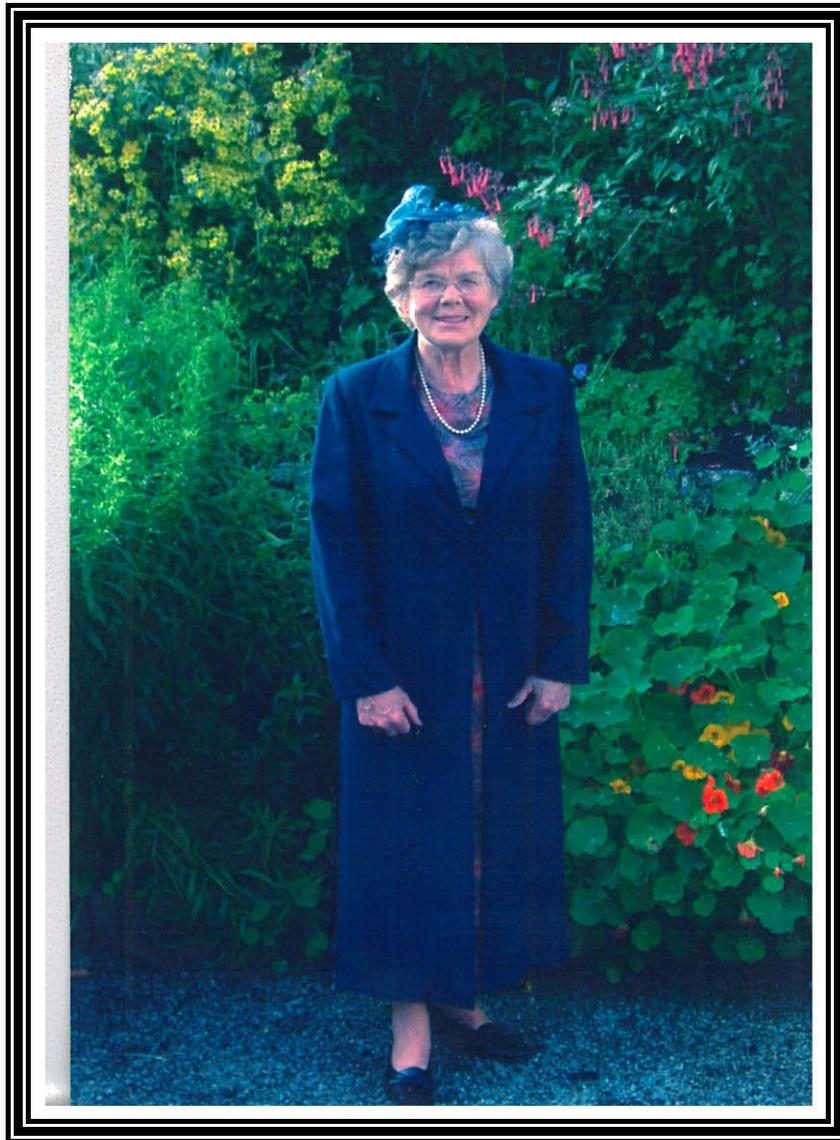
Heat the wok or a large frying pan until hot and add a little oil, swirling the oil to coat the surface evenly. Add half the beef strips and stir-fry for about a minute until just brown on the surface, but still medium rare in the middle. Remove to a plate and repeat with the remaining beef. Set the beef aside. Add a little more oil to the wok along with the garlic, ginger and chilli. Stir-fry the mixture for about a minute until lightly golden and fragrant. Toss in the mushrooms and stir-fry for a minute. Add the carrot and a splash of water. (This will create steam, to help cook the vegetables evenly). After a minute, toss in the red pepper and mangetout. Stir-fry for another two mins or until the vegetables are just tender.

Give the sauce a stir and pour over the vegetables, then return the beef to the wok. Toss over the heat for another minute until the sauce has thickened. Turn off the heat and stir in the spring onions.

Spoon the stir-fry onto warm serving plates and scatter over the basil leaves.

Serve at once with basmati gem pack rice.

In the Make-and-Model, we came second with Maura Walsh modelling a lovely outfit she had made. A table quiz then took place and our members made up 4 tables. Fun and laughter was had by all, as competition between Guilds was very keen. This was followed of course by tea and biscuits!



Maura Walsh modelling her outfit in her garden

In November the ESB sponsored a mid week course for one member. It was agreed by the Guild, in consultation with Federation, to send two members who would share the sponsorship and thereby halving the fees for each. Gerardine Farrell and Betty Keegan travelled from our guild.

Report on our Mid-Week break in An Grianan

We arrived on Monday 24th and had Style and Image with Renee Clarke that evening. Tuesday began with a demonstration on Christmas floral arrangements, and then a talk was given by a representative from the ESB, who was the sponsor. Our national president, Carmel Dawson gave an inspiring talk, firstly thanking the ESB on sponsoring the mid week break. They have sponsored courses in An Grainan for the last 35 years at a cost of approx. €7,000 a year. She then spoke of the financial affairs of An Grianan, informing the members of the costs involved in the running of the ICA incl. An Grainan and the sale of the HQ in Dublin. She said that the ICA obtain grants from the Government, and also get sponsorship from companies like Bord Gais, ESB etc. She said that with the current finances, including outstanding bills and the so far unsuccessful sale of HQ in Dublin meant that they were looking for a “Rescue Fund” of €25 from each member.



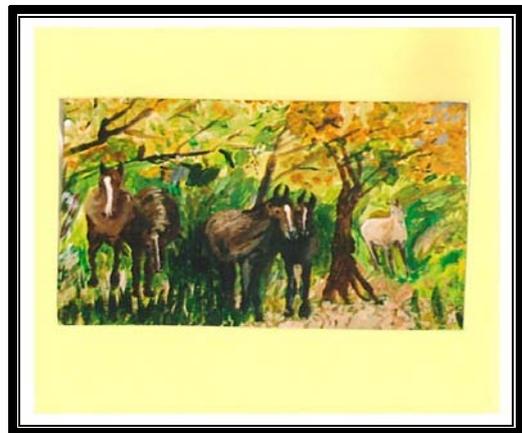
L to R - Betty Keegan (Horseleap/Streamstown) Anna Connolly (Moville, Donegal), Carmel Dawson, National President and Gerardine Farrell (Horseleap/Steamstown)

In the afternoon we had a cookery demonstration and on the last day a Paper Craft class. There was also a great social aspect in the evening, we met up in the bar, and as there were lots of good singers, story tellers and joke telling it was most enjoyable. There was also lively entertainment with a one man band the second night – everyone was on the floor till the early hours. We would highly recommend a visit to An Grianan to lift the spirits in these times of recession. It’s also a great value holiday, with a wide choice of courses on offer, and you can bring a friend as it’s also open to non-members.

Also in November some ladies did classes in Acrylic Painting. They surprised themselves with landscape pictures on the first night, and felt like children mixing colours. They found the classes very relaxing.



Left to right - Eileen McCormack (displaying her painting), Ber Seery and Maura Walsh



Painting by Attracta Colgan

December

Our Christmas Party took place on December 3rd which was our meeting night. It began with some games and then presents were exchanged. Afterwards there was plenty of home baking to be sampled – A good night was had by all.



Enjoying the party are (l to r) Lily Casey, Bridie McCormack, Maureen Hannify and Rose Cummins.

* * * * *

Report on our Christmas Party in the Red Cow Inn, Dublin:

On December 13th, we got more into the Christmas spirit. We set off for Dublin. Lots of members, partners and some friends came too, all off to the June Rodgers Show in Red Cow Inn. The night began with a lovely meal, followed by the show. While we listened to the songs and dancing, holding hands and swaying – it brought us back 20 years.



Attracta Colgan and Kathleen Darcy with June Rogers (centre), a new member!

Some of us had a little sleep, on the way back to our Community Centre where we had our cars parked, not used to being out after 12! This was short lived, however, as our cars were well frosted on our arrival – we had to spend quite some time with heaters on full blast before we could set off for home.

January

This can be a very bleak month, with no meeting being held. We help at the Senior Citizens Party which is held on the second Sunday of the month each year. Members cook turkeys, prepare and cook vegetables make trifle and of course the dinner would not be complete without the Christmas Cake – we have some members who specialise with cake making and so they come up trumps each year with a lovely one! The cutting of the cake is an important affair and this is done by the two most Senior people at the party. After the meal there is some entertainment with dancing, singing, sketches etc. Our members do their bit each year with either a sketch or some set-dancing. We enjoy the day as much as the Seniors and it brings out a great community spirit.



From table end – Cecilia Lynam, Sheila Keegan, Bridie Lynam, Ann Lynam and Bernadette McCormack.



Fr Martin Burke(RIP), Mary Nannery, Paddy Nannery



Betty and Pat Keegan



*L to R – Eileen Johnson, Larry Galvin,
Caroline McDonnell and her grandmother
Mrs. Maureen Robbins(RIP)*



Peter Stokes and Kathleen Darcy

Also in January we held a Committee Meeting to discuss the New Constitution and to vote on the amendments which were returned by 30th January, 2009.

February

Our February meeting was attended by a representative from Herbalife, Terry Keegan, a local lady. The company produce food supplements, skin care creams, shampoos and much more. We then had a sampling session, and some interested members placed orders. We also had some discussion regarding the Rescue Fund. After the meeting our set dancers stayed on to practice for the up coming competition.

We collect Pennies for Friendship each month. We were told by Ursula Goh, World President of ACWW who had visited An Grianan in June that the Pennies are well spent and make a huge difference to the lives of women and children in the Third World countries – with over €10,000 donated last year.



A sponsored 10 kilometre walk was being organised by the Army, Mullingar, in aid of the Stroke Unit in the hospital. Some of us decided to “have a go”- in the hope it would help us train for the Mini Marathon in June.

Report on our sponsored walk for the stroke unit, Mullingar

On a cold Saturday, 28th February, we donned our walking shoes and arrived at the Army Barracks at 10.00 am to register ourselves. Five of us brave souls turned up. We set off at approximately 11.00 am with the aid of a shot from a starter gun. The pace was at our ease or if we were up to it we could run. The army battalion set off on a run in full training gear. We did not feel like keeping up with them so decided to pace ourselves.

It was a cold but dry morning and the walk took us from the town to the country where we could listen to the birds singing and look at all the different shrubs and flowers coming into bloom. By the time we reached the Golf Club we were feeling the strain and it felt like we had already walked our 10 kilometres but we ‘soldiered’ on and soon entered the grounds of Belvedere House. With its magnificent avenue and beautiful gardens it was a fine way to finish a walk. We were informed then that we had just finished over 11 kilometres.

We received our certificates and listened to the speeches and awards were handed out to the winners - none came our way but we finished it and we were satisfied with that. Our main aim was to collect money for the Stroke Unit which we did.

Then we headed off the where the bus was to collect us. We waited and waited and getting colder now we still waited!! No bus, the army seemed to forget that we were supposed to be transported back to Mullingar for our cars. There was a bus belonging to Belvedere House, the question was would it start and would it be able to transport so many of us back to Mullingar or would we end up pushing it up the hill. At last full to the gills the bus makes it back to the Army Barracks and off loads us to our waiting cars.

By then it was too late to finish off our day with our customary meal as most of us had other arrangements made for the evening. We were all very happy with our walk and we had something to report to our next meeting.



L to R – Eileen Robbins, Attracta Colgan, Aine Burge, Gerardine Farrell and Helen Elliffe

Ber Seery and Maura Walsh went to the Competition Finals in An Grianan. Ber was the Westmeath Federation finalist in the Gempack competition.



Gempak Rep presenting Ber Seery with Certificate accompanied by our National President, Carmel Dawson

March

Our Federation meeting was held in Rochfordbridge – We were informed that Phil Brennan has been appointed the new Information Officer. She spoke at the Federation meeting of her new role. She was designated to attend our Guild so we arranged that she attend our AGM in April. There was a competition at Federation Meeting for the most unusual flavour bread in 1lb loaf tin and our Guild had an entry from our President, Attracta Colgan. Although our entry tasted very nice with apricots, sunflower seeds, sesame etc., there was no joy! At Federation, our Guild paid the Rescue Fund of €25 per member plus the Centenary Fund (taking the opportunity to make the once off payment rather than making payments over the 3 years) – totalling €700.

Our Guild meeting was held on Wednesday March 4th and Bernie Gallagher, an Interior Designer, was guest that night. She gave some very good tips regarding colour schemes, furniture arranging, various floor coverings and lighting. We all went home with great ideas, determined to put them into practice.



L to R: Attracta Colgan with Bernie Gallagher – Interior Designer



L to R – Eileen Slevin, Maureen Bermingham, Ber Seery, Maureen Hannify and Margaret Hanlon

One of our members, Maureen Hannify, attended a Pampering course in An Grainan. She was delighted to avail of this course which was sponsored by the HSE. During her stay she enjoyed lovely food and took part in the various courses offered. She won a prize of an Easter flower arrangement and it was a real surprise as she had won an arrangement at our Christmas flower arranging evening also! The Patsy Lawlor set dancing competition was to be held in Abbeyleix on April 25th so we kept practicing until then.



L to R: Frances O'Grady (An Grianan) and Maureen Hannify

April

Our April meeting was held on 1st. As it was our AGM, our President gave us a review of the year, in which we had packed in quite a lot from our entries into the various competitions, classes, events held and trips. Our Annual Mass for the deceased ICA members was discussed and was to be held on April 7th.

Our meeting was attended by Phil Brennan as arranged. We were delighted to have her visit as it was she who was President when we first set up our Guild twenty four years ago. She helped with our “teething” problems then, and now she is here to help us “keep going”. She encouraged us to make use of An Grianan and stressed the importance of attending Council and Federation meetings. It was a relaxed meeting with many stories told of times gone by and of the friendships made in ICA.

As Information Officer she attended the meeting. She outlined the programme she has for the year, visiting Guilds in the Federation and holding courses for the officers, all with the aim of giving officers a greater insight into their roles.

On that night Phil spoke about the ICA. She said she knew about it for years before she joined as her mother was a member - like most of us our own mothers. Back then some of the guild meetings were held in the members' houses. We then spoke of old wives remedies and reminisced about times past.

One member mentioned “mustard baths” - This is supposed to be a remedy for icy feet!

Prepare the bath by dissolving a dessert spoon of dry mustard in 4 pints of warm water; soak the feet for 20 minutes, adding enough water to maintain the temperature. Powder your feet lightly with mustard afterwards. Hopefully, the feet will also maintain a warm temperature after using this remedy.

Kathleen Darcy then entertained us with a song she composed about her recent stay in hospital:

♪
*Show me the way to go home,
I'm tired of lying in this bed,
I had a Panadol an hour ago,
And its gone right to my head ♪*

♪
*Westmeath, here I come,
Beating on my drum,
New knee, new knee, new knee,
I keep beating on my drum ♪*

♪
*Thank you Dr Shariff
For giving me a brand new knee,
The pain is gone, I'll soon be home with Tom,
New knee, new knee, new knee ♪*

Another member, who shall remain nameless, recounted an incident when she was newly married and very innocent. Her mother in law mentioned to her that she had a clocking hen and that she should put down a setting of eggs. She did what she was told. When she went home to visit her parents she proudly told her father what she had done. He asked “Where did you get the eggs?” “In the shed”, she answered. Then he asked, “Do you have a cockerel?” “Nooo.....” She said that she has learned much since with the help of the ICA. Times have changed and maybe we are not so naïve now.

The business of the meeting then continued to a secret ballot for President, in which Maureen Farrell was elected. The Secretary and Treasurer are to remain in their positions for another year.

We posted our voting paper on the ICA draft constitution which had to be returned to Head Office by 24/4/09.

Report on our entry for the Patsy Lawlor Cup & Centenary Set Dancing competitions

At our meeting in March it was decided that we would participate in the Patsy Lawlor Cup and the once off Centenary Set Dancing competitions. Carmel Dawson, The ICA President, presented a trophy for the Centenary Set Dancing competition. Training would take place immediately. We had 10 members willing to train at least one evening a week and we had to learn parts of 4 set dances. With the help of two members from the Ballinea Guild we proceeded to learn all our parts.

Of course the 25th April arrived too soon and we headed off the Abbeyleix for the day, twelve dancers and some of our Guild members who came to support us.

The first competition to take place was the Centenary set in which we danced the Plain and the Antrim Square Sets. The nerves were almost rendering us immobile but we danced our hearts out and as we got into the set we relaxed and began to enjoy ourselves.

Next came the half set and again we took to the floor. We did the Ballynascarty half set. We had to learn this from scratch as no one had ever danced a half set before. Again it was nerve wrecking but as we danced we forgot we were in a competition and enjoyed our dancing. Then all eight of us took to the floor for the last competition of the day. We danced the Connemara set dance. As we had danced this in set dancing class we were more confident dancing it.

Unfortunately we did not take any prizes home with us but received a certificate as a memento of our participation in the Centenary Set. We had a wonderful time and it was very enjoyable watching all the sets. We finished off the day with a meal in the hotel.



L to R – Attracta Colgan, Helen Elliffe, Nuala Reid, Betty Keegan, Maureen Farrell and Eilish McDonnell



L to R - Aine Burge, Jenny Ryder, Antionette Ahern and Attracta Colgan



*Back row l to r – Eileen McCormack, Jenny Ryder, Eileen Robbins
Front row l to r Bridie McCormack, Maura Walsh, Ber Ennis, Carmel
Dawson-National President, Ber Seery and Aine Burge*



*Ber Ennis, Eileen Robbins, Ber Seery Aine Burge, Maura Walsh, Carmel
Dawson, Jenny Ryder, Eileen McCormack and Bridie McCormack*

May

Our May meeting was held on 6th, the first for our newly elected President, Maureen Farrell. Maureen reminded us that membership fees are now due. Maureen Hannify gave us an account of her time in An Grianan where she was entertained with talks on Honey, Make-up, Gardening and Cookery – this “Pamper Week” was sponsored by the HSE.

After our meeting we had our annual bring & buy to raise funds for the Guild. On sale was a variety of toiletries, confectionery, books, shrubs and flowers.



L to R: Aine Burge, Margaret Hanlon, Maureen Bermingham, Bridie McCormack, Maureen Robinson, Ber Ennis and Eilish McDonnell



L to R – Mary McDonnell, Eileen McCormack, Ber Seery, Kathleen Darcy, and Maureen Hannify

With the benefit of Aqua Aerobics in mind we decided to arrange classes in Clara Swimming Pool for a 6 weeks course. Some 10-12 members were interested in the class and had a great time even some other family members came along!



*Back row, l to r – Gerardine Farrell, Helen Elliffe, Ber Seery, Mary McDonnell
Front row, l to r – Maureen Robinson, Maureen Farrell, Ber Ennis, Eileen Robbins, Aine Burge and Attracta Colgan.*

With the set dancing finished we looked to our next project of the Mini Marathon. Most of us who wished to participate decided to do a local Mini Marathon in aid of the Mullingar Hospice. Only one member was interested in taking part in the Dublin Mini Marathon. Training was to begin on the following Monday evening. Over the month of May we spent every Monday evening walking the roads, come rain hail or shine. We increased our pace week by week and felt we were ready for the day. As usual all topics were discussed and dissected on these walks. Everyone enjoyed getting out together after the working day - a good way to relax and unwind and free of charge. This year the Mini Marathons were taking place on the 1st June.

On May 18th we attended Federation meeting in Mullingar – two members entered the Rhubarb Tart Competition, Eileen McCormack and Nuala Reid, and this time Eileen was victorious, so we were delighted as she is a new member.



Eileen McCormack

At the meeting we heard the result of election of our new National President. It was Anne-Marie Dennison from Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick. There were vacancies for many posts in our Federation and Maureen our President offered to continue with the post of Contest Secretary (with the help of Guild members). The AGM was to be held in Kilkenny on May 27th. In the meantime Aqua Aerobics classes were continuing.

Having obtained some “car bins” from Westmeath County Council, Maureen, our President, felt it her duty to give each member one to do our bit to keep Westmeath Tidy!



L to R Kathleen Darcy and Maureen Farrell

Report on the ICA involvement with our Local Community

The local sports were held on June 15th, 2008, in glorious sunshine. Many of our members became involved with the organising of this event. One member baked a fruit cake for the “guess the weight of this cake” competition, with the cake being the prize for the nearest guess. Helping out also involved supervising of races, competitions, and other activities on the day including “nappy hanging”, “guess name of doll”, “guess number of sweets in a jar” etc. A good day was had by all.

The Harvest Fair was held on October 5th. This event was the brain-child of our first President, Maureen Farrell, and it is still going strong. This is an open event though our Guild members submit quite a few entries. Entries include vegetables, flowers, farm eggs, jams, cakes, bread etc (as can be seen in our photos the beautiful display of home baking). There is a section for Flower arranging also. All the produce on show is later auctioned off and the funds collected contribute towards the upkeep of the community centre amongst other things.



Childrens Baking Competition



Mrs Joy Roe – Judging the entries

On January 9th, 2009 the Senior Citizens party was held – as on page 27.

On May 17th, 2009 an auction was held. This is also an annual event held by the Community Association in which our members help out. People take their unwanted goods for auction on the day. Our members help in the collection of the goods and then back at the centre help to number each item and arrange them for auction. They later assist the auctioneer on the day of the auction with the sale of items and then record the sale with names of the buyers.



L to R Bridie McCormack and Eileen Robbins

CONCLUSION

Looking back on our year, all our members agreed that we had a very busy and fun filled year. With our charity walks and work, dancing, cookery and skills competitions, aqua aerobics, cookery and painting classes, the different demonstrations we had at each meeting, our variety of tours and not least getting this book together which gave us many hours of reminiscing and laughter. As one of our newest members put it “she thought ICA was a ‘closed shop’, but she was warmly welcomed and joining our Guild was one decision she will not regret. It was like joining a large busy and happy family once more”. We are always on the lookout for new members, and hopefully by reading this book, prospective members will get a glimpse of what one small Guild can achieve in a year. We look forward to completing our Guilds 25 years in ICA in April 2010.

Guild members who contributed:

Eilish McDonnell

Maura Walsh

Betty Keegan

Aine Burge

Maureen Farrell

Eileen Robbins

Attracta Colgan

Bridie McCormack

Sheila Keegan

Helen Elliffe

Gerardine Farrell

Mary Fox