



## Naomh Eoin Bosco CLG

*Irish News Special Recognition Award Winners 2011*

### ***St John Bosco GAC Seniors Social Initiative***

### ***Summary 2012***

#### **Introduction**

The St John Bosco Seniors had a very busy year breaking into jail, getting into Croke Park, emptying bottles, studying at the gaelteacht and much more!

The seniors have had such an impression in the club that at the annual general meeting on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> December a motion was passed that there is a committee place specifically reserved for a senior member.

#### **Jail Break**

Older members of society are not usually synonymous with jails or indeed that famous song from Phil Lynott and Thin Lizzy but the penultimate Winter meeting of St John Bosco Seniors Project took the form of a field trip to Armagh Gaol on Thursday 23rd February and they all got in and out on the



same day!. The St John Bosco Seniors Project is part of the wider GAA Social Initiative and is delivered in collaboration with Gaeláras Mhic Ardghail Newry.

*Picture title: The St John Bosco Seniors group outside Armagh Gaol*

The field trip to Armagh Gaol was a resounding success with over 20 participants making the trek from Newry to Armagh. As co-ordinator Séamus MacDhaibhéid stated at the outset *“It was difficult to predict numbers for those who would be prepared to travel. I was delighted that such a large group were able to make it to Armagh. It is a truly an historic building and everyone was genuinely impressed with the tour and the quality of the information”*.

And indeed Séamus was correct. The party was informed that the prison was for male, female and youth offenders. The tour party were shocked by the confines of the prison and the conditions that inmates had to endure. Eddie McIlroy was intrigued with the famous prisoners incarcerated in the jail and their personal histories.

**Picture title: Exercising in the yard**

While a lot of the participants were happy to hear information on historical cases of prisoners, for some of the group the visit evoked personal memories. Peter Jackson recounted visiting a Newry man in the prison in 1975 and Kathleen Burns had taught prisoners in the jail in 1975. A



handcrafted handkerchief from G. Larkin who was a republican prisoner in the jail in 1975 also stirred a lot of interest and debate.

The St John Bosco GAC Seniors Project Winter programme entitled Comhrá agus Craic was a series of workshops in Cumann Naomh Eoin Bosco exploring the heritage of Newry. Facilitator Séamus Mac Dhaibhéid ensured the debates and discussions were lively and informative, and in the process an extensive collection of memories was unearthed, re-visited and recorded for future generations. Senior group members were very enthusiastic about the events, Felix Finnegan stated *“The banter and interaction was*

*tremendous. Past events, places and people about the town were discussed and debated. I will really miss our gatherings.” Tom Tumilty likewise was very complimentary about the weekly meetings. He stated “The meetings were great, good company and hospitality, you didn’t notice the time going past. In fact I was often surprised when an hour and a half or two hours had passed.”*

## **Message In A Bottle**

The last event in the Winter calendar of activities for the Bosco Seniors was the ‘Message in a Bottle’ exhibition on Wednesday 14th March as part of Seachtain na Gaeilge. The exhibition looked at the bottling, local mineral water companies and diaries in Newry and took place in the Cusack Lounge, St John Bosco GFC Social Club Water Street on March 14<sup>th</sup> .



Picture Title: Teachtaireacht I mBuidéal – message in a bottle



Picture Title: Seniors at the Bottle Exhibition

Cathaoirleach Cumann Naomh Eoin Bosco Seosamh Ó Riain stated “*Social isolation among the elderly is not just a rural problem, older members of our*

*communities in towns and cities suffer from lack of opportunity and loneliness. Cumann Naomh Eoin Bosco organized this series of events to help fill those dark solitary Winter evenings and we were very pleased with the success achieved. Now, in line with mainstream club planning we have designed a spring training programme for the seniors which will include heritage, language, culture and fitness activities. The highlight of this will be our trip for seniors, carers and helpers to the Eucharistic Congress Mass in Croke Park in June.*

As with all of the seniors nights this proved to be a very successful event and provoked lively debate among the participants. There were a lot of empty



bottles alcoholic, mineral, milk and medicinal and none were emptied on the night! Many thanks to all who helped assemble the display.

*Picture Title: An old milk bottle from The Commons Dairy owned by the late Peter Woods from the Commons Hall Road. Bottle loaned by Kieran and Majella Jennings (nee Woods)*

## Statio Orbis – 50<sup>th</sup> Eucharistic Congress



*Picture Titles: The St John Bosco Seniors outside Croke Park and Mary Cookson 'under arrest!'*

As part of the 'seniors' project St John Bosco GAC organised a bus for 45 members of our community to the Eucharistic Congress in Croke Park to attend the Statio Orbis Mass. This was a wonderful day, blessed with good weather, with time on our hands we came home the scenic route via Howth, Malahide and Portmarnock and the day was enjoyed by all. Even Mary Cookson who ended up in Garda custody in handcuffs saw the bright side of things.

## Coláiste Bhríde Ó Méith Celebrations

The St John Bosco clubrooms were packed on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> September for the Coláiste Bhríde Ó Méith 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations.



Friday night in the Cussack

Lounge Donegal Gaeltacht singer Dominic Mac Giolla Bhríde treated the crowd to an excellent concert and on Saturday

Séamus MacDhaibheid gave a very informative presentation on the college work.



## Plans for 2013 – Our Golden Jubilee Year

### Lost Sounds of Newry

We are working on an initiative entitled *'Lost sounds of Newry.'* This will be a series of workshops with the Seniors capturing their memories in written form of all the sounds they grew up with that are now long gone. Hopefully these memories will be produced in a booklet for distribution to all local primary and post primary schools providing a social tapestry of Newry's industrial, commercial and social past and serve all generations. Sounds such as ships in the Albert Basin, Mill Horns sounding, clogs on cobbles, fire

station sirens, mill wheels, blacksmiths etc are sounds that many of our older members of society grew up with that the younger generations are oblivious to. The project will capture these sounds and memories for enjoyment by all.

## **Grandparents Day**

Another initiative we are planning a ***Grandparents day*** where the players/members of the club are encouraged to bring their Grandparents along to a special day in the club and to games to recognise and pay tribute to the older generation who founded the club 50 years ago and act as pillars in our community.

## **Were you there in '53 or '61?**

During 2012 St John Bosco GAC as part of the 'seniors' social initiative are developed a grandparents/grandchildren project. The aims of this are to bridge the generations gap and ensure that family links with the GAA are recognised and strengthened. In working on this project we unsuccessfully applied for funding opportunity from OFMDFM .

The project is entitled '***Were you there in '53 or '61?***' The objectives of the project are to reach out to the older generation of GAA supporters that were in Croke Park in 1953 when Armagh reached the final and many thousands

of supporters literally climbed over the wall and also in 1961 when Down were the first Northern Team to bring Sam over the border. Using the youth of the clubs who would in many instances be the grandchildren of the 'seniors' we would like to record these memories, photos etc of these landmark occasions for Ulster GAA and then organise a special trip to Croke Park for all participants.

The aims of the project are

1. to reduce the social exclusion of older people.
2. Facilitate our older members to remain active and have a visible role in our community .
3. To increase awareness and mutual respect between generations.
4. To capture the memories of those special GAA occasions for future generations

Whilst we were unable to develop this project further in 2012 because of a lack of funding we are actively seeking funding in 2013.

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**Cairde Bosco – Have you joined yet?**  
**Funding the St John Bosco GAC community initiatives on a sustainable basis.**

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