

Shelton Abbey Visiting Committee Annual Report 2005

Shelton Abbey Visiting Committee have pleasure in presenting their report for the year 2005

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.

Governor Liam Dowling transferred to Cloverhill Prison at the end of 2004 and was replaced by Governor Seamus Cramer and Assistant Governor Patrick Corcoran replaced Christopher Breen who retired.

There was a lot of uncertainty throughout most of the year as to the future of Shelton Abbey, this only ended in September with the acceptance of the new changes in Prison Service. It had been a bad year up to then for staff and it was great to see the stability coming back into the Institution.

The farm was set this year by a contractor and the yields produced very well. It is hoped that there will be personnel in place soon to work the farm and create employment for offenders as it was for many years.

The grounds and garden were kept in tip top condition and all the flowers were grown in the glasshouse which created work and training for several offenders. Each year the grounds staff cut timber which is given to the local society of St. Vincent De Paul for the needy in the local area.

The excellent Education courses were maintained during the year with large numbers of offenders attending classes. It is staffed by a Supervising Teacher who has 2 full time and 6 part time teachers giving day and evening classes, these consist of Woodwork, Art & Craft, Computers, French, Maths, Music, English, Literacy, Cookery, Physical Education and Pottery. There was a very successful exhibition of the various crafts created by offenders a large amount of money was raised for charity. A large number of offenders successfully passed the Safe Pass Course which will enable them to work on building sites on their release. There was also driving courses provided to a number of offenders for car, truck and heavy machinery.

During the year the Chaplain Sr. Patricia 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. A number of offenders were allowed to attend Church of Ireland service on Beech Road and Fr. Crossan from Avoca said mass each Sunday.

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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.

Review meetings are held monthly and each offender is discussed and recommendations are made as to their future. Decisions are made to grant offenders periods of Temporary Release. Heads of all agencies attend those meetings along with an Irish Prison Service official.

The kitchen was visited on regular occasions and as usual the standard of food supplied was excellent. The prisoners working there were given a hygiene course by the chef, and it was obvious as the place was shining. It was a source of great pride to all concerned that they achieved the hygiene award again this year.

The building was as always kept clean and tidy at all times and a major painting refurbishment programme was undertaken and the place looks exceptional. This is a great credit to the Management and Staff along with the offenders who took part on the project.

There were over 300 offenders transferred here during the year and no major incidents were recorded. It would suit better for everybody concerned if there were more long term offenders sent to Shelton Abbey as it would provide better opportunities for teachers to deliver more intense educational programmes.

The doctors provide an excellent service daily to look after the health of offenders, they see each one on committal and provide the medical officer with a report outlining any medication required or any further treatment needed.

There has not been a psychologist available to Shelton Abbey for a number of years, this is a great shame as it is essential service and should be available to offenders as required. A number of offenders have experienced suicide among family or friends and counselling should be available to them. During the visit to Shelton Abbey by the Inspector of Prisons Mr. Justice Kinlan in October this was brought to his attention and he was very supportive of the committee's concern and would be dealing with the issue in his report.

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. C. Garvey

Mr. P.J. Sheridan

Mr. S. Quirke

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