

When we drink the water , we should remember
with gratitude those who dug the well.
- Chinese saying.



MID-WESTERN
The Arts Council of the Mid-West

St. Joseph's Hospital Arts Project Ennis 2004

A TIME TO REMEMBER



Memories of St. Joseph's Hospital Arts Project Ennis



*Bail o Dhia
ar on obair.*



*May the blessing of light
Be on you, light without and light within.
May the blessed sunlight
Shine upon you and warm your heart 'til it glows
like a great peat fire , so that the stranger may
Come and warm his or herself at it ,
and also a friend.
And may the light shine out of the eyes of you,
like a candle set in the windows of a house,
Bidding the wanderer to come in out of the
Storm.*

....OLD IRISH BLESSING.



NÁDÚR

The West of Ireland has always been associated with the natural and indeed, the supernatural world. In its stones, cairns, mountains and wells it exudes an ancientness that defines our past. Amongst the people there is an innate belief in, and understanding of, the need for 'mystery', other worlds that connect with our own, whether through nature or divinity.

But there is another 'nature' that in this part of the country is still cherished. It means an outpouring of the heart, a compassion towards the 'other' and a forgetting of the self. Every day I see this demonstrated, sometimes in the most unexpected ways and places. Warmth, earthy humour, an understanding of the human condition and, above all, kindness, prevails. St. Joseph's is a microcosm of Co. Clare and Co. Clare in turn is a microcosm of all that is the best in our 'nature'.

✿ ELEANOR



FOREWORD

A Time to Seek was an initiative of the County Arts Office which saw an opportunity to cherish and embrace members of our older generation in a creative and empowering way. The project came to life with the support of the Mid Western Health Board and found a home in St. Joseph's Hospital, Ennis, Co. Clare.

From the outset the ideology behind the project was always going to take those involved on a journey. However, no one involved could have foreseen the emotional, celebratory and artistic voyage that the project developed into led, led by the dynamic Eleanor Feely, artist in residence.

This journey continues with this publication. There is no point of beginning and no end in sight. The reflections, observations and experiences contained within are personal to each of the contributors but resonate far and wide.

It has been an experience and a privilege to be involved in the project, one that has shaped our perceptions of the elderly and the community at large in ways we could never have anticipated. We invite you to share in these experiences through the pages of this book.

✿ SIOBHÁN MULCAHY
Clare County Arts Officer

October 2004



THE ARTS PROJECT

The 'A Time to Seek' arts project commenced in January 2002 in St. Joseph's Hospital Ennis. The project seeks to enhance the quality of life for all those in residential care. The project is a partnership with the County Arts Office (Clare County Council) through the County Arts Development Plan.

The project was initiated for the residents in St. Joseph's Hospital by the Elderly Care Services Section which is committed to 'focusing on the provision of health and social gain' for the elderly. During her intensive collaborations with both staff and patients Eleanor Feeley, the Artist in Residence, identified time as being of immense value to all those affiliated to the provision of elderly care services. Time has different resonances for staff, patients and their families and covers the past, present and future.

The establishment of an artist's residency in the Hospital allows the elderly patients to engage in creative activities to improve their quality of life. This is achieved by the creation of several initiatives which stimulates the imaginations and interests of the hospital community. The benefit overall to the patients has been to create a sense of belonging in this community. There is always a sense of anticipation of events and active participation. For the patients there is a valuing of their involvement and a creation of a sense of "home".

*"Whatever your labours and aspirations
in the noisy confusion of life
keep at peace with your soul"*

✿ NOREEN SPILLANE, Director of Nursing

✿ MARIA MOLLOY Elderly Care Services Manager

Many people from all walks of life have helped us in the creation of this project. I would like to pay tribute here to their kindness and generosity.
-E.F.

Phil Barrow and the Active Retirement Association, Ennis.
Nurse Geraldine Behan
Martin Blake, Ennis Parish Church.
Jimmy Brohan, Parnell St.
Mary Bugler.
Jerry Carey, St. Joseph's Church.
Clare Champion Newspaper.
Cormac McConnell and Marian Egan of Clare FM.
Frankie Coote, Clare Animal Welfare and his canine friends Abby and Bart.
Frank Custy, Johnny McCarthy and all our wonderful musicians.
Martina Crowley-Hayes and Amanda O'Donovan of CLASP Publishing.
Willie Daly, matchmaker and raconteur.
Seamus Feely, watchman, (his description!) Parnell St.
Liam Flynn and his team, Whelan's Quarries.
Kieran Hanrahan and the 'Ceili House' production team, R.T.E.
Michael Hennessy, Colaiste Muire.
Howard's Shop, Lifford.
Paddy Hynes, Carron.
Howard's Shop, Lifford.
Liam Keehan, Johnny Ryan, Eamonn Kenny, Mick Quinn, Sean Dunphy and all the maintenance team at St. Joseph's.
The Lavin family.
Sean Lowe, poet.
Pat Meehan, Abbey St.
Maire Ni Chiothain, Gaelcholaiste an Chlair.
R.T.E. Archives Dept.
Shanahan's Paints.
St. Joseph's Travellers' Group.
Etain Murphy
St. Flannan's College

I would especially like to thank Siobhan, Noel and all the gang for allowing me to turn ideas into realities and those who, in my father's words, are 'the reason why'...

Go n'eiri an t-adh libh.
Eleanor.

Compilation and photography by Eleanor Feely.
Still from artist's 'Memoria' by Gerry Leddin. Page?
Graphic design by Edel Butler.



LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS.

Phil Barrow is a community activist .

Meadhbh Boyd is a student at Gaelcholaiste an Chlair and a composer.

Christy Carey is from Gort. He works in Unit 5 in St. Joseph's. He is an expert gardener and naturalist.

Margaret Finlay is a nurse in St. Joseph's.

Colm Flynn is a student at the CBS, Ennis. He has his own video production company, Moon T.V.

Shane Gilmore is a sculptor.

Sandra Hurley is a Dutch sculptor living in Carron.

Nathalie Leahy is a student of media in the University of Limerick.

Sean Lowe is a former resident in St. Joseph's Hospital. He now lives in the community and is an accomplished poet.

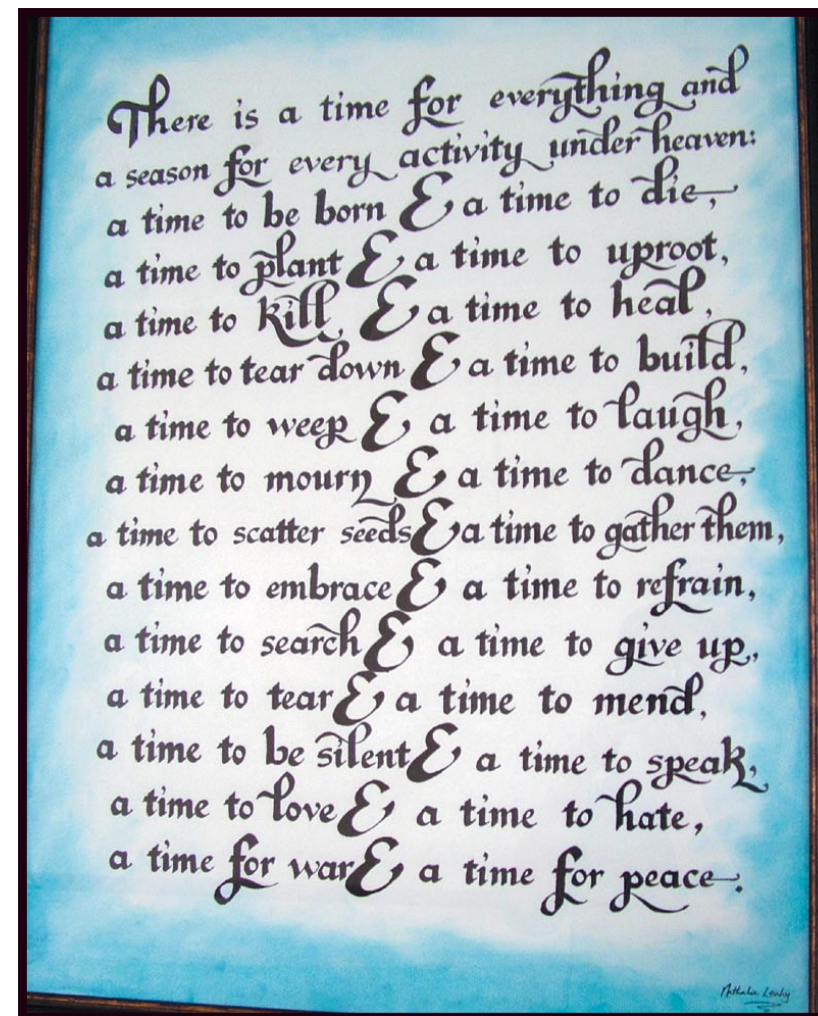
John Molloy is a priest based in Ennis. He is also a horticulturalist.

Maria Molloy is Director of Clare Elderly Care Services.

Anne Neylon is a former student of Colaiste Muire and is from Corofin.. She is currently studying law at U.C.G.

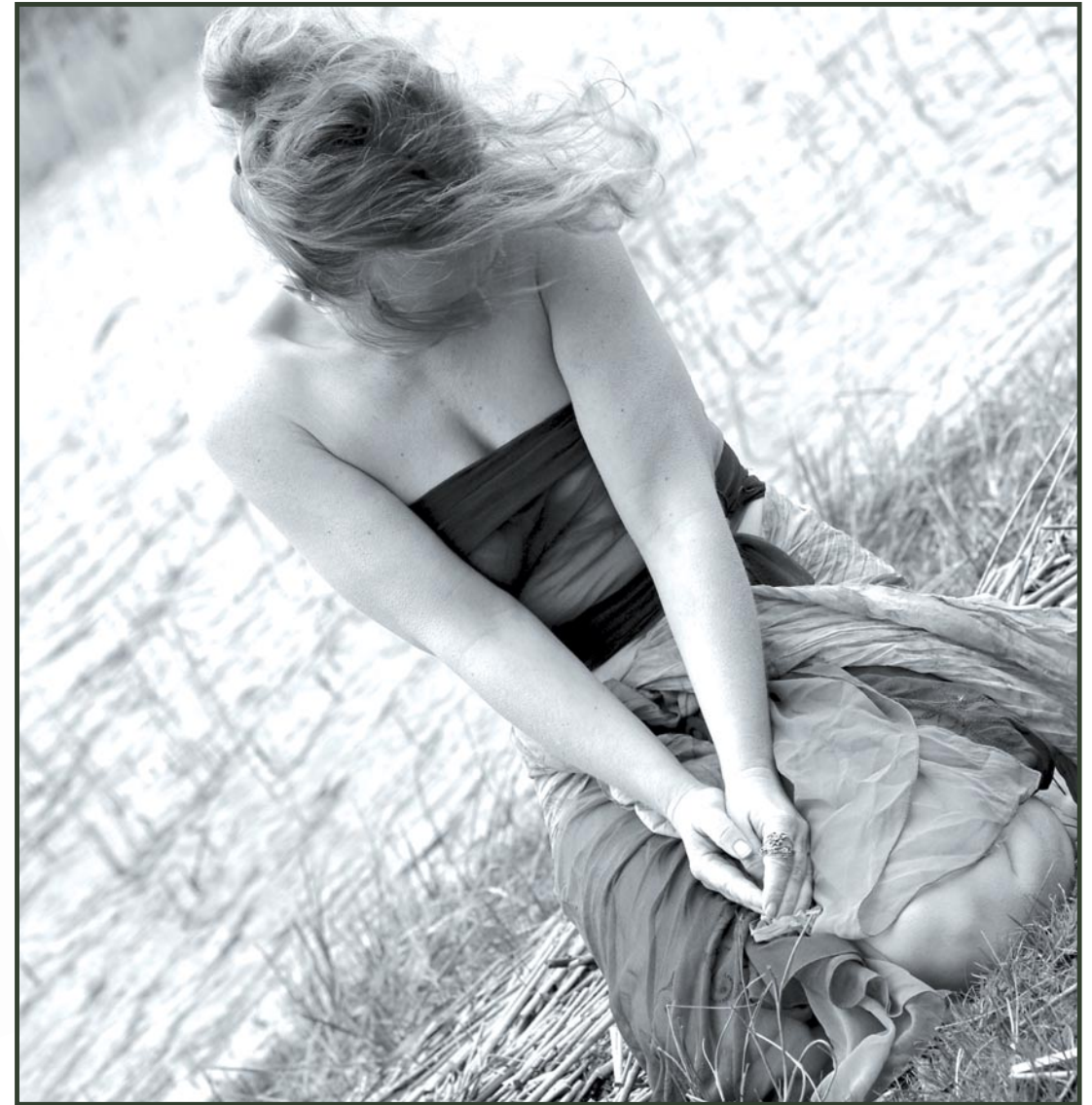
Noreen Spillane is the Director of Nursing at St. Joseph's.

Eleanor Feely is artist-in-residence at St. Joseph's. She is an actor/director/writer working in community settings.



*"And are you
innocent?"* the poet asked.

*"Yes...in the way I think you mean it...
yes, I am ...yes".*



SEOMRA CUAIRTE

' *W* here the wandering water gushes

From the hills above Glen-Car,

In pools among the rushes

That scarce could bathe a star,

We seek for slumbering trout

And whispering in their ears

Give them unquiet dreams;

Leaning softly out

From ferns that drop their tears

Over the young streams.

Come away, O human child!

To the waters and the wild

With a faery, hand in hand,

For the world's more full of weeping

than you can understand.

W. B. Yeats.

Since it opened, everyone has placed a few bets,
watched a few races,
cursed a few teams, sang a few songs ,
played a few tunes , danced a few sets,
kissed a few times and waited comfortably
as time stood still.



*For the good are always
the merry,
Save by an evil chance,
And the merry love
the fiddle
And the merry love
to dance.*

W. B .Yeats.

SONGS

*Bless this house
O Lord we pray
Keep it safe
By night and day
Bless these walls
So firm and stout
Keeping want
And trouble out.*



*Bless the people
Here within
Keep them pure
And free from sin
Bless us all
That we one day
May dwell, O Lord
With Thee.*

✿ (WORDS COURTESY OF ESSIE DUGGAN - FEELY)



RADIO

Céilí House, RTE visits An Seomra Cuairte



PRAYER

*May the gentleness of water soften
The tensions within us,
May the wisdom of the earth open us
To mystery,
May the simplicity of air capture our
hearts,*



*May the flame
of the Spirit give
us*

*hope, courage and strength
As we continue our pilgrim way...
And Healing God, come to our
hidden
corners.*



THE GARDEN

The development of a garden, whilst being an end in itself, is also, and more importantly, a conduit for expression, the development of self-respect and community participation.

The sharing of time and knowledge; memory; a reliance on religious practice as a constant in a changed world and a need for 'dreamtime' are all things which are important to the people who live in St. Joseph's.

We based the design of our garden on the outward simplicity of a prayer and the oriental tradition of 'zazen' ('sitting still').

In today's sectionalized world we are in danger of cutting ourselves off from earth, spirit and the wisdom of the old and so, we have concentrated our efforts on the concept of 'meitheal' or communal time and connecting those threads which forge our humanity.

Our garden has more than four seasons. Secrets have been told in it, laughter has been heard in it, tears have fallen in it, seeds have been gathered in it and love, in all its forms, thrives there.

✿ ELEANOR FEELY





*Beside a withering flower
is a bud about to bloom.*

*Many seeds remain
after a flower dies.*

How similar to a flower is life.'

✿ JAPANESE GARDENER.

*'The kiss of the sun for pardon
The song of the birds for mirth
One is nearer God's heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth'.*

*I think that I shall never see
A poem lovelier than a tree.
A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast
A tree that looks at God all day
And lifts her leafy arms to pray.*

*A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair
Upon whose bosom snow is lain
Who intimately lives with rain*



*Lonely I wandered through scenes of my childhood
They call back to memory those happy days of yore
Gone are the old folk , the house stands deserted
No light in the window , no welcome at the door.*

*Lone is the house now and lonely the moorland
The people are scattered , the old folk are gone
Why stand I here like a ghost on the heather
It's time I was moving , it's time I passed on.*



MARY OF THE CURLING HAIR

*My Mary of the curling hair
The laughing cheeks and bashful air
A bridal morn is dawning fair
With blushes in the skies.*

*Siul, siul, siul arun
Siul go socair agus siul go ciuin
My love, my pearl, my own dear girl
My mountain maid arise.*

*For we were known from infancy
My father's hearth was hope to me
No selfish love was mine for thee
Unholy and unwise.*

*And soon my love shall be my bride
And happy by our own fireside
My veins shall feel the rosy tide
Which lingering hope denies.*



*... 'The years that pass
Like tired soldiers
nevermore have
given
Moments to see
wonders in the
grass'.*

✿ P. KAVANAGH.





*We plant the seeds
That one day will grow ,
We water seeds already planted ,
Knowing that they hold
Future promise ...*

✿OSCAR ROMERO.

TAKING A LOOK BACK



No other generation will experience the changes that those of us born in the 30's have seen. Take one example...electricity. In the 50's, many of our relatives living in rural Ireland had not yet installed 'the electric'. that magical switch that flooded daylight into the house before dawn and long after darkness fell.

Picture the deprivation they experienced compared to those who lived in towns.

No instant light to rise with in the morning; no electric kettle, no toaster or microwave and no hot shower facilities..and that only takes care of breakfast time.

No vacuum cleaner to neatly get rid of dust and pet hairs, no washing machine, dryer, electric iron, not to mention essentials like cookers, grills and deep fat fryers.

No central heating..can you imagine having to light a fire to heat the room when the day's work was done?

No T.V. to relax and unwind with.. running water and flush toilets are not aeons away from us.

Today we have many aids that make home less laborious for us ..tiled and wooden floors and the numerous solutions and devices available.

We have frozen foods and pre-packed meals and take aways...sure, home-making today should be a doddle compared to how our ancestors or indeed our parents lived.

One would think that there is little left for the present generation to learn the hard way.

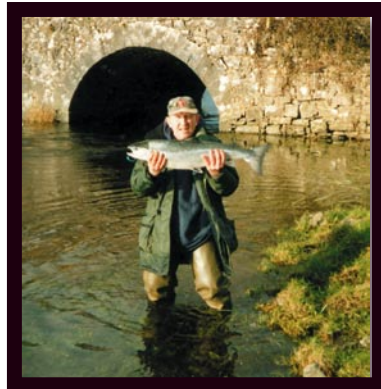
But...we have more conveniences but less time...

✿PHIL BARROW.

-As a nurse , I'm accountable for all I do ,
and I must adhere to the professional code of practice at all times.
I enjoy caring for the elderly , because I like people and get great satisfaction
from helping them.
For many reasons our patients had to leave their homes , families and community.
While I cannot replace all that's lost in their lives, to the best of my ability
I try to maintain their dignity and independence.
Above all, I hope I'm their friend.

✿ MARGARET FINLAY. Nurse , Unit 5.

*What life have you if not life
in community?'*
T. S. ELIOT.



A TIME TO LIVE

The St. Joseph's Garden Project in my mind , was and is a unique Arts Project.

Since my arrival to Ennis town, some six years ago, I regularly come into contact with the residents in St. Joseph's.

As we are aware, our life expectancy is longer now than it used to be. The people I meet, greet and listen to in St. Joseph's are people from all over Co. Clare. They are people who have lived life through the good and bad days. They may have reared families or live alone. They may have worked and toiled the land, busily going about their daily labour.

Our people now reside in St. Joseph' - a place we call 'home'. They say: 'home is where the heart is', or supposed to be.

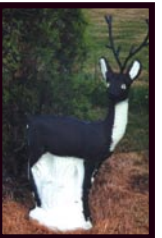
The development of the Seomra Cuairte gives St. Joseph's a new heart centre.

At times , to see people sit there , chat and just 'be' - by the fire - gives the 'outsider' a feeling of warmth and togetherness.

No home, I believe , is complete without a garden. We have maybe heard the lovely verse: 'we are closer to God in a Garden than any place else on earth'. To observe the way the garden is developing makes one 'think'. It makes me realise when time and money (!) are given to reach out and make a place more homely - changes occur for the better. E. g. Chat among the residents about the spuds, beans, lettuce and onions.

When one sees a person walk out and touch and feel and notice different things growing or different things appear like a grotto or toilet bowl or sink, one can only be in awe and say 'well done'. That's the project. When one hears chat on the corridor about the 'work going on out in the garden' - things like that stir in me feelings of normality and memories etc. When times and memories meet - we are in a special place - a place in the heart - hopefully a happy heart called contentment. The Garden Project has given and will hopefully continue to give life and nurture to all in St. Joseph's.

✿ JOHN MOLLOY



MADONNA WITH CHILD' SCULPTURE FOR ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL, ENNIS

When I was invited to make a sculpture for St. Joseph's Hospital, the brief was to create a piece that would appeal to patients, staff and visitors alike. I decided to make a figurative piece that should transcend its traditional or representational meaning. I wanted people to be able to recognise and connect with the sculpture and at the same time evoke the memory of the primary emotions it represents, if not the actual feelings themselves.

The image of the Madonna with Child conveys a timeless and universal meaning, regardless of station in life, religion, age, etc. On a primary level, almost everybody has memories and feelings about loving and being loved. The ultimate acceptance and unconditional love between parent and child. The feelings of safety a very small child experiences in a parents arms, the instinctive recognition that there is always somebody who will love and protect.



When people get old, especially when suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's disease, it is often difficult or even impossible for them to retain any memories of recent events in their life. In my own experience, I have found that when people revert to the memories of their childhood, it is usually the love they experienced, the bond with their parents and the feelings of being safe and protected that are most clear. They remember being comforted by their mother, even if they are confused and don't recognise their adult son or daughter anymore.

With this sculpture, I have tried to convey that experience of love. The unconditional love that we can find within our family and that stays with us throughout our lives, and that ties us from one generation to the next.

sandra hurley



MEMORIES ON THE WALL.

As the mural developed in Unit 3, more and more stories came out: days on the turf bog; a spin out to the islands in the Shannon; a herd of Shorthorn cows roaming and off to the creamery on the ass and cart. The artwork has inspired songs, stories and good craic amongst the residents as the weeks went by.

SMILES OF SURPRISE

"I can't do it," "I'm too tired," "it's all a cod!" - initial reaction to art classes in the Alzheimer's Unit.
But over the weeks more and more would join in and their initial reluctance turned to smiles of surprise as their painting unfolded before their eyes.



The final accolade – their work framed and on display at the Bealtaine Festival...and the smiles again – of pride in achievement!

✿Thoughts on work in Unit 1A. – ALAN SHOOSMITH.

FORGET ME NOT

*They passed away unnoticed
Untouched by praise or blame
Outside the confines of this place
Not many spoke their name
With patience proud, unwithering
Meandering through this spot
Their hope was high as heaven's
door
Their prayer forget-me-not.*

✿SEAN LOWE. Former Resident



ART CLASSES

In the garden of St. Joseph's Hospital stands a large boulder.
Having been asked by Eleanor to carve the word
'tranquillity' ('suaimhneas')
onto the stone, I decided a few small carved features
would also look good on it.

The stone reminded me of an ancient celtic standing stone, so
I carved a spiral. I carved a child's face to represent youth
and where we began our lives as little children.

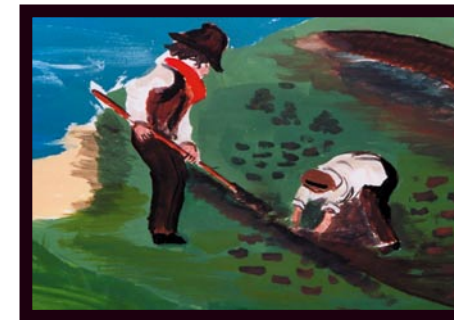
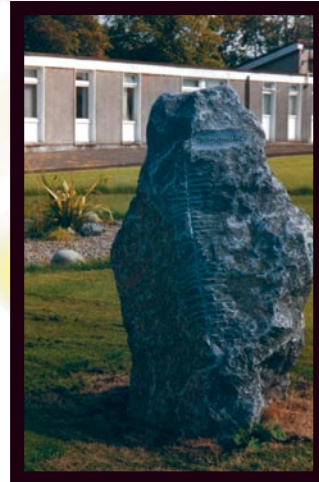
At the top I have made a bowl shape to hold
water or food for the birds.

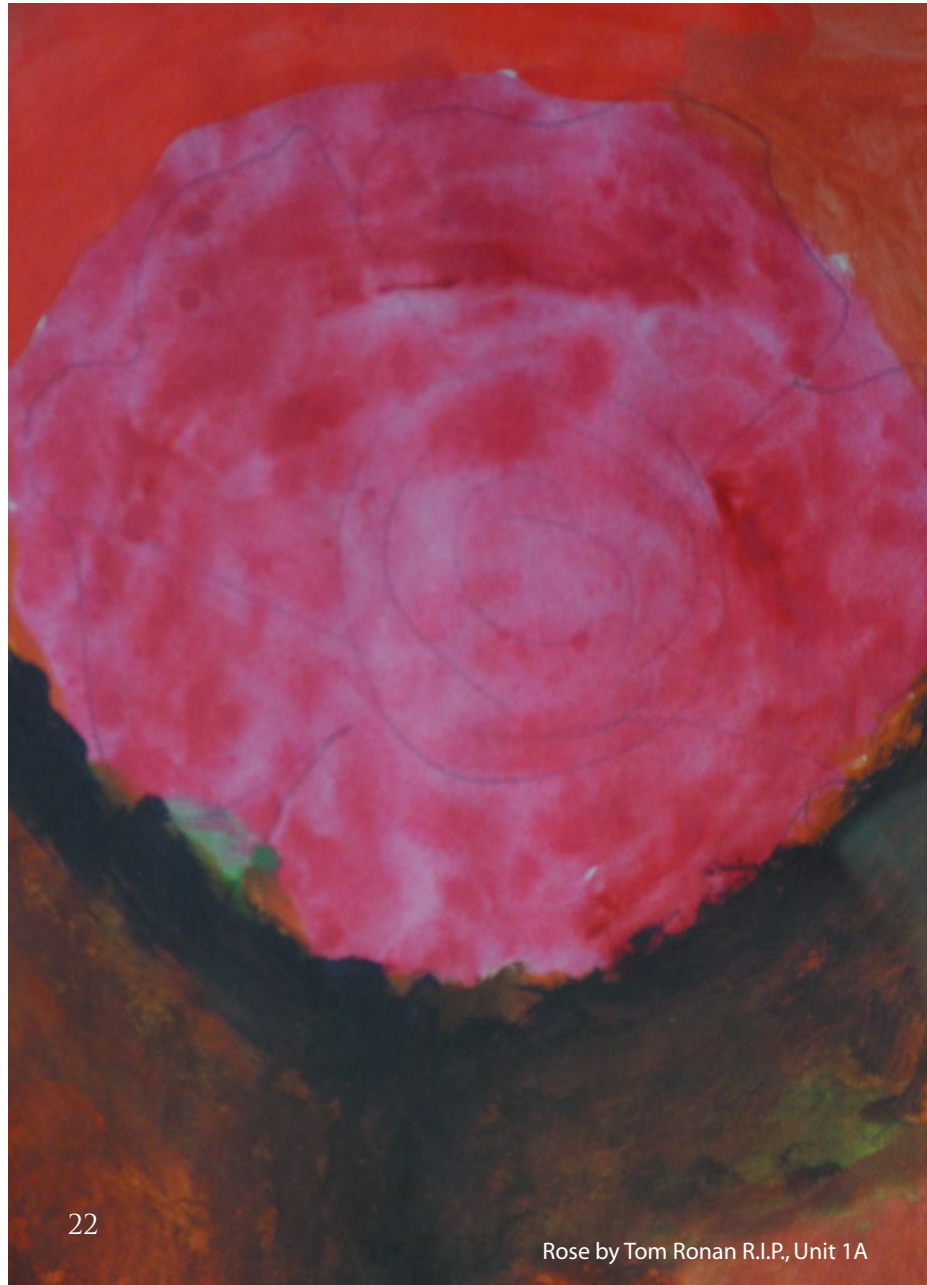
✿ SHANE GILMORE 2004



*Tranquillity walks with me
And no care.
O, the quiet ecstasy
Like a prayer.*

✿ P. KAVANAGH.

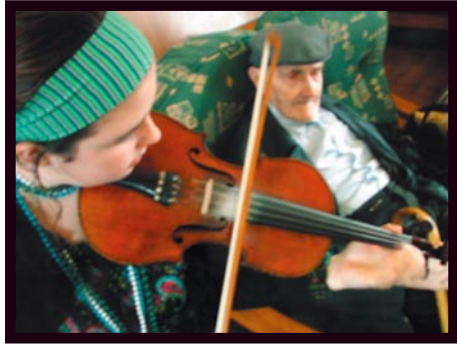




During the epidemic of the dreaded 'winter vomiting bug' in the hospital in May(!) 2002, when we were all barred and I could only twiddle my fingers, there appeared, miraculously, in the garden a beautiful birdtable, made with loving care and donated by members of the travelling community. It was a great sign of hope at a dark time.

*I must uphold my ideals for perhaps the day will come when
I must carry them out.*

✿From the Diary of Anne Frank.



My time spent with the residents in St. Joseph's was enlightening. These are real people with amazing stories. Most importantly, these are people, human beings who experienced all shades of emotion : love, hate, grief, joy. Some of them whom lived through war and witnessed the building up and breaking down of our society. I played the violin\ fiddle and piano for these residents. Music, I believe, is a gateway and a means of escape from reality for them. They can close their eyes and visualize they are wherever it was they were happiest and perhaps, in a sense, relive their youth.

I cannot put into words how I felt as their eyes lit up watching and hearing me play. That alone would brighten anyone's day. I would sincerely hope more young people would be aware of the elderly and make use of their knowledge and experience. We can learn so much from them.

It may only take a chapter from a book, a tune or two, or a conversation. The point is that you took time out to spend with them, and they are always grateful and look forward to seeing you again.

‘We do not count a man's years until he has nothing else to count’

-Ralph Waldo Emerson.

✿MEADHBH BOYD.

I first met Eleanor in 2000 when I was involved in a drama project called Ex Libris with herself and a group of students.

Then three years ago she was appointed to St. Joseph's Hospital as artist in residence and asked me if I would assist her with some of the ideas she had for the hospital environment.

When I started helping Eleanor with projects in St. Joseph's Hospital, I wasn't sure what to expect. The ideas were brilliant, all we had to do was put them into action. As part of my voluntary work there, I took on several things to brighten up the hospital. One of the first things I did was take photographs which are part of a collection on permanent display on the main corridor. They were launched on the U. N. International Day of the Elderly. I helped painting the wall outside and the garden. One of the other projects which I did were the calligraphy and pictures which are now framed and hanging on the wall. One is hanging amidst the photographs and two more outside the mortuary doors to comfort the grieving. I chose quotes that I thought were fitting for the area.



As a young person, I feel it's important to give back to the community.

As time passed in the hospital I helped Eleanor with anything I could, like where to hang all those prints by famous artists. As well as this, I helped prepare the hospital for special occasions such as Christmas and St. Brigid's Day by making decorations and also taking part in the celebrations and religious ceremonies.

The decorations that I took on to make for Christmas were strings of holly. My mother showed me how to do this as her mother had shown her. I thought it was important to do this as some of the residents might have decorated their own homes in such a way.

As religion is of utmost importance to their generation, St Brigid's Day is held close to their hearts. Eleanor and I built up a little grotto for the occasion in the Seomra Cuairte and I made some Brigid's crosses. One of the elderly residents came in and, as she loves St. Brigid, began to kiss all the crosses and placed one over her heart. This gesture was touching and made me realise how important these rituals are for the elderly.

What I have done in St. Joseph's hasn't been much, but if everyone gave a little of their time it would make residential places more homely and enjoyable for both the residents and staff.

✿NATHALIE LEAHY.

The 03/04 Gaelcolaiste Transition Year students in conjunction with Eleanor and the Arts Office are currently in the process of improving the St. Joseph's garden walls.

Eleanor came to us for help on a Lenten and Easter altar for the Seomra Cuairte (visiting room) in St. Joseph's in February 2004. We worked together on the theme 'Desert', paying special attention to the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine, with help from their respective embassies in Dublin. After the successful completion of this endeavour, we had tasted the flavour of community arts work and we were hungry for more.

When we were looking for inspiration wandering around the hospital, we noticed that some of the garden walls were dark and gloomy. Not, we decided, the desired atmosphere in a place of care. The people working at St. Joseph's were far too busy to keep the garden bright, so we decided to help out.

We got to work almost immediately on ideas for sprucing it up. After much discussion we decided that a mural would be the best choice, considering the rich artistic resources in the class and the goal of creating a more cheerful atmosphere for the patients. Easily the most difficult and time-consuming section was the design stage. We had to have it blend with the surroundings, please the residents and have it in keeping with the theme of 'time and memory'. Countless photographs and calendars were analysed before we came up with the final design.

It would be a farm on a cliff edge, with a rock in the centre on which was written the poem 'A Time to Talk' by Robert Frost.

We reasoned that this would please the residents because many of them were from rural or coastal backgrounds.

After the matron gave us the all clear we began work straight away. Thanks to the generosity of Shanahans' Paints we have been able to keep costs to a minimum.

Our art teacher, Mrs. McDermott, was also a great helping laying the foundations and she was always there to give some good advice.

It is now nearing completion and the garden is noticeably brighter and so too, we hope, are the lives of the residents who view it.

✿CORMAC O'BRIEN

- On behalf of Transition Year, Gaelcholaiste an Chlair, Ennis.

The main purpose of humans in this world is to make others feel less alone....
and integrity is doing something for the sole reason that it is right.

✿ANNE NEYLON.

When I first entered St. Josephs I was totally unaware of the many great people who worked and lived there. As a teenager I suppose I saw elderly people as 'uncool' and 'boring'.

But by the end of my first day there that attitude had totally changed.

The crew and I thought that our cameras, sound booms and equipment would surprise them or make them quiet and shy, but this was not the case. Our first interview was with Michael Noone, who made us do three different takes until he was happy with it! It was like we were working with pros. None of the residents were quiet or shy in front of our camera and were always very nice to us and patient.

I learned so much while filming in St. Joseph's and I would like to thank Eleanor for giving us the opportunity to film in the hospital and for taking so much time out to help us in the making of our video. I will never forget all the happy memories I have from St. Joseph's.

✿COLM FLYNN.



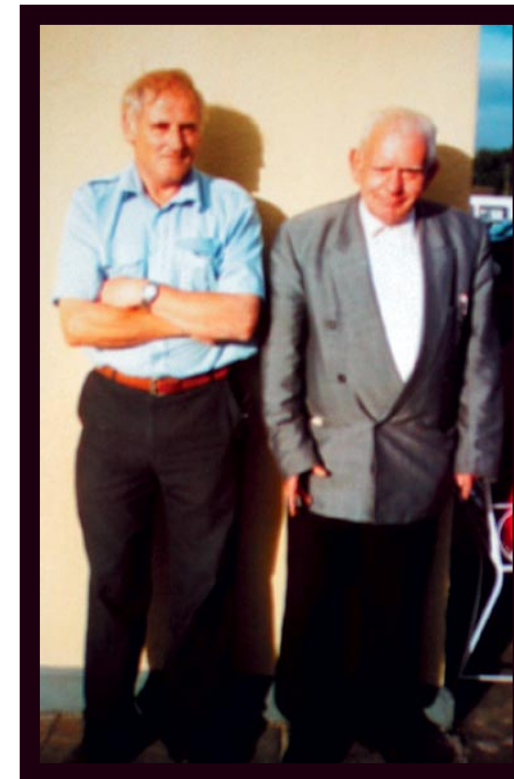
*'I'd like to do with you what
Spring does with
the cherry trees.'*

✿PABLO NERUDA.



*'Two hearts are better
than one...'*

✿BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN



Christy Carey & Sean Lowe