

VISITING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2009

Shelton Abbey Visiting Committee have pleasure in presenting their report for the year 2009.

The Visiting Committee played an active role in the life of the Centre and met on 12 occasions during the course of the year under the Chairmanship of Mr. Pat Fitzgerald. Members were facilitated in regard to their meetings and regular visits. Offenders made requests to see the Visiting Committee during the course of the year.

The annual Visiting Committee Variety Concert went ahead as usual in December and was deemed to be a great success and was much enjoyed by the offenders who showed their appreciation by their large attendance. What is particularly gratifying to note about this event is that all the performers are from the local area and always enjoy taking part in this event.

Regime Services to Offenders

Addiction Counsellor

Ms. Annette O'Neill continues to prove highly effective in terms of linking in with offenders who are committed here with Addiction issues. This service is available to offenders on a 5 day liability, 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday inclusive.

Catering

Training continued for both our Catering staff and offenders. A total of 13 offenders were employed daily in our kitchen and were heavily involved in food preparation, records, cleaning, serving etc. An external audit of our catering services was carried out in July and a very positive result was attained in that the Kitchen retained its Q Mark status.

Chaplaincy

Spiritual Care to offenders during the year was provided by Sr Pat Egan, who attended the Centre for 3 days per week in addition to Sunday mornings. Sunday Service was facilitated by Fr Crossan.

Bothar Project

This was a new project to Shelton, and commenced in February of this year with the first contact with the Bothar organisation, who were happy to place their goats in our care. These goats provided a number of opportunities for us, particularly in the area of employment of offenders. The costs of keeping them were met by the Bothar organisation. This partnership with Bothar grew in the coming months before their eventual departure to Africa.

This partnership grew even more in 2009 with the introduction to Shelton Abbey of Heifers. This new initiative, along with the goats brought huge positive publicity to Shelton Abbey and of course, increased employment and training opportunities for our offenders.

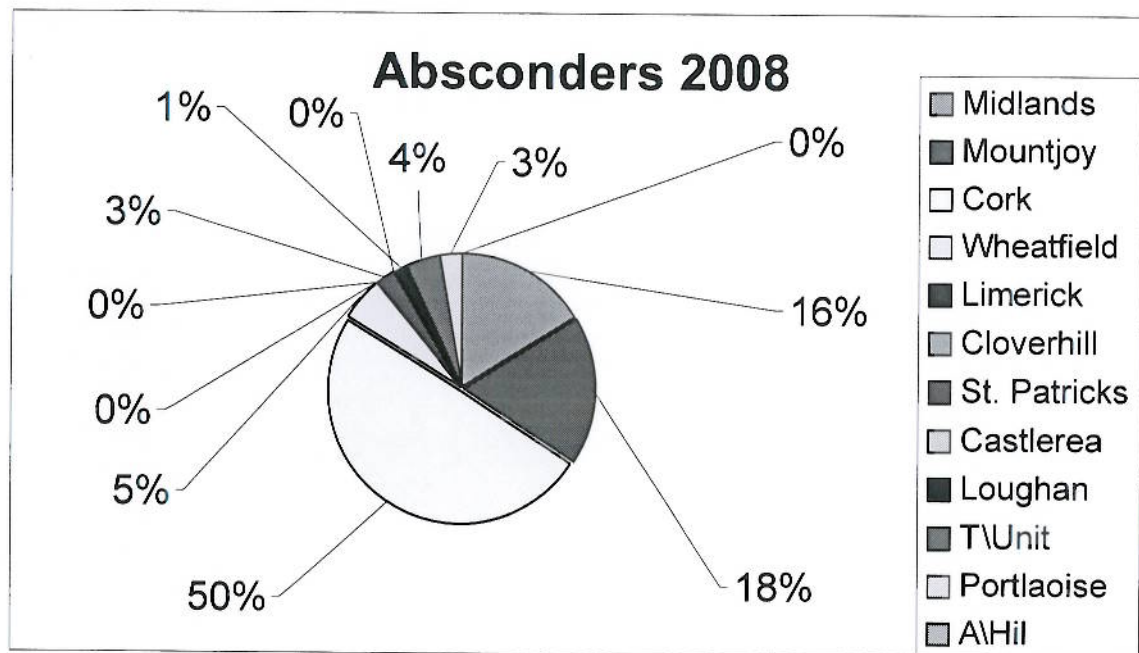
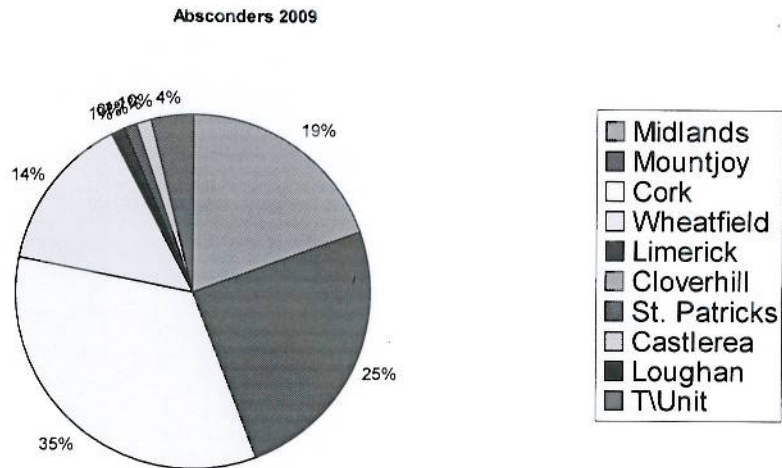
Avoca House

Avoca House continues to operate in a manner which promotes the ethos of Shelton Abbey. Offenders graduate to the single cell, ensuite accommodation from the main House in most instances. There are however, allowances made for special case offenders who will transfer directly into Avoca house from the transferring prison. Examples of this category of offender would be an offender serving Life, other long term offenders.

VISITING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2009

Offenders Statistics

407 offenders transferred into Shelton Abbey in 2009. An increase of bed capacity by 40, from 60 to 100 offenders. There were 77 offenders absconded from Shelton Abbey in 2009 as opposed to 73 in 2008. See attached Chart



Committee members voiced their concerns on the criteria for the picking of prisoners suitable for Shelton Abbey, and queried the sentencing policy management of Department of Justice & IPS Visa V Types of Offences i.e. Fines that should not command a custodial sentence. A total of 5 offenders gained external employment locally on a Daily Temporary Release basis.

VISITING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2009

Educational Activities in 2009

Educational Services were provided by the whole time equivalent of 7.4 teachers, that's 3 full time and 9 part time teachers. Classes were held in the usual day time hours and during the Evenings from 5.30pm until 7.30pm. The teaching regime was altered this year on the recommendation of the Regime Report (07) to provide classes to us during the traditional school holidays periods.

The total number of offenders enrolled for education courses in 2009 was 268

Outdoor Pursuits

A group of 16 offenders, two P.E. teachers and two Officers attended a one day introductory course at Baltinglass Resource Centre.

Arts Council Projects

Two projects took place in the summer term of 2009

Creative writing was facilitated by Ms Sylvia Cullen, playwright, in May on Wednesdays over four weeks.

A mosaics workshop project, took place in June, on four days per week over two weeks.

Health Care

The needs of offenders were well catered for during the year and there were no incidents which gave rise to concerns. A local Doctor attends on 5 mornings per week for a two hour period. Outside of these times, the Doctor will attend if required in an emergency type situation. The dental and optical needs of offenders are catered for by appointment in Arklow town. There is a Health Care Staffing compliment of two Nurse Officers rostered back to back from 8am to 8pm, 7 days per week.

Library

A most welcome improvement occurred in our Library, during the year which did much to enhance and improve the service available to the offenders.

Psychology

Our Psychology needs were met during the year with the attendance of a Psychologist, Ms. Gemma Anslow from the Dochas Centre for two days per month. The Psychology service facilitates workshops and courses to offenders on issues such as Stress, Anger Management, etc. These courses result from a close working relationship between Health Care, Probation and Education Services.

Probation Service

Our Probation Service continued to operate on a five day week by Ms. Jan Alvey. The Probation Service provided a full service to all our offenders during the year in addition to playing an active role in multi - disciplinary working and in partnership with the other services delivering rehabilitation programmes and initiatives to offenders.

Other Services

Security

CCTV and Alarmed External Doors continue to provide added assistance in providing security within Shelton Abbey. The Security Screening Booth at the entrance to Shelton Abbey allows staff to check all visitors re identification, and also allows for the secure storage of visitors mobiles phones, handbags etc. in line with Irish Prison Service guidelines on security. There were 103 mobile phones confiscated, in total for the year.

VISITING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2009

Staff

The staffing compliment for Shelton Abbey 53 officers. To date all of these posts have been filled with the exception of 2 Industrial Supervisor Posts and 1 Job Sharing Post. A total of 1 Officer retired in 2009 and he has been replaced.

Recreation

With the increase in capacity it was important that efforts were made to improve the recreational facilities available to offenders. Room space became available with re- location of the Tuck Shop. The room was refurbished and set it up as a pool and darts room. This has proved to be popular with offenders during the evenings and at weekends. A fully equipped Gym which is open 7 days per week and managed by 2 qualified Gym Officers. Inmates attend Coral leisure Centre in Arklow on a weekly basis where offenders are taught to swim, play indoor soccer, squash and raquetball. F.A.I. Soccer Skills Course are provided in Shelton Abbey with a Soccer Coach to facilitate said course on 1 afternoon per week.

There are regular Bingo sessions, Table Quiz's (in conjunction with the Education Unit), Card Drives, Dart Competitions, Soccer Tournaments and Pool Competitions for offenders.

Projects completed during the Year

The skills of offenders committed here during the course of the year were utilised as much as possible on the various projects that were undertaken. This proved to be particularly beneficial to them and the Centre in terms of utilising their skills and reducing costs that would ordinarily have to be paid had external contractors been engaged to carry out the work.

Projects completed during the year were:

All areas within Shelton Abbey were painted by offenders. Dangerous Poplar Trees were removed from the "Bank" at the Football Field and as per recommendations from Ms. Fionnola Reid and were replaced with 230 Native Irish Trees. Reclaimed Red Brick, Dwarf Walls were constructed at the Rose Garden and Canal areas. One of the Farm sheds was developed to accommodate Bothar Heifers. Wardrobes and lockers were constructed for all bedrooms in the Main House. The roadway to the front of Shelton Abbey was lowered in order to prevent flooding. A complete new Drainage System was constructed throughout the Grounds/Gardens within Shelton Abbey. The Rose Garden was completely revamped. These works were completed by Shelton Abbey staff and offenders. The hen flock on the Farm was replaced and increased due to the high demand for eggs. The flock total rose from 100 hens in 2008 to 150 hens in 2009. The hens are cared for by offenders in Shelton Abbey. Shelton Abbey supplied other prisons and IPS HQ with potatoes, eggs and flowers. All of these items were grown/produced on the Farm in Shelton Abbey by our staff and offenders.

In addition to the above projects, the ongoing programme of General Maintenance of Shelton Abbey continued.

VISITING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2009

Patrick Fitzgerald (Chairperson)

John Byrne

Fergus McDonnell

Fergus Nestor

John Kierans

Michael Hanrahan

Hugh O'Keeffe

P J Sheridan