

Shelton Abbey Visiting Committee Annual Report 2008

Shelton Abbey Visiting Committee have pleasure in presenting their report for the year 2007.

Shelton Abbey is an open Prison with dormitory type accommodation catering for 44 offenders and single room accommodation for 46 offenders.

We held a total of 12 meetings this year, all of which were well attended even though the committee only had 10 members. As always a very good relationship was kept with offenders and other agencies within Shelton Abbey throughout the year. All members arrived early for each meeting and were available to meet with offenders and dealt with any queries at the meeting. There were a number of appointment's to the committee this year.

The new building catering for 44 single rooms was opened in April and which increased the numbers from 60 to 90 offenders in custody. There were a number of new officers transferred to Shelton to cater for the extra numbers. The offenders in the new building are mostly coming to the last year's of a long sentence and all work daily in the industrial area's such as the Farm, Garden, Kitchen and cleaning. A number of offenders were employed daily outside Shelton, these were brought out in the morning and collected in the evening.

So far this year there were 490 offenders transferred here. This is a reduction on the numbers last year. The decrease in transfers allow more work to be done by the various agencies with offenders in setting up pre-release programmes. The numbers of absconders are also down on last years number, so far there were 64 of which there were still 8 at large.

The Education Unit continued to provide excellent courses and training for offenders throughout the year. Head Teacher Patsy Breen organised an awards night for the offenders successful in attaining their F.E.T.A.C. Awards. It was great to see some longer term prisoners coming to Shelton as this allowed the Teachers deliver more courses and offenders achieve more accredited results.

These were all provided by the Head Teacher who has 14 full and part time teachers giving day and evening classes.

There were a large number of offenders provided with Safe Pass Course to enable them to work in construction on release. Fork Lift Training and Machine Driving courses were also provided through the Education unit. They also had an "Anger Management" and "Addiction Awareness" Courses which were always well attended by offenders and was very successful and will be ongoing.

The Education Unit provides basic literacy to prisoners also English as a second language to foreign nationals.

During the year a number of speakers came to talk as part of the Getting Out course.

During the year Industrial Supervisor Tom Gregan successfully completed a Fork Lift Trainers course and he will now be able to give courses to offenders.

Tom and his assistants have been very successful with their work programmes on the Farm and Garden with growing summer and winter flowers, vegetables and the crops. They also took in a large number of goats during the year and raised them for

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BOTHAR who will send them to Africa. In the weeks prior to the goats going they took in over 300 goats for a few weeks quarantine prior to their departure.

Chaplain Sr Pat Egan looks after the spiritual needs of the offenders. She will make contact with their families when required. She at times takes offenders out on visits to their homes or to visit family graves. Fr. Eamon Crossan PP in Avoca attends every week to say mass. A number of offenders were allowed out to attend Church of Ireland service in the local church when requested.

Probation & Welfare Officer Catherine Doyle was replaced during the year by Jan Alvey and she 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. She also works closely with the Education unit and assists in setting up suitable courses for offenders with FAS.

The doctor attends daily to look after the health of the offenders and see new committals on arrival here. Medical Orderly Tom Dillon retired during the year and was replaced by Nurse Officer Geraldine O'Dubghaill who with Nurse Officer Brendan Dillon look after the health needs of offenders and issue medication required and make arrangements for any further treatment needed.

The monthly review meetings continue to be a necessary part of the running of Shelton Abbey it organises programmes for offenders and is attended by a member from IPS Operations, Head Teacher, Probation & Welfare Officer, Chaplain, Governor, Chief Officer and some officers who discuss each person and make recommendations accordingly.

We visited the kitchen on occasions before the meetings and are always impressed that it continues to provide excellent meals and is always kept spotless. There was a major refurbishment of the kitchen during the year to allow it to be a pilot for the cook chill style catering which if successful will be part of the new system put in to Thornton Hall. The offenders working take great pride in their work and attend the hygiene course set out for them by the chef in charge.

There were no major incidents during the year. There is a good relationship between staff and offender's. The new staff placed here for the increase in offender numbers are all from the local area and have vast experience in closed prisons before transferring here.

During the year Addiction Councillor Annette O'Neill arrived here and is working with offenders who have addiction problems.

A monthly disciplinary meeting takes place with The Psychologist, Probation & Welfare Officer, Head Teacher, Addiction Councillor, Governor, Chaplain and Chief Officer where all prisoners are discussed and recommendations are made to the various agencies.

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Patrick Fitzgerald

John Murphy

John Byrne

Fergus McDonnell

Oonagh Doyle

Fergus Nestor

John Kierans

Michael Hanrahan

Hugh O'Keeffe