

June 2001

NEWSLETTER

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS EX-RESIDENTS AND STUDENTS SERVICES

A Welcome Change in ATTITUDE

It is sometimes said that it takes two generations to change firmly entrenched attitudes.

Two generations ago, policy makers thought there was nothing wrong or damaging in the practice of uprooting small children from their families and shipping them off to foreign lands and cultures.

Nor, over many decades were they prepared to recognise the long term harm that emotional deprivation, physical hardship and often abuse would wreak in the lives of those children as they grew into adults.

Over the past decade, those attitudes have begun to shift, starting first at the community level with the establishment of support organisations and self help groups, and extending out to encompass more broadly based social institutions and the community as a whole.

In July 1993, the Christian Brothers took the initiative when the Order issued a public apology to all those who suffered abuse while resident at any of their child care institutions. The apology was published in both the West Australian newspaper and in the Weekend Australian. CBERS started 18 months later in January 1995.

Over the past few years alone, this long-overdue momentum of attitudinal change has gathered pace.

In 1999, the British House of Commons conducted an Inquiry into the Welfare of former British Child Migrants to which the British Government responded with practical measures to help heal the wounds of the past.

In the same year, the Irish Government apologised for the wrongs that were done to children who, in previous generations, lived in institutional care for which it was responsible and committed significant

A Message from C-BERS Chairperson Maria Harries

funding for the provision of services and supports.

Late last year, the Australian Senate announced an inquiry into the role and responsibility of Australian Governments in relation to child migration schemes practiced during the 20th Century including consideration of whether a formal apology and compensation may be called for. With hearings in the United Kingdom and around Australia (including Perth) now concluded, the Senate Committee is preparing its report due for release on 30 August 2001. (C-BERS also made a written submission to the Inquiry on behalf of our clients).

Also this year, the Catholic Church issued an apology to former child migrants (a copy of which is included with this newsletter).

For all those who have lived with the consequences of child migration for the past two generations, these developments hold out the promise of a brighter future. The first stage of the healing process has been to validate

the harsh reality of the personal experiences many were forced to endure.

The practices of the past were wrong and inhumane and must be recognised as such. Those who developed and implemented child migration schemes must accept responsibility for their part in the damage that ensued. And finally, the consequences of child migration practices must be addressed with practical measures that will support healing. From there we can all move forward.

At the start of the 21st Century, we are closer to achieving these outcomes than ever before.

The change in attitudes which make this possible has been a long time coming. Its progress has been greatly hastened by the courage of former child migrants who have been prepared to share the pain of their private lives publicly and the determination of all those who have campaigned so passionately to right the wrongs of the past.

For those of us who work in this area we thank you all for your courage and your determination.

C-BERS gets the THUMBS-UP

An independent review of C-BERS has confirmed that we're providing "an excellent service" to former child migrants while offering a few pointers here and there as to how we can do even better.

The review noted that more than 400 clients have used C-BERS in the seven years since we were established. (This is about half the original client group if all were still living, needed and wanted to use the services we provide). The wide range of services provided was assessed as being of "high quality" and designed to meet the changing needs of our clients. However, the review recommended that there was a need for ongoing evaluation of our client services and a more systematic means for identifying client needs into the future so that we are better able to plan for the longer term.

About half the C-BERS budget goes directly to clients to pay for such things as reunification travel, 30% goes towards employing our counseling and administration staff, while the rest is used to pay for rent, communication and service development costs. (A copy of the review summary is enclosed)



**WE'RE OPEN
FOR BUSINESS**

**between 8.30 a.m.
and 4.30 p.m.
Monday to Friday**

ON STAFF

**Administration
Manager— Mary Kearns**
(Tuesday to Friday)

**Clinical Psychologist
Patrick Howard**
(Tuesday, Wednesday)

**Counsellors
Michael Anderson**
(Tuesday, Wednesday,
Friday)
Sjoukje Tarbox
(Monday, half day
Wednesday, half day
Thursday)

**Administration
Lorraine Hipkins**
(Monday, Tuesday)
Sue Fullerton
(Wednesday, Thursday,
Friday)

**MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE**

Maria Harries
(Chairperson)
Dr Debra Rosser
George Horton

CONTACT

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Web-site:
www.cberss.org

Malta Migrants Meeting

Eighteen former child migrants from Malta had the opportunity to raise issues which were specific to their experience of child migration and its affect on their lives when they met with the C-BERS Management Committee in April.

The meeting had been called to gather information which could be incorporated into the C-BERS submission to the Senate Inquiry into Child Migration.

From all accounts the discussions were more than lively with the walls of St Catherine's College vibrating to the sound of reunion—some laughter, some sadness, a lot of banter and some strong words and argument as well. Apart from the fact that there was a lot of catching up to do for some of the men who had not met each other for years, it was a great opportunity to speak Maltese and catch up with stories about family searches and trips back to the home country.

The issues raised at the meeting were recorded, typed and sent to the Inquiry, together with a very comprehensive individual statement from one man. Everyone who attended

the meeting was also sent a summary of the points raised as well as the individual submission. Anyone else who would like a copy can obtain one through C-BERS.

MEANWHILE... the meeting was such a success that those who attended have asked for another one within the next three months at which it is hoped that even more men, and their partners will be in attendance. Mark your diary for Friday 3 August 2001 from 3.30—5.30pm at St Catherine's College, Nedlands. (See page 4 for details).

By the way, did you know that

- ♦ 310 Child Migrants came from Malta (between 1950 and 1965)
- ♦ 259 of them were boys and 51 girls (aged between five and 16)
- ♦ 303 Maltese Child Migrants came to Western Australia and seven went to South Australia

C-BERS S-N-I-P-P-E-T-S -- We answer YOUR questions about...

CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY

The Child Migrant Friendship Society recently asked some questions of C-BERS in relation to the management of client records. C-BERS understands that client confidentiality is a very important issue for many of you. Listed below are some of the questions we have been asked about how personal information is recorded and who has access to it. We would appreciate hearing your views and wishes about these matters.

IS THERE A FILE ON ME?

When you become a client of C-BERS we need to keep a record of all our dealings with you. To maintain security, files on our clients are given a number rather than being filed by name. Only authorised C-BERS' staff can have access to your file, which is kept in a locked cabinet.

WHAT'S ON MY FILE?

Your file contains copies of any documents you give to us and any completed application forms. For legal and accountability purposes we also keep a copy of any letter you write to us and any letters we write to you or to anyone else on your behalf.

Your counsellor also keeps notes of their discussions with you so that they can bring themselves up to date with your situation if they haven't had contact with you for some time or if another worker takes over as your counsellor.

CAN I HAVE ACCESS TO MY FILE?

Yes, if you wish to view your file it will be necessary to make an appointment with your counsellor for this purpose.

IS INFORMATION ABOUT ME EVER GIVEN TO ANYONE ELSE?

We must, except in emergency cases, have your express consent before we can speak on your behalf to another person, e.g. the travel agent, your doctor, another agency such as Catholic Migrant Centre, etc. Note: C-BERS has NEVER had occasion to release information about a client without the client's agreement.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY FILE WHEN I STOP GOING TO C-BERS?

Your file is kept securely locked on C-BERS' premises. We welcome your suggestions on what should happen to old files in the future.

If you have a question you'd like us to answer in the newsletter, send it to C-BERS Snippets

A Better UNDERSTANDING of Where Mick Comes From...

We acknowledge that the impact of child migration extends to encompass a broad circle of loved ones and extended family members. This is the first time we have published a story which gives a voice to the perceptions and feelings of that broader network of affected people. Edna Monaghan is the wife of Mick who is a Tardun Old Boy and former Child Migrant. She writes of Mick's search for his family origins and the impact of Mick's early childhood experiences on their shared family life.

A personal story from Edna Monahan

Edna is a migrant herself, having been born in Manchester. She and Mick have been married for 32 years. They had four children, Andrew now 30, Grayem who died when he was 18 from an asthma attack causing cardiac arrest while on a fishing trip, Louise now 25 and Caroline aged 24. Mick, who left to visit family in Ireland on 30 April, worked as an agricultural worker and still helps friends out at sheep shearing time.

As I write this, or rather our story, my husband Mick is flying to Galway, Ireland to meet an aunt and two cousins.

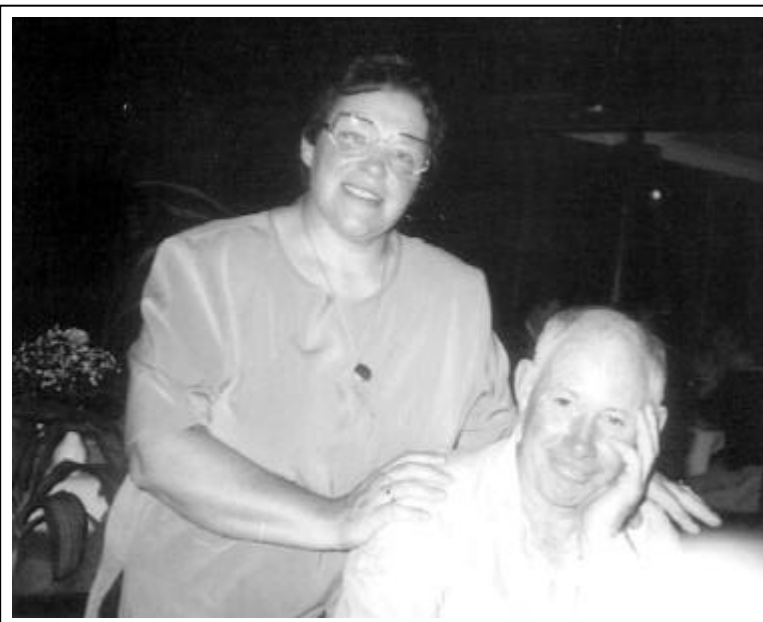
Mick's quest to find family goes back to 1973, four years after our marriage. We had two small boys at that time and perhaps this evoked memories for him of children in a family situation because he was always thinking about the circumstances of his transportation from the orphanage at Gravesend to Tardun, Western Australia, in 1953.

I encouraged him to go in search of relatives but with the little information he had and no freedom of information in force the search proved fruitless! We went on to have two daughters and so with a large family to keep us busy plus a move to Tasmania, the focus shifted for a while. But Mick always wondered about people that he could call his own! Then tragically and suddenly we lost our son Grayem at eighteen years of age. As this tragedy stirred deep feelings of overwhelming loss at his death, Mick was compelled to start searching once again for family.

In March 1994, we received a phone call from the U.K. to say relatives had been found in Bow, London. We were to write a letter and if these relatives wanted contact we would subsequently hear from them! I remember there were mixed feelings of both excitement and apprehension during the four weeks we waited for a reply! A letter arrived from Mick's Uncle Jim and Auntie Nellie with photos of family members including his Mother. Mick was devastated to learn she had died

eighteen months previously. However it was wonderful to see people smiling from these photos with faces and expressions so like Mick's. It was even better when we were eventually to meet them later that year! I would sit in the background with a roomful of relatives observing. I'd say to Mick on our way home, "I saw another 'Mick-ism' today"! It would be a gesture, a smile or an expression that I had only

Mick in St Mary's Orphanage when she was summoned back to Ireland to care for ailing parents. As she was the "spinster" of the family, this responsibility fell to her. Jim and Nellie went to the orphanage after a change of heart about taking care of Mick, only to be told he'd already left for Australia. Mick has since learned that in fact he was still at the orphanage at that time!



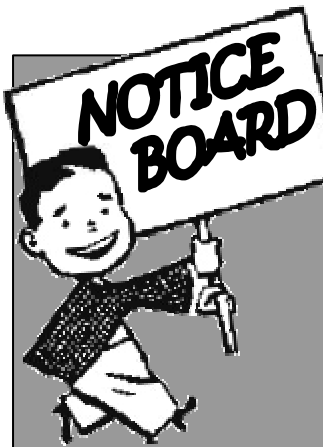
I'm happy for Mick that he has found family of his own. It has changed him a great deal and these days his outlook is brighter and he is more confident. But I also see a man who has struggled for a great many years to find his place in life, sometimes to the detriment of his family. A man who is so independent that at times he doesn't need anyone! A man who finds expression difficult, who cannot allow himself to get too close to anyone, a driven man who finds

ever seen from Mick and I found this fascinating and amusing! I also felt a great sadness at the loss he'd incurred from being deprived contact with his family. People he could call his own.

From talking with his family we learned that his mother fled Ireland when she discovered her pregnancy to a soldier stationed there. She placed

solace in physical hard work and a break-neck pace of life!

I'm grateful to C-BERS for helping organise this trip for Mick to meet more family, his Mum's youngest sister and two of her children in Galway, Mick's own people. His family!



MEETING

MALTESE CHILD MIGRANTS and their PARTNERS

On: Friday 3 August 2001, 3.30pm—5.30pm
At: St Catherine's College, Nedlands

At the special request of former child migrants who met with the C-BERS Management Committee in April, ALL Maltese Former Child Migrants and their partners are invited to a follow-up meeting to talk with members of the Management Committee about their own issues and concerns and to hear more about the launch of the Maltese Oral History Project.

important project is a joint initiative of C-BERS and the Oral History Unit of the State Library providing a personalised statement of the experience of child migration from a Maltese perspective.

REUNIONS

Child Migrant Friendship Society
Annual "Christmas in July"
REUNION LUNCHEON
Sunday 15 July 2001, 12pm—3pm

This highly successful annual event is open to ALL former Child Migrants of Western Australian Orphanages and their partners.

If you wish to attend, contact Maureen Colgan as soon as possible on 9317 2753 (after 6pm) or by fax on 9317 2091. Registration and payment of \$25/person MUST be received by 6 July, 2001

Tardun Old Boys Association

WEEKEND REUNION

A much enjoyed twice yearly event for ALL Tardun Old Boys and their families

On: 21 July—22 July 2001
At: Tuppin House, Guilderton (Moore River)

If you wish to attend, contact Judith Marshall on 9457 7936 before 1 July, 2001

TARDUN 2002— A Grand Reunion
for ALL Tardun Old Boys is in the planning stages to be held sometime next year in Geraldton (watch this space for further details)

CLONTARF CENTENARY CELEBRATION
Saturday 8 September 2001
Mass at 10 am, Barbeque at 12 noon

A family get together for all former students, residents, partners, children and friends of Clontarf over its 100 year history

For further information, contact the Clontarf Campus Coordinator Peter Haan on 9458 1774

Please note: the Clontarf Campus is an alcohol-free zone

MALTESE CHILD MIGRANTS

Tony Pavia is wanting to organise a reunion of former child migrants from Malta who came to Australia in August 1953. If you are interested, contact Tony on 9295 0678

BINDOON OLD BOYS

Laurie Humphreys is organising a monthly lunch for Bindoon Old Boys who want to keep in touch. According to Laurie, the first get-together at Hickey's Tavern went VERY well.

Contact Laurie for details on dates and venues
Ph: 9337 4837 or by email on laurieph@bigpond.com

WANTING CONTACT

Patrick Cannon (Clontarf 1949—54) would like to make contact with Clontarf Old Boys. Patrick arrived in Australia on the Asturias in 1947.

Michael O'Donoghue (Clontarf 1953—58) wants to make contact with former child migrants who came to Australia with him on the Maloja in 1953. He would particularly like to hear from Derek Heddrell (also from Clontarf).

Bill Wilson (Clontarf 1952—63) wishes to hear from other "old boys". Bill lives in New Zealand and would like to talk over old times especially if anyone is planning a trip to New Zealand.

Contact details available through C-BERS

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