

Memorial Moves Ahead

A Western Australian memorial to honour former child migrants from Britain and Malta is beginning to take shape with details about the form of the memorial and the inscription that will accompany it recently released at a meeting in Perth.

Geordie's Spirit Shines Through

It's been a long journey for Lionel "Geordie" Welsh since he wrote his first book "Geordie: Orphan of the Empire" chronicling the hardships of a young child migrant. His second book "Geordie, An Incredible Story of the Human Spirit" builds on the earlier work but this time capturing a new sense of optimism that is, these days, characterised by peace, healing and a deep and abiding spirituality.



Geordie's inspiring story was launched in April at a function attended by dignitaries, supporters and friends alike at the Catholic Pastoral Centre in Manning.

Pictured at the rostrum above, Geordie describes how he went about transforming his ideas and experiences into words and text and from there into a published book. He expressed a heartfelt "thank-you" to all who had helped him achieve his goal.

The Mayor of South Perth the Hon. John Collins (pictured next to Geordie) who launched the book, was generous in his praise for Geordie's achievements. Mr Collin's said Geordie's testimony had value on a number of fronts, including as a history of one of the City's residents, AND in the wider arena of human endeavour. **(More on page 3).**

The Western Australian Department for Community Development, which is coordinating the jointly funded Commonwealth/State initiative, announced the details to a group of former child migrants and other interested parties at a meeting on 24 May.

To be set in the grounds of the new Maritime Museum at Fremantle, the memorial will feature two life-size bronze statues (a 12 year old boy and a ten year old girl) carrying small suitcases.

The experiences and contributions of British child migrants and of Maltese child migrants will be separately acknowledged each with their own plaque. However, the inscription for both will basically be the same.

In essence, the text will read as follows....

*This memorial is....dedicated to the
...boys and girls who left their
homeland to brave an unknown
future in Western Australia.*

*Hardships were endured, benefits
were derived.*

*These child migrants provided
valuable contributions to Australian
Society in diverse ways as parents,
workers and citizens.*

Australia is better for their coming.

The dedication of the memorial is scheduled to take place in December. A further meeting to update on progress is planned for October.

STOP PRESS

As our newsletter was about to go to print, we learnt that the long awaited **Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional or Out-of-Home Care** had just been released. (A couple of items in this newsletter refer to the Inquiry).

The Inquiry, which was conducted by the Senate Community Affairs Standing Committee, received more than 600 submissions, many of which described the lasting consequences of harsh and abusive institutional practices in the past.

The report is entitled "**Forgotten Australians**" and includes 39 recommendations to support healing, provide redress and ensure a better future. We will report more fully on the report and its recommendations in our next newsletter.

In the meantime, the report can be accessed via the web at www.aph.gov.au/senate_ca.

C-BERS SERVICE ASSURANCE: - In response to recent media coverage suggesting that the Christian Brothers are leaving WA, a number of men have asked us for clarification. Let us reassure you that they are not doing so. Despite the fact that they are opening ventures elsewhere, the Christian Brothers Province remains committed to work in Western Australia and that includes to C-BERS.

Honour for Board Chairperson, Dr Maria Harries AM

All of us at C-BERS extend our heartiest congratulations to C-BERS Chairperson, Dr Maria Harries, on being appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in June. Maria's honour acknowledges her services to the social work profession and to the community, particularly in the areas of mental health, child protection and education (not to mention her services to C-BERS!).



Mary leaves C-BERS

-with heartfelt memories -

In March 1995 a Counsellor, Woody Wolf, and myself were appointed to C-BERS in Gloster Street to assist and support those who, as boys, grew to young adulthood in orphanages now known as Castledare, Clontarf, Bindoon and Tardun.

Woody was an experienced Social Worker and I a rookie in the field of human services. Working two days a week, both of us were shaken by the emotion we experienced in those early months of C-BERS's operation.

Shortly after that I left, returning almost a year later to C-BERS at Coghlan Road working three days a week with Woody and a new counsellor, Iolanthe Laing.

By 1997 C-BERS had moved again, to Alvan St and full-time operation and



Lorraine Hipkins joined the Admin team. C-BERS has had several staff changes since then.

Early last year Patrick Howard retired; at the end of the year Michael Anderson did likewise and in September this year, I'll be retiring too. This leaves C-BERS in the capable hands of Lorraine Hipkins, Sue Fullerton, Sjoukje Tarbox, Pip White and Mark Sachmann.

No one likes "Goodbyes" so I won't say that.

I will remember you and all that I've learned from you – your survival and the many personal victories in what surely has been a challenging life; your courage and dignity, concern for one another and your sense of humour.

I will also remember with gratitude the genuine and loving colleagues I've been so lucky to have worked with as well as the faithful backing of the Management Committee and the compassionate support of the Christian Brothers.

Mary Kearns



**WE'RE OPEN
FOR BUSINESS**

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

ON STAFF

Administration

Manager— Mary Kearns
(Tuesdays, Wednesdays,
Thursdays)

Clinical Supervisor

Dr Mark Sachmann
(Wednesdays)

Counsellors

Sjoukje Tarbox
(Mondays and Thursdays)

Pip White
(Wednesdays)

Administration

Lorraine Hipkins
(Mondays, Tuesdays)

Sue Fullerton
(Wednesdays and
Thursdays)

**MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE**

Dr Maria Harries AM
(Chairperson)

Dr Debra Rosser
George Horton

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www.cberss.org

As I read through the contents of this newsletter I am reminded of the phases C-BERS has gone through over the years.

It strikes me that organisations, like people, can grow and move on, or — they can also get stuck.

When C-BERS started, it was a traumatic time for so many. The extent of the pain was palpable even though it may have been experienced differently by different people. Yet, it was this same pain, and the courage it took to confront it, that provided the strength from which our services grew.

C-BERS brought together many different groups — the Congregation that wanted to right past wrongs; the men and women who were former child migrants and their families who had to learn to trust us; the men who had been residents in child care institutions at a time when standards were not what they are (or ought to be) today; staff and management who wanted to meet the needs (as variable as they were) and who suffered along

C-BERS at the CROSSROADS Where to from here?

In January 2005, C-BERS will have been in existence for ten years. Over that time, C-BERS has changed the way it operates to reflect the changing needs of the men and women it seeks to support. C-BERS Chairperson Dr Maria Harries AM reflects on the changes that have taken place and the challenge of ensuring that services continue to be relevant to where people are at in their own life's journey.

There has always been a core group of men and women — former child migrants and friends who have offered friendship, and mutual support based on shared experiences. Some have centred on particular institutions and the Old Boy's Associations. Some are more local. Most are even stronger now than they were in the past.

with the men and women; and the various people and organisations that had worked to support former child migrants.

The process seems to me to have been a slow progression towards healing — from awareness and openness and much expression of anger and sadness, there developed a generosity of spirit that has enabled so many of us to move on.

There have been several inquiries — all useful but also traumatic to many — and a will to generate changes to ensure we don't repeat the errors of the past. (The report of the latest inquiry into children in institutional care was released on 31/08/04).

Many men and women have moved on to even more health giving relationships. And so has C-BERS. We have a great core of terrific people who have traveled the years with us or who are more recently involved.

The number of new people accessing our services is, however, declining dramatically leading us to pose the question "where to next in the healing process"?

To help provide some answers, we will be holding an important planning meeting in September. I so hope that as many people as possible can come to the meeting to share their thoughts on where C-BERS should be heading, (and to have some fun as well).

Geordie's Incredible Story of the Human Spirit continued from page 1

Geordie's story spans his earliest years in the care of Nazareth House sisters in the UK, migration as a child to the Christian Brothers at Bindoon WA and his life as a responsible family man — before he lost his family, job and his home.

The narrative chronicles Geordie's battle with alcoholism, violence and self-destructive behaviours until he embraced sobriety and made the slow and painful journey towards self-discovery and self-respect inspired by a deep spirituality.

Geordie's earlier book *Geordie: Orphan of the Empire* omitted a large section of the text that Geordie had originally written and presented his story in a negative way.

This new version is complete and reflects the light that inspired Geordie which he hopes will also inspire others struggling to find their way.

At the launch, Master of Ceremonies, Andrew Twine (pictured

far right) spoke proudly of his association with Geordie.

Through C-BERS, it was Andrew who first helped Geordie to master the mysteries of computer technology and it was heartening to see how far he had progressed.

Other honoured guests included Brother Kevin Ryan, Provincial of the

Christian Brothers Holy Spirit Province (WA and SA), and Mr Len Cohen, lawyer, as well as many other friends and supporters.

To purchase a copy of Geordie's book, please contact — Eljae Press; P O Box 1666, Victoria Park East, WA 6981 or email: eljaepress@yahoo.com

Geordie's book is officially launched by the Mayor of South Perth the Hon John Collins. Seated L-R at the head table are Lionel "Geordie" Welsh, Br Kevin Ryan, Len Cohen and Andrew Twine



A Story of Survival, Success ... and Celebration !!!

We were delighted to receive an email from an Australian-born man who was placed in Castledare/Clontarf as a child. George and his four siblings were placed in various Catholic orphanages in WA during the 1940s and early 50s. It would be forty years before he and his brothers and sisters – and their families, would meet again at a reunion in Perth.

George says he feels that the “Aussie” kids have been placed at the back of the room over the years, including on the part of the media, and that this is most unfortunate. We hope that the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care in Australia, (whose report has now been issued) will do something to rectify the situation and highlight the lives of “Aussie” kids whose story needs to be told and heard in the same way that the stories of the Stolen Generation and of Child Migrants have been told and heard.

George is very clear that neither he nor any one of his siblings feel like “victims” of their childhood, and he feels proud of the fact they have achieved much more than many who have been privy to all the benefits and comforts of a “normal” family life.

Most of us are survivors – not victims, he emphasized.

George says his brother was Executive General Manager of a major national retail chain while he himself served

his country in the RAAF and later held senior positions in Australia’s Foreign Service both nationally and overseas. He has also held positions in business as General Manager of a leading entertainment corporation and retired recently from his business as Managing Director of an accomplished company in Brisbane. More recently he has been a Team Leader (Volunteer) training and leading hundreds of volunteers in major world events. Other siblings have also achieved much in their own fields and with their children.

George says he writes the above not to ring his own bell but solely to show that because you were brought up in an orphanage does not mean you cannot do something useful with your life and strive to reach goals that most of the community may consider impossible. “Live the impossible dream? – sure can, and so can you.”

George suggests that whether we be “Aussie” kids or part of that great collective of youth shipped away from

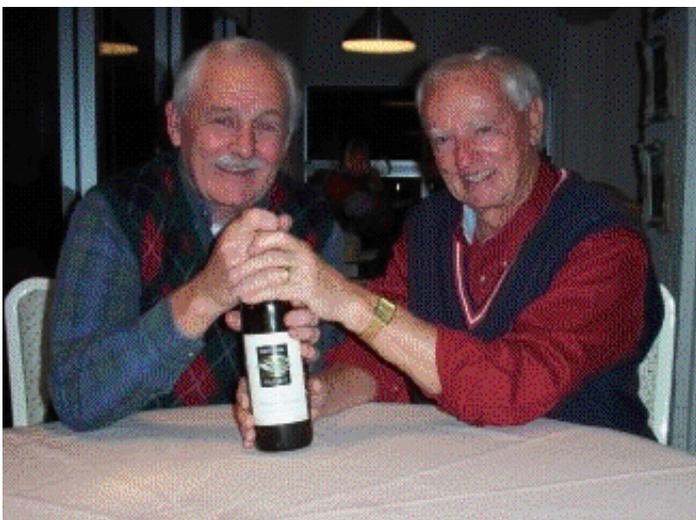
Time is running out for the Australian Child Migrant Travel Fund

This is a reminder that the Australian Travel Fund finishes next year. Anyone who intends to travel in 2005 needs to have their travel completed by 30 June 2005. If you are a former Child Migrant from either the UK/Ireland or Malta and are eligible for funding to travel to reunite with family or to visit a parent’s grave, you need to get your application in as soon as possible.

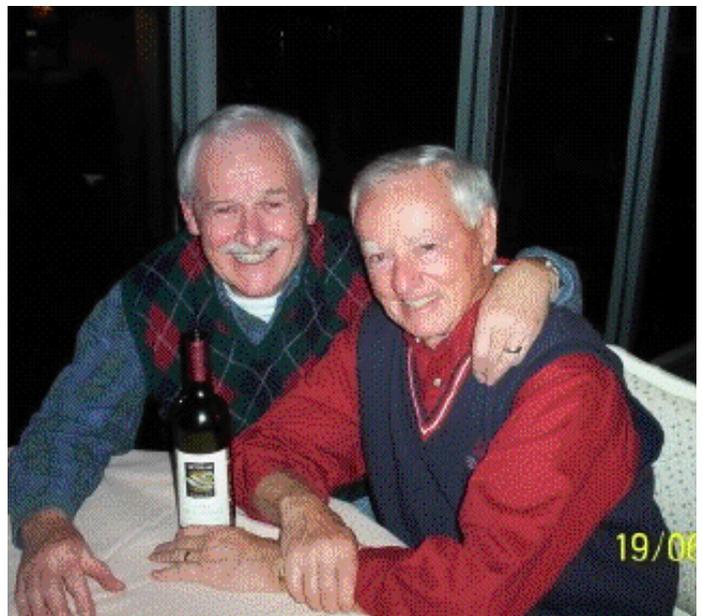
For further information or assistance in applying phone C-BERS on 08-9381 5422 or 1800 621 805 or ISS (International Social Services) 1300 657 843

their own countries to become Aussies in their own right we all feel a sense of unity of spirit that we all went through that time together and human nature being what it sometimes is, hopefully we will retain memories of the better moments rather than those others that may have been more painful.

In closing, George asked us to mention and recognize the great work that one man in particular did for his charges – Rev. Bro. P.L.O’Doherty - to whom George, and many others will always be thankful, for his guidance, application of discipline, teaching, and caring. Thanks “Dickie”. George.



George (left) and brother Bob in celebratory mode (over a good bottle of red)



Compensation for Abuse in Irish Institutions

The **Residential Institutions Redress Board** welcomes submissions from those who, as children, in institutional care in the Republic of Ireland experienced physical, sexual or psychological abuse or serious neglect.

The Board was set up under the Residential Institutions Redress Act, 2002 to make fair and reasonable awards to persons who, as children, were abused while resident in industrial schools, reformatories and orphanages in the Irish Republic.

Former residents can apply for redress to the Irish government directly or through their lawyer. Submissions will be received up to December 2005.

To apply for redress, a person must complete an official application form and provide the following documents

1. Evidence of residence in the institution
2. Medical reports relating to injuries consistent with abuse
3. Evidence of Identity
4. A written account of abuse and injuries suffered.

If you think you may be eligible, or want to find out more about the scheme, contact C-BERS for further information. Further information is also available on the Board's website at www.rirb.ie, which includes a list of the institutions covered under the Act.

“Welcome Walls” to Record Western Australia’s Migrant Heritage

A new attraction at the WA Maritime Museum will honour migrants who arrived in Australia via the Port of Fremantle.

The **Welcome Walls**, which are currently under construction, will border the outdoor gallery that greets visitors to the museum. They will feature the names of those migrants (including child migrants) who entered Australia through its western gateway whose details have been registered with the museum for listing.

The cost of the engraved listing, which will include the migrant's name, year of arrival and ship of passage, is \$66. A framed commemorative certificate will also be issued (at an additional cost).

Individuals whose names are listed on the **Welcome Walls** will also be included in the **Passages** historical computer database, with scope to include additional family history. The database will be able to be accessed via a terminal in the Maritime Museum. A **Welcome Walls** website is also being established which, as reported by the museum, will be “accessible to friends and families around the world”.

Registrations for listing can be lodged personally or on behalf of a family member or ancestor. So that names can be inscribed in time for the official launch by the Premier in December, registrations must be received **before 4 October 2004**. Registrations received after this time will appear on the walls in early 2005.

Call 1300 858 438 for a brochure or visit www.museum.wa.gov.au/maritime.

And... for any who may be interested in doing a bit of web-based research on their own behalf, the **Welcome Walls** link on the Maritime Museum's web-site also includes links to other sites that provide information on official records held on Child Migration Schemes, in particular, the State Records Office of WA www.sro.wa.gov.au and the National Archives of Australia www.naa.gov.au.

Farewell to our Old Friends

Recent Obituaries:

We note with sadness the recent passing of clients and friends of C-BERS

Gordon James

Gordon was born on 25 May 1963 in Western Australia and lived with his parents in a bush settlement north of Geraldton until he was two years old. The Child Welfare Department placed him and his brother (aged five) and his sister (aged one) in the care of the Sisters of Nazareth in Geraldton and subsequently Gordon was sent to Castledare. Gordon subsequently lived and worked in and around the Perth and South West area. Gordon suffered many health problems and in the last twelve months discovered he had a brain tumour which claimed his life on 24 April this year.

We remember Gordon as a great Eagles supporter who wore his Eagles jacket with pride. He was writing his autobiography and from the extract we read had a keen memory of his childhood and early adult years. With C-BERS' assistance Gordon acquired a computer and quickly became very good at working out the difficulties posed by learning a new skill.

We shall miss his quiet ways and his sometimes unexpected but welcome visits to C-BERS. Rest in Peace Gordon. We extend our deepest sympathy to his extended family and to his sister Pauline.

Paul McKenna

Paul was born in Mullingar, Ireland on 29 June 1932 arriving in Australia in 1939 where he was placed in Castledare, Clontarf and Tardun.

We remember Paul as a great friend to those from the orphanages who were in need, a gentle and religious man in every sense of the word.

Paul died (29 July 2004) where he was born - in Mullingar, Ireland, during a trip to revisit his roots and family connections. He was accompanied by his wife Jill. We offer our sincere condolences to Jill and family.



FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR C-BERS

**Important Planning Meeting
(and Sausage Sizzle)**

C-BERS invites you (and your partner) to a get-together on **24 September** to discuss the options for future C-BERS services both in the short and longer term. We want to hear what you have to say and look forward to meeting you again - the Management Committee and Staff of C-BERS Services.

Date: Friday 24 September 2004
Time: 4.00 pm to 6.00pm
Venue: St Catherine's College,
Stirling Highway, Nedlands
(Opposite UWA)

To help us cater, please ring to let us know if you will be attending on (08)-9381 5422 or 1800 621 805 by **Tuesday 14 September**.

CLONTARF

CLONTARF MEMORIAL PROJECT:
 Former students are invited to contribute their ideas for the creation of a memorial - a 'Clontarf History Project'. If you would like to 'have your say' or be involved in planning the project, please contact Dennis McNerney or Peter Hann at the Clontarf Management Office, on (08) 9458 1774. (Also see the "History of Clontarf" insert with this Newsletter).

CLONTARF OLD BOYS:

Anyone interested in re-forming the Clontarf Old Boys' Association, please contact Dennis McNerney at the Clontarf Management Office on Tuesdays or Thursdays 9.30am to 1.30pm. Phone: (08) 9458 1774.

AUSTRALIAN CHILD MIGRANT PROJECT

**Australian Child Migrant Project –
Get-Together - Friday 10 December 2004**

This is an opportunity to meet up with Project Manager Joan Kerry on her final visit to Australia on behalf of the Australian Child Migrant Project (and to say a personal "thank-you" and "goodbye"). Joan will report on the work she has done over the past three years in helping to find family members of former Child Migrants, assisting relatives overseas in adjusting to news of a "new" relative, and in meeting and supporting former Child Migrants when they make their momentous trip to the UK. Joan will continue her work for the Project in the UK for the major part of 2005.

The Get-Together (including another "sausage sizzle") will give us a chance to enjoy each other's company just before Christmas and to hear of any new developments at C-BERS following our September planning meeting.

Diary Date: Friday 10 December 2004
Time: 4.00 pm to 6.00 pm
Venue: St Catherine's College, Nedlands
(opposite UWA)

CLONTARF CONTACT WANTED:

Skinny Johnson (whose e-mail address is omlama@yahoo.com.au) wrote to advise: "I am currently planning my autobiography. I was in Clontarf from 1948 -1954. I am interested in contacting boys from that period. I am currently living in Nepal".

BINDOON

BACK TO BINDOON (Bus Trip)

A bus trip to Bindoon is being planned by the Catholic Migrant Centre in conjunction with C-BERS for **29 October 2004**. Whether the trip goes ahead will depend on the number who wish to participate. Please phone Sr Flo at CMC on 9221 1727 Monday or Thursday, or C-BERS on 9381 5422 to register your interest and to receive further details. **Closing date for registering is 7 October 2004.**

**A Personal Postscript
to the Clontarf Bus Crash Story**

Following on from the story on the Clontarf Bus Crash in our last newsletter, Derick Haddrell, who was on the bus on the day of the crash, wishes to add the following.

The boys were on their way to stay on farms in Pinjarra. The bus was overcrowded. In fact, there were fold-up forms in the aisle for boys to sit on.

The Clontarf bus was stopped and waiting on the side of the road for the oncoming truck to pass. The approaching vehicle was a semi-trailer: the rig went in one direction and the trailer sheared into the parked bus.

Derick wishes to convey his sympathy to the driver of the semi-trailer involved in the accident. In his opinion the road wasn't wide enough for even one large vehicle and should never have been open for such traffic as buses and trucks.

Michael Bowman was in fact 12 when he died (and not seven) as stated in our article - we apologise for this error.

Derick also wants to say "Hello and regards to his friends and schoolmates in WA".

Note: Copies of the video of last year's ceremony to celebrate the life of Michael Bowman can be obtained from Peter Bent - please phone C-BERS for Peter's contact details.