

Springhill Community House Trustees Report

1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024

Charity Contact Details:

Springhill Community House

6&7 Springhill Close

Belfast

BT12 7SE

Tel 02890326722

www.sch.ie

Charity No:100911

Company No: NI017628

Charity Aims and Objectives

The purpose of Springhill has and will continue to be about empowering people to take control of their own lives. This remains at the heart of what SCH is about and involves tackling the apathy and frustration felt by individuals through programmes of personal development, life coaching, education, training, health awareness and confidence building. SCH has continued to build on its early ethos of free learning and provides a wide spectrum of courses: Statistics show that many in the West Belfast have little or no qualifications on leaving school and that mainstream schooling has been a negative experience for them. This negative experience has tainted their view of mainstream education and acts as a barrier for returners to education. SCH is about overcoming these barriers by providing programmes in a relaxed and informal environment that puts participants at their ease which creates a positive learning experience. Programmes include: Accredited and non-accredited courses, Life Coaching, Information Communication Technologies, Complementary Therapy Clinics and Training, Premises are used as a Community Resource, Victims Advocacy Support

Charity Purpose

The objects of the Company shall be exclusively charitable and be for the advancement of education (including the provision of training or re-training courses and facilities) and the relief of poverty in West Belfast particularly (but so that the Company shall not be limited to pursuing its objects only in such area nor shall those who participate in the activities of the Company be drawn exclusively from the residents of West Belfast)

The trustees have paid due regard to the charity commission guidance on public benefit. The trustees are confident that Springhill Community House's aims and objectives are in accordance with the regulations on public benefit and that the activities outlined in this report meet the public benefit requirements.

Charity Trustees

Tommy Holland – Chairperson
Elsie Best – Secretary
Eilish Rooney - Treasurer

Independent Auditors

Joe Quinn & Company
Certified Public Accountants
44 Glen Road
Belfast BT11 8BB

Bank Bank of Ireland 202 Andersonstown Road Belfast BT11 9EB	Solicitors Delaney & Co 54 Andersonstown Road Belfast BT11 9AN
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Financial Review

The project's current financial position remains healthy with no significant changes, the current assets and reserves are sufficient to cover any unforeseen costs which may arise in the event that current levels of funding is not maintained, the directors will review the amount of funds that the charity requires to ensure that they are adequate to fulfil the charities continuing obligations.

Funding

Springhill Community House continue to receive funding from the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS £121,322) and the Department for Communities (DfC £31,469).

Busy beavers.

It's been a busy couple of months at the house with all sorts of creative workshops including glass painting, felting, weaving, planting, photography and touring.

It's great to learn new skills and have a cuppa and chat at the same time.

Thanks to everyone who took part, you should be proud of your amazing works of art.





Complementary Therapy Clinics

Our team of complementary therapists continue to deliver weekly therapy clinics in Reflexology, Aromatherapy massage and Homeopathy. We receive funding from the Victims and Survivors Service to deliver therapies with two hundred and forty clients per year each receive five one to one therapy sessions on a weekly basis.

Complementary therapies take a holistic approach to the individual incorporating physical, emotional and spiritual needs. The therapies we offer are designed to work alongside and not intended in any way to replace any medical treatment.

People often use complementary therapies to help them feel better and cope with the challenges life throws at them. Many complementary therapies concentrate on boosting relaxation and reducing stress. They may help to calm your emotions, relieve anxiety, and increase your general sense of health and wellbeing.

Proposed Funding Cuts Protest

Springhill Community House and other community organisations found themselves again protesting at proposed funding cuts by the department for communities.

Déjà vu - Been there, done that, got the Tee-shirt.

But we shouldn't have to be out protesting for Funding again.



Springhill Community House receive funding from the Department for Communities for the delivery of our services. In April 2023 we were forced to take to the street in protest at these proposed cuts and funding on a three-month basis.

It's impossible to plan or deliver services on a three-month basis.

Community groups gathered outside Dfc offices to let officials know that this situation is unacceptable and will have serious negative consequences for local community organisations and their service users and demanded that the uncertainty and ongoing threat to funding must be lifted immediately.

Mighty Oaks from little acorns grow.

Celebrating 10 years of Gairdín an Phobail.

Gairdín an Phobail – Garden of the people beside the Whiterock Leisure Centre had its first growing season in 2013, 10 years on it has blossomed into a social hub for horticulture, arts and culture.

We marked the 10th year by dedication one of the raised beds to Noelle Ryan who was instrumental in the campaign for the community garden and allotments.



Seen here digging the foundations for the garden Noelle championed food for healing and remedies based on plants, flowers and herbs.

She believed in treating the cause and not the symptoms, and in treating the person holistically, body, mind and spirit.

She used Bach remedies everyday of her life and we are still using them today in the Community House.

Gairdín an Phobail was open to all today as part of the Féile a GCloihni Gorma-Festival of the bluebells with loads of activities including, pizza making, foraging, making seed bombs, pesto making and much more.

So it was a fitting occasion to remember Noelle with a named plaque (leaba Noelle – Noelle's Bed) made by Bob McAllister and to celebrate the 10 years of amazing work in the garden by volunteers past and present.

Special mention of Sean Mac Brádaigh of Participation and the Practice of Rights (PPR) who has revitalised the garden into a blooming success aided and abetted by his team of volunteers.

Whiterock's Garden of the People is absolutely blooming

Joe McCann April 29, 2023 09:55



The Peoples Archive - Fr Des Wilson

It was great to be in the company of so many friends at a presentation of Fr Des' archive in St Comgall's School.

Thanks to Falls Community Council for hosting us today in their beautifully renovated St Comgall's School. It was a fitting venue for the exhibition and presentation. On Display were just a few of the many documents, reports, photographs, posters and artefacts.

One of those present commented "Des was in the room" and indeed he was, we felt his presence.

And through the magic of technology heard his voice which was recorded in August 1971. Among other things Des kept an audio diary. Every night Des retired to his bedroom, smoked 2 gauloises French cigarettes, and recorded the events of that day, who he met and what happened in the community.

Our 18-month archive project is nearing completion but there is still much more to be done.

We'll be having more presentations of the archive in the coming months.

Des always said there is a book in everyone. No matter who he met he encouraged them to record their own story even if it was just for the family. He was very conscious that we must not leave the telling of our history to others. Be inspired by him to make a start

Thanks again to everyone who came and to Falls Community Council for hosting the event.





Supporting Students through exams with Bach Remedy Exam Mix

Exam season is upon us and its always a nerve wrecking time so why not get some of our Bach remedies to help you get through it and focus the mind.

Here's what the remedies are and how they help;

Clematis: for a better concentration
 If you're always daydreaming and have trouble staying focused on the present, Clematis Bach flower remedies may be able to help. This natural remedy can help improve focus, concentration and grounding, making it ideal for those who struggle with staying present in the moment

White Chestnut: to better remember things
 Take if you find your mind ends up with thoughts whirring round and round, particularly at night causing sleep problems before exams.



Gentian: not to respond when in front of an unexpected situation

Gentian encourages the positive potential to put mistakes in context, cope with setbacks, pessimism, and negative outlooks. From small upsets to large difficulties, and when challenges build up, keep Gentian at hand. Approach all challenges with conviction. It helps you to better concentrate and solve problems more easily and quickly. Managing new situations is easier.

Elm: for a surplus of care that an exam requires

Take if you suddenly feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of it all. Could be a good one if your university place is riding on your A-level results, or for those 3rd year University finals.

Larch: to have confidence in your abilities

Take this if you feel like you have no self-confidence, really useful before exams. Keeps you feeling capable; not fearful but determined.

MUST SEE TV!!

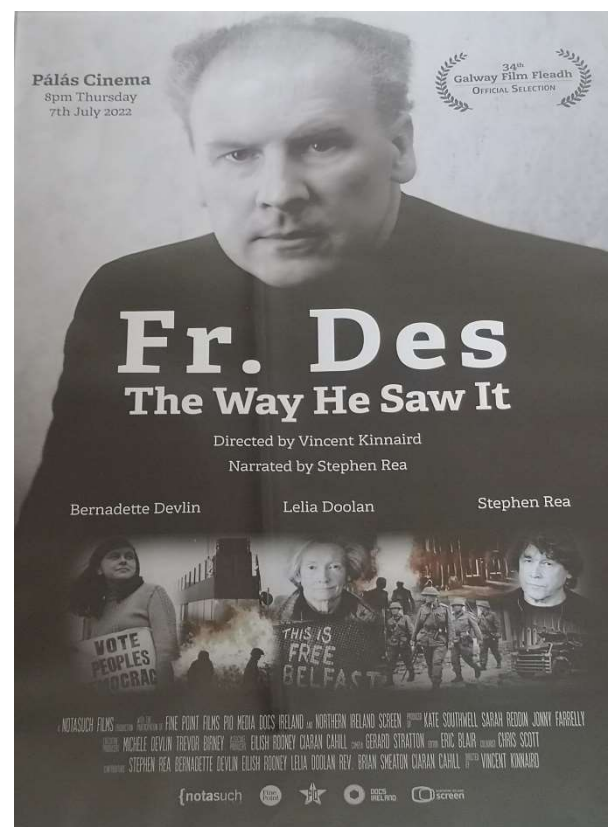
Fr Des - The Way He Saw It.

We were delighted to announce that Vincent Kinnard's film about Fr Des was screened on local TV station NVTV# on the 10th May 2023.

The film narrated by Stephen Rea tells the life-story of Des, the people's priest with a socialist and humanitarian outlook, who spent a full life helping those in need as the British empire's hold on Northern Ireland began to unravel from 1969 onwards.

Amid civil strife he followed the path of Jesus in caring for the downtrodden, and for a long period was ostracised by the hierarchy of his own Church for doing this. Courageously though he continued to work for justice and against inequality to the end of his life in November 2019.

An extraordinary man in extraordinary circumstances.



Féile na gCloigíní Gorma - Festival of the Bluebells

Thanks to Glor Na Móna for hosting a presentation of Fr Des' Archive as part of Féile na gCloigíní Gorma.

Des had a great view of the mountain, the hatchet field and bluebells, he described the Upper Springfield as a beautiful place under the shadow of the mountain. In fact, we used a photograph of a tree in a field of bluebells above the hatchet field on his memorial card along with another photograph of his second favourite place to be Muckish in Donegal.

Des would be delighted that the seeds of festival that were planted way back in 1973 bloom again with the bluebells festival.

Congratulations to Glor na Móna for their fantastic programme of events which is about community, solidarity and Wellbeing.

Springhill Community House celebrated its 50th anniversary last year and this project is one of our key projects in celebration of those 50 plus years.

Des had a minimalist lifestyle, he had few possessions, if he had two shirts he would give one away, but when it came to the archive he was a hoarder and thank god for that.

He advised everybody he met to record their own story if only for their family to look back on.

65 years ago he was advising students in St Malachy's to keep a diary and one of the diaries survives in the Archive.

The first entry in that diary reads:

9th of October 1958

I have begun to write this diary on the advice of Fr Des Wilson. This will, I hope, perhaps be a help to me in the future when I wish to see how my thoughts have developed.

The diary is just one example, many more have followed that advice and published their story, some through the Springhill Local history series which has more than 30 titles including "The gates flew open" by Jim McCann and "Put out that light" by Teresa Donnelly.

If you take anything from the archive project let it be the start of you documenting/recording your story.

Des kept his own diary's both written and recorded.

At night he would retire to his room, smoke 2 Gauloises French cigarettes, and record the events of that day, who he met and events within the community.

We played a clip recorded in August 1971 just a few days after the Ballymurphy Massacre. Des describes visiting the location of Fr Mullan's murder and seeing children leaving jam jars filled with flowers at the site marked by Black crosses, the children blessed themselves and prayed.

What's amazing about the recording is Des was thinking then of a memorial to all who died. He spoke about the possibility of a centre for reconciliation that would remember all victim's protestant and Catholic.

He didn't get the support for it at the time but through the good work of the Black Mountain Shared Space Project that vision will become a reality. They started building a 6.5 million cross community centre for reconciliation on that site.

Our archivist Tiarnan ÓMuilleoir gave a presentation about the archive project and its contents including examples of posters, letters and pamphlets.

Our long term objective is to house the archive in a newly built Fr Des Wilson Interpretive Centre which will tell the story of Fr Des and his work and where the archive contents will be available for all to access.



STOP THE CUTS

The message was loud and clear as we took to the streets again in protest at budget cuts.

The cuts will have a devastating impact on much needed community services.

Services are at risk and the cuts must be stopped.

Thanks to all our service users who joined us to show their support and opposition to the cuts.



Topper Thompson Inquest.

We supported the Thompson family and eyewitnesses as we did at the Public Inquiry into the murder of Paul Topper Thompson at Banbridge Courthouse.

It takes courage to give evidence to an inquest, even when the event happened only a few days ago. But to do so 30 years later is a truly courageous.

The inquest will hear evidence from eyewitnesses about what they seen and heard on that tragic day.

Despite the passage of time, the eyewitnesses' memories of Toppers murder were still vivid. They described how they had tried to help Topper who was dying in the taxi, and how they had been powerless to prevent his death.



It was clear that they are still traumatised by what they witnessed and by having to recount their evidence.

Their courage and bravery should be commended, they showed great strength and determination in coming forward to tell their stories, even after all these years.

The eyewitnesses' evidence is crucial to the inquest, it helps to establish what happened on that day and helps to ensure that the truth about Toppers murder will finally be revealed.

Topper was murdered in a loyalist gun attack in Springfield Park on 27th April 1994, at 25-years-old. He was shot dead whilst being given a lift in a taxi,

Members of the Springfield Park community were subjected to regular attacks conducted by loyalist paramilitaries. They consider that the RUC and other state agencies, including the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), were aware of these attacks and the method by which these paramilitary groups entered Springfield Park was known to both the RUC and the NIO.

On the morning of 27 April 1994, residents notified the RUC, NIO and their Member of Parliament (MP) that the 'peace line' separating Springfield Park and Springmartin Road had been compromised by the creation of a hole and no action was taken to either repair it or provide security for the members of the community, though it was known that the area was subject to regular attacks by loyalist paramilitaries.

A Community Public Inquiry was held in September 1994 into the circumstances of Paul's death, involving international jurists and lawyers, including Judge Andrew Somers, Gareth Pierce, Judge Dan Coburn, Richard O'Meara, Dr Ray Murphy, Tom

Fox, and Angela Ritchie. Documents were reviewed, statements were taken, evidence heard, submissions received, and a report produced in 1995.



Celebrating our Volunteers

We would be lost without them!

Volunteering is a great way to give back to the community and make it a better place. When you volunteer, you are helping to provide important services to those in need. You are also helping to build a stronger and more vibrant community.

Our volunteers are invaluable in helping keep the project running from reception duties, housekeeping, administration, teaching and more recently helping in the Peoples Archive.

Volunteering is a great opportunity to learn new skills that you can use in your personal life.

The volunteers in the archive project are learning preservation and conservation as well as cataloguing skills.

Volunteering has many benefits for volunteers, including:

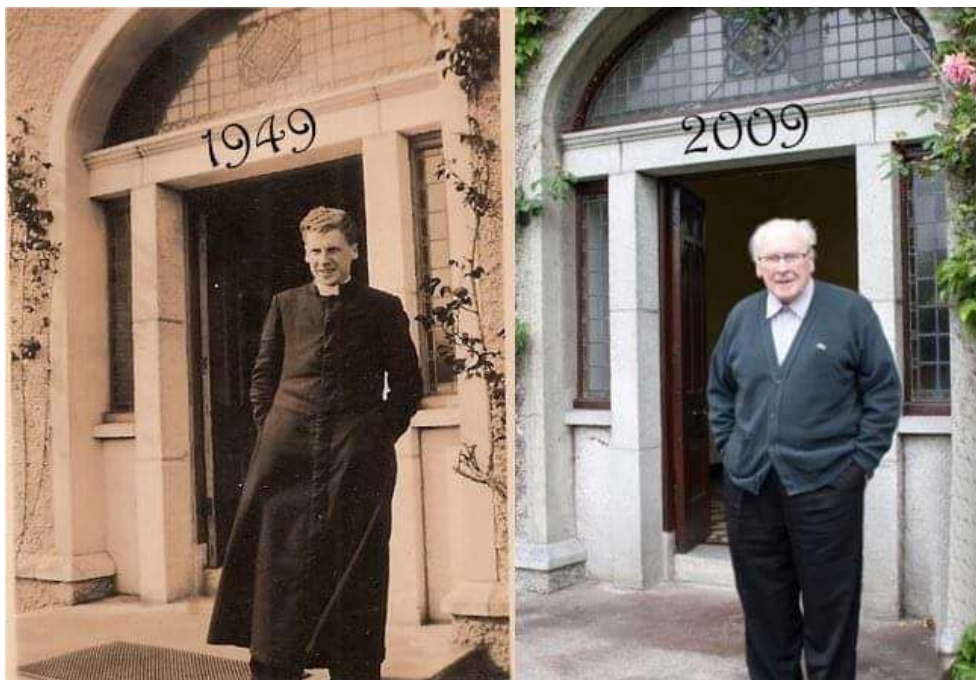
- **Improved mental and physical health:** Volunteering has been shown to reduce stress, improve mood, and boost self-esteem. It can also help to reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and stroke.
- **Increased social connections:** Volunteering can help you to meet new people and make friends. It can also help you to connect with your community and feel a sense of belonging.
- **New skills and knowledge:** Volunteering can help you to learn new skills and gain valuable experience. This can be helpful for your career or for personal development.
- **A sense of purpose:** Volunteering can give you a sense of purpose and satisfaction. It can make you feel good about yourself.



Remembering Fr Des on the 74th anniversary of his ordination.

Much has, and will be said, about Fr Des but we wanted to share this Poem by Fra McDaniel which says it all in our view, a heavenly saint among us, thanks Fra.

A Heavenly Saint
Among Us
In the heart of
Ballymurphy, a
beacon stood,
A man of peace, in
the neighbourhood,
Father Des Wilson, a
caring Christian soul,
Embracing his calling, making broken hearts whole.
With unwavering faith, he walked the path,
Bringing hope to the downtrodden, ending their wrath,
Injustice and discrimination, he fiercely fought,
For the rights of the marginalized, his voice brought.
Jobs and opportunities, he tirelessly sought,
To uplift his community, each battle he fought,
"Give me a call," his resounding motto,
A guiding light in the darkest of sorrow.
Through troubled times, he lent a helping hand,
A rock of support, against a turbulent land,
He preached compassion, understanding, and love,
A testament to his faith, sent from above.
Father Des Wilson, a man revered,
In the hearts of many, his legacy seared,
He left footprints of kindness, etched in time,
A symbol of hope, forever sublime.
Though he may be gone, his spirit remains,
In the hearts he touched, in remembered refrains,
A man of God, a caring Christian, true,
Father Des Wilson, we honour you.
FMD justice for all.



I Did This for You

We were delighted to welcome Margaret McGuckin to the community house with some copies of her book "I Did This for You"

The book tells the story of her life and the enduring impact the abuse she suffered as a child has had over her lifetime.

It details her early years in Nazareth House where she suffered abuse at the hands of nuns and her campaign for redress for all victims.

Springhill Community House have supported Margaret and the SAVIA group for many years and were delighted to see Margaret's story finally in print.



A dip into the archive – St John's & Corpus Christi Parish Bulletins.

St John's Parish Bulletin, later to include Corpus Christi was published between July 1970 to June 1974 and was a great insight into what was going on during that time, including the building of the new church Corpus Christi, the arrival of the new youth worker for the Ballymurphy Tenants Association, Paddy McCarthy, later murdered by the para's in the Ballymurphy Massacre and various sporting events.

It also included an article "Young Dopes" by Fr Noel Fitzpatrick who was murdered in the Springhill Massacre in July 1972, as relevant today as it was then. (Issue 2 page 4)
The Building of new factories at the Whiterock Industrial Estate (Issue 22)
The arrival and Departure of St Mother Teresa (Issues 14 & Issue 38)

An article in issue 20 headed Ranafast is a reflective piece by author RT on the first visit of children to the Gaeltacht in 1926. It's fitting that we share it today just as bus loads of students leave Coláiste Feirste on route for the Gaeltacht 2023 style and not a Model T Ford in sight.

TR recalled making a promise to her fellow students on arrival at Ranafast to only speak Irish, she decided to show off to her friend saying "Ta Muid sa Gaeltacht anois. Caithimid Gaeilg a labhairt" (We are in the Gaeltacht now, we have to speak Irish) Her friend glared at her and blurted out "Aw shut up! I want my mammy!"

The 43 editions in the archive offer a wealth of information and insights into the social, cultural, and religious life of the local community.

The archive serves as a time capsule, preserving the stories, events, and achievements of the people connected to St John's Parish – Corpus Christi and the Ballymurphy area. It offers a unique perspective on the development and transformation of the area, documenting the challenges faced by the community as well as the progress made over the years.

Through the pages of the Bulletins, readers can delve into the rich tapestry of West Belfast's history. The bulletins provide updates on church activities, parish events, and community initiatives. They serve as a means of communication, connecting individuals and families, and fostering a sense of belonging within the community.

All 43 Issues can be viewed on our web page.



Remembering Fr Des on his 98th Birthday

The 8th July would be Fr Des' 98th Birthday, he had a long and happy life during which he was a faithful servant of God.

He once told students "The world must be better when we leave it than when we entered it. That for every day of our life there should be someone who has more to eat, to wear or to live for."

He lived his life by that motto and left the world a better place. He enriched the lives of all he met.

Some say legend some say saint, we say both.

He stuck by us in our hour of need and dedicated himself to our community. He became part of us and we became part of him.



Another dip into the archive.

The archive project is progressing well and thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund we've been able to digitise some of the collection.

We've already shared the parish bulletins and today we can share some of the many campaign posters.

Posters are a powerful tool for getting your message across. They are especially effective in campaigning and raising awareness of injustice, a cause or call for change.

In the context of campaigning, they are used for spreading a message and mobilising support.

Fr Des had the foresight to keep a copy of many campaign posters over the years which are now in the Peoples Archive, here is just a few to whet the appetite.



Upper Springfield Festival 2023

It was a great day to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the first ever Upper Springfield Festival in August 1973.

The Upper Springfield events team excelled themselves providing Health Stalls – Therapists - Health Bus - Health checks - Beautician's – Barbers – Inbody Machine - Go Karts - Bouncy Castles – Inflatable's –Fun Activities –Family Activities - – Mini Sports – culminating in the amazing colour run.

Thanks to all the community organisations in the Upper Springfield who came together to deliver the festival. Just like the ethos of the 1973 festival it was a great boost to morale during difficult times.

Thanks to Dáithi for kicking off the colour run even though there was a false start. Brilliant day all round.





The People's Archive - Fr Des Wilson

Another packed audience in St Mary's University College for the presentation of the People's Archive by our archivist Tiarnan Ó'Muilleoir who gave an overview of the archive project including examples.

As well as the presentation we had an amazing exhibition of posters, photographs, and artefacts.



Springhill Community House has the key to unlock your potential

Launch of education programme and activities starting September 2023.

Springhill Community House is a community education and development charity based in West Belfast. It was founded in 1972 by Father Des Wilson, who was committed to social justice and community education and development. The house quickly expanded from providing advice to offering a wide range of educational and social services to the local community.

Today, Springhill Community House offers a variety of courses and programs for people of all ages and backgrounds. These include GCSE English, Maths, Science and Irish as well as a range of diploma courses in Reflexology, Massage and Thermal Auricular Therapy. The house also hosts a number of social events and activities, women's groups, gardening and community events.

We take a holistic approach and recognise that stress and anxiety can be a barrier to unlocking potential. In addition to the education programs we deliver a number of complimentary therapy clinics in Homeopathy, Acupuncture, Reflexology, Aromatherapy and Massage. Each person gets five one-hour therapy treatments which will help reduce stress and improve their mental health.

We believe that everyone has the right to education and development, regardless of their background or circumstances. The house's programs are designed to help people unlock their potential and build a better future for themselves and their families.

Education for the community in the community has been at the heart of our work since 1972. By providing our service we want to ensure that everyone has access to the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life, regardless of their social or economic background.

Our programs have a number of benefits including improved literacy and numeracy skills, better job prospects, and overall better quality of life.

We have helped thousands of people to improve their lives, and they have made a real difference to the local community.

Springhill Community House believes that everyone has the potential to succeed. The house's programs are designed to help people to realize their potential and achieve their goals.

The house's staff are passionate about helping people to learn and grow. They are committed to providing a supportive and inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome and valued.

We a proven track record of helping people to unlock their potential. The house's graduates have gone on to achieve great things, including getting jobs, starting their own businesses, and making a positive difference in their communities.

Springhill Community House is a valuable asset to West Belfast. The house's programs are making a real difference to the lives of people in the city. If you are looking for an opportunity to learn and grow, Springhill Community House is the place for you.

Our programs are making a real difference to the lives of people in West Belfast, and you can be a part of that difference.



SPRINGHILL COMMUNITY HOUSE

GCSE CLASSES

Maths Blended Course Essential Skills
Numeracy/GCSE Wednesday
6pm – 8.30pm
English Thursday 6pm – 8.30pm
Science: Wednesday 6pm – 8.30pm
Irish GCSE Thursday 6pm – 8.30pm

LIFE COACHING COURSES

HISTORY & POLITICS

Introduction to Women in History and
Local History 6 weeks

THE PEOPLES ARCHIVE – FR DES WILSON

Volunteers required to assist in
cataloguing and preservation.

THERAPY TRAINING

Diploma Courses in Reflexology
& Flower Essence, participants
must meet victim's criteria.

THERAPIES OUTREACH BEFRIENDING

We have a team of Therapists who offer
treatments in Aromatherapy and
Reflexology at Springhill Community
House. This programme is funded by VSS
and participants must meet victim's
criteria.

GAIRDÍN AN PHOBAIL

Volunteers wanted to help in the
Peoples Garden at the Whiterock Leisure
Centre. Getting involved is a great way
to learn how to grow your own
fruit and veg, what we grow we share.
Fridays 10am - 12noon

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

Need help with English or Maths? We
can help you, just call in for a cuppa and
a chat.

OTHER CLASSES

Digital Photography

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ANY
OF THE ABOVE CALL INTO**



Springhill Community House, 6&7 Springhill Close, Belfast BT12 7SE

T: 02890326722

Springhill Community House is funded by the Victims and Survivors
Service & DSD/Belfast Regeneration Office Neighbourhood Renewal.

Exam results day has arrived.

Congratulations!! to all our students who received their results today, its the reward for all your hard work. Best Wishes from all of us in Springhill Community House for the future.

But remember exams are a test of your memory, not a measure of your worth as a human being. Grades don't define you as a person or shape your future you are in control of that.

Our programme of courses starts again in September and there is something there for everyone, so why not enrol in one of our courses and broaden your horizons.

If at first you don't succeed.

As the dust settles on exam day and grades are awarded don't be too disheartened if you didn't get the grade you wanted.

Be inspired by one of our students who didn't succeed the first time or the second but persevered and got it on the third attempt.

Tis a lesson you should heed—
Try again;
If at first you don't succeed,
Try again.
Then your courage should appear;
For if you will persevere,
You will conquer, never fear,
Try again.



Celebrating Community stalwarts and entrepreneurs - Shop locally!

Mary's shop is back open for business after a refit and the transformation is amazing.

Congratulations to Stephen Snr, Stephen Jnr and Rachel, the next generation of Walsh/Gribben's, who are continuing to provide a much needed local grocery service just as their parents and grandparent did before them Mary Walsh open the shop in Springhill Avenue more than 50 years ago followed by her daughter Ann Gribben and Ann's husband Davey, then their children, Stephen, Kieran, Angela and Paula (RIP)

Since then the Walsh/Gribben family have been providing a much needed local grocery service to the wider community through good times and bad.

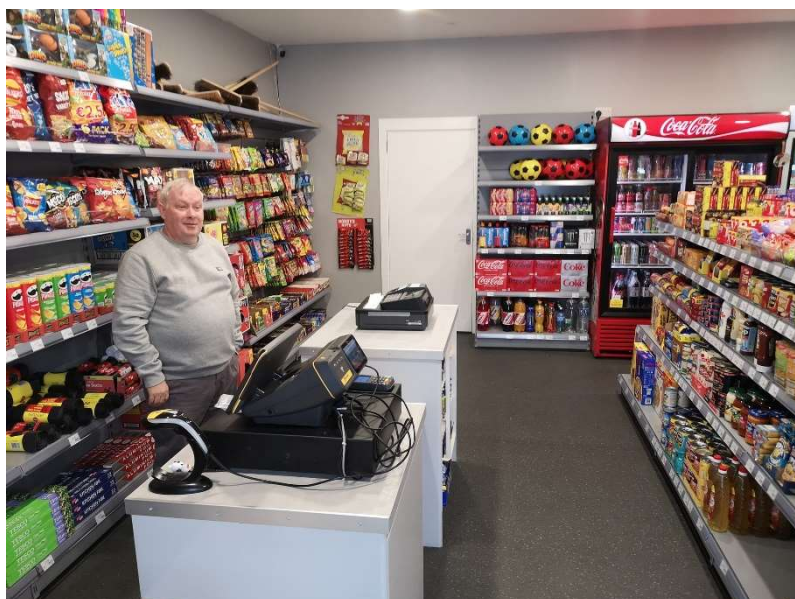
Mary's Shop truly is a family run local convenient store that serves the needs of the community.

Not only that it supports community events and initiatives by donating goods and services.

So it's important that we support local family run businesses remain in the community by shopping locally.

When you buy from a small local business, you are not helping a supermarket CEO buy a third property. You are helping a little girl get dance lessons, a little boy get his team jersey, a mum or dad put food on the table, a family pay a mortgage, or a student pay for University.

Your also ensuring that the community will continue to have a great service on their doorstep for many years to come.



A Dip into the archive – This time the Andersonstown News from 1982.

Like ourselves the Andersonstown News is celebrating 50+ years of service and are currently cataloguing and preserving their back issues including many photographs of community events.

The first edition of the Andersonstown News was on 22nd of November 1972 and was the successor to “Internment 71”, a news-sheet published irregularly up to that point by the Andersonstown Civil Resistance Committee.

“Internment ‘71” expressed the outrage of the local community at the introduction of internment without trial, which had affected numerous families from the greater Andersonstown area.

Alongside the wave of grassroots resistance to internment in nationalist communities emerged new forms of independent community expression that challenged the traditional communications monopoly of the Catholic church and the middle classes. Andersonstown was no different, with “Internment ‘71” and local republican newsletters such as the Tattler or Volunteer, often published in haphazard fashion by amateur volunteers, acting as the forerunner to the Andersonstown News in voicing the concerns and opinions of the working class.

A popular page in the paper is always their pictures page of what’s happening in the community that week.

Who was out and about this week in 1982 contains several pictures of Springhill residents including Fr Des presenting medals to the ladies ‘Misfits’ volley ball team and the ‘Old Crocks’ five a side team. Pat Doherty and Geordie McKenna are also presenting medals to some young Sprighillian's during the Springhill Festival.

I think you’ll agree these pictures capture the great community spirit that still exists in Springhill today.



Father Des Wilson presents medals to Westrock 'Old Crocks' five-a-side team at the Springhill Festival in August 1982

Remembering Matt Lundy RIP

A ray of Sunshine was our sunflower project during lockdown. Every house in the Upper Springfield received a sunflower seed in a pot. More than 4500 homes received a seed and watched it emerge from the soil.

It took a lot of helpers to make the project happen, Matt Lundy was one of those helpers.

That was Matt always willing to muck in and get the job done.

He was a great teacher, story teller, activist and friend.

Someone once said;

Life is the soil, our choices and actions the sun and rain, but our dreams are the seeds. Matt planted many seeds in his time, seeds of culture, language, activism, resistance, rights, resilience, confidence, hope, success, joy and love.

From those seeds mighty Oaks will grow keeping Matt's dreams alive.

"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant." in other words don't judge your day by the rewards you receive, but by the efforts you put in, that was Matt Lundy in a nutshell.

Matt passed peacefully at hospital on 3rd September 2023 surrounded by his loving family. Devoted partner of Margaret, adored father of Grainne and loving daideo of Culann. Much loved father-in-law of Francis.

Our condolences to Margaret, Grainne and the wider family circle.

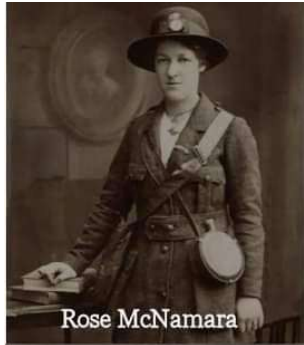
Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.



Women In Irish History Course

We are delighted bring back by popular demand our 8 week Women in Irish History class.

The course will give an overview of the role of women in Irish History and focus on some of the lesser known women including Rose McNamara, Elizabeth O'Farrell, Kathleen Lynn and Jenny Wise Power.



Rose McNamara

Springhill Community House
Presents
An Introduction to
Women in Irish History

Starts Tuesday 7th November @
6pm



Elizabeth
O'Farrell



Kathleen Lynn



Jenny
Wise
Power

Sagart Pobal - The Peoples Priest

Remembering Fr Des today on the 4th anniversary of his passing. We thank God for Des' priesthood, his faithful and dedicated service of God and for his lifelong service to his people.

Five months before Des died he celebrated his 70th anniversary, although he was ill and frail he sent the following message to be read at mass by Eilish Rooney. Fr Paddy McCafferty celebrated the mass with Des' friends and families while Des followed proceedings online.

I see it as Des saying thank you and goodbye to his community.

"Seventy years. I never thought I would get this far. There were more than 80 priests ordained the same day as I was; most of them are gone from this world, a mere handful of us laughing about which of us will reach the hundredth birthday first.

What I want to do now most of all is to thank God for allowing me to live among such good family, friends and neighbours during those years. You taught me what life means, you taught me that especially during the bad, sad times. I believe we are seeing the beginning of a renewed Ireland, a renewed Christianity, a renewed city of Belfast - and we are privileged to live in one of the most beautiful parts of the city - between the beautiful mountain that is full of surprises like the feast of bluebells in the beginning of summer to the snow topped hills in Winter, between that and the sweeping magnificent valley of the Lough and Lagan. This must surely be one of the most beautiful places for a city to be in.

This is where I learned the best lessons about life and I am grateful to family, friends, neighbours who taught me and even had great patience when I learned so slowly. I

learned how good people show their dignity even during the hardest of times, show it most of all during the hard times.

So I am grateful to God for being here, grateful, to all whom I have had the privilege of being family and neighbour to. And very, very hopeful for the future. Coming out of the worst of times we could now be facing into the best of times. May God and good people make it so.

Father Paddy, like our friend Father Aiden, you are with us all at the beginning of a newly awakened church and a people refreshed by what they have suffered and achieved. together. We have good reason to be thankful for that and for each other.”



The Spirit of Freedom awarded goes to the Springhill/Westrock Massacre Families

Harry Gargan, the brother of Margaret Gargan, reflects on receiving the award and what it means to families. "Tonight, the Spirit of Féile award that had been awarded to our families back in the summer now sits proudly alongside our loved ones lanterns in the Springhill Community House. A poignant fitting to end a tough week of our inquest proceedings.

When we were awarded this recognition, it was our families desire for it remain in the heart of the community our loved ones tragically had their lives stolen. The families stated amongst ourselves that this award didn't belong to us, it belonged to John, David, Paddy, Fr Noel and Margaret, as it was them who selflessly and courageously lost their lives whilst trying to help others. We have only given them a voice.

It should also belong to the community, as it is the spirit of the Springhill and Westrock community that is one to be inspired. It was this very community who rallied around us in our darkest days to comprehend the trauma we had endured; it is this community who stood behind us as our families battled for 51 years to seek the truth into our loved one's death's. It is now this very same community during this inquest that is attempted to be criminalised. This community has suffered terribly since this horrific atrocity. We hope to achieve vindication for not only our loved ones but for the remarkable people from this community.

"All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident."

- Arthur Schopenhauer



A dip into the archive – Fr Des' Audio Diary's

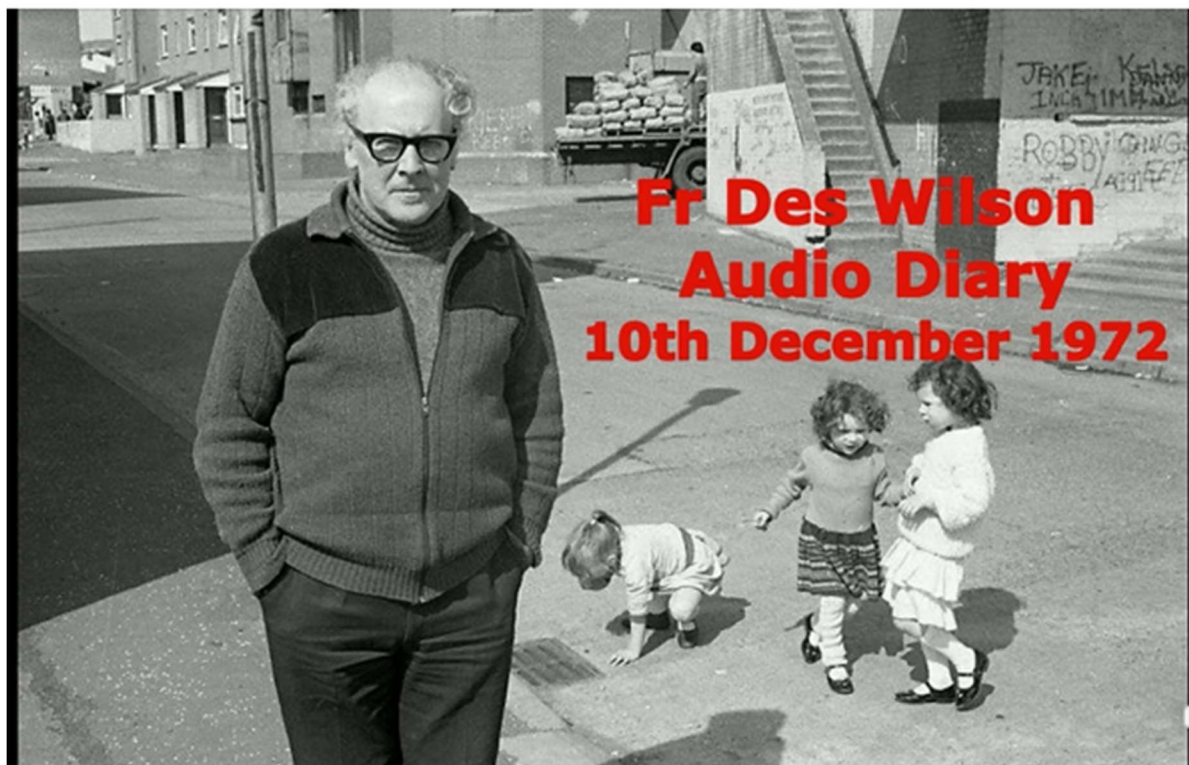
Sunday 10th December 1972

Fr Des had extraordinary foresight to keep copies of correspondence, books, orals histories, videos, sound recordings and photographs. He also recorded diaries on an old reel-to-reel recorder.

This one is from Sunday 10th December 1972, 50 years ago today. As you will hear he was lifted by the British army and put into an armed personnel carrier despite his objections.

He wasn't interested in an apology for himself but wanted an apology for the hundreds of people who had been gravely hurt by British army policy of lifting people into army carriers and dumping them out where they liked.

It's just one of many amazing records in the Peoples Archive – Fr Des Wilson. We are in the process of digitising the recordings and in the long term, we will establish the Fr Des Wilson interpretive centre which will house the collection permanently and tell the story of The People's Priest.



A Life Devoted to Truth & Justice: Remembering Davey McCafferty RIP.

At the weekend we heard the sad news of Davey McCafferty passing.

Davey was a father transformed into an unwavering advocate for truth and justice. His passing marks the end of a life that was defined by a commitment to seeking answers for his son, David, who was one of the victims of the Springhill Westrock Massacre in 1972.

The loss of his son was a devastating blow for Davey his wife Norah and their family, but it also ignited a fire within them. Davey, supported by his family, refused to accept the official narrative, which placed the blame on the victims and labelled them gunmen. Instead, he embarked on a relentless quest to expose the truth of what happened that horrific day.

Despite facing numerous obstacles and setbacks, Davey never wavered in his pursuit. He believed that his son David, Fr Fitzpatrick, Paddy Butler, John Dougal and Margaret Gargan deserved the truth to be told and he was never going to give up until it was uncovered. Earlier this year he had his day in court and gave evidence to the Springhill Massacre Inquest.

Davey's determination saw him campaign for the Springhill Westrock Massacre victims and for those seeking truth and accountability for the victims of state violence. His pursuit of truth and justice inspired others to speak out too.

Davey's legacy extends far beyond his own personal grief. It is testament to the collective strength of families who refused to be silenced by the injustices perpetrated upon them. He embodied the courage of those who dare to challenge the power of the state, demanding that it be held accountable for its actions.

As we remember Davey, let us honour his unwavering spirit by continuing the fight for justice and accountability.

Let us oppose the state's efforts to hide their war crimes.

Let us remember those who have lost their lives due to state oppression.

Let us carry their voices forward, echoing their demands for truth and justice.

Davey's legacy will live on in the hearts of those he touched and in the pursuit of truth and justice for all who have suffered and will resonate for generations to come.

Our heartfelt condolences go to Davey's children and wider family circle. We know that they were by his side throughout his quest for truth and justice and will take up his mantle.

The Truth will out.



Remembering Noelle Ryan on her Birthday.

Noelle was a remarkable human being who always saw the good in people.

She dedicated her life to the service of the people of Belfast.

Originally from Dublin Noelle joined a Dominican convent in Drogheda, it was an enclosed order that had no direct communication with the outside world, a life of contemplation and prayer. For anyone who knew Noelle that was never the order for her. She left after 6 years and became a street sister working in Lourdes, Liverpool, Dublin before arriving in Belfast.

She met Fr Des and knew Springhill Community House was the place for her, over the next 40 years Noelle brought work opportunities, education and health awareness to the people of West Belfast and beyond, her work continues today.

She chose to live and work in Springhill and was a great advocate of Bach Flower remedies.

I know that she would be out on the front line during our current crisis advising people of the benefits of the remedies.

“We need, in every community, a group of angelic troublemakers”

This quote from fellow angelic troublemaker Bayard Rustin reminds me of our own angelic troublemaker Noelle.

Bayard Rustin was an American civil rights activist who was an adviser to Martin Luther King, Jr., and who was the main organiser of the March on Washington in 1963.

There are many stories of her civil and human rights activism, but a couple stand out. While driving in Belfast city centre she crossed a one-way system and the police fined her, she took the opportunity to raise awareness of strip searching in Armagh gaol. She refused to pay the fine in the hope it would go to court and she would be sent to Armagh. Either the authorities got wind of her plan or someone unknown paid the fine, but the penalties were dropped and she didn't get her day in court. But this just demonstrates what she was prepared to do to highlight human rights abuses.

On another occasion she started a boycott campaign against M&S who were making substantial donations to the tory party. On different days she would go to all the stores in Belfast, fill the trolley with non-perishable goods and proceed to the checkout, when all the goods went through the till she would refuse to pay and ask for a manager. In a loud voice she would tell the manager and anyone in close proximity that M&S were implicit in all that the tory government were doing as they were major donors.

In a similar vein she and others started a boycott of the Northern Bank, the slogan at the time was "the bank that doesn't like to employ Catholics". As part of the equality campaign business who had an atrocious record of employing Catholics were targeted and the Northern Bank was one of them. Individuals and community organisations were asked to close accounts with the bank in protest at their unfair employment practices and they did. After a lengthy international and domestic campaign fair employment legislation was introduced, although not perfect it was a start in the reversal of unfair employment practices against Catholics.

So you can't get any more angelic than a former nun who gave a life of service to the people of Ireland and beyond, some might call her a troublemaker, I prefer revolutionary.

Happy heavenly birthday Noelle.



Rita Walker RIP

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Rita Walker (née Curran) on 23rd December 2023.

Rita was one of the Curran sisters, the others being Mary (RIP) , Geraldine, Teresa and Lily who were great friends to Fr Des, Noelle and no strangers to Springhill Community House.

Rita was a good neighbour and friend to many in Springhill/Ballymurphy and beyond. Until November of this year she was deeply involved in the parish and community life of Corpus Christi parish as a Eucharistic Minister among other things. When she retired she was presented with a Belfast crystal plaque which said "with love and gratitude for Rita from Corpus Christi parish for her years of devoted service to the Lord, his Church and his people."

The plaque took pride of place in her home.

Rita was a tower of strength and courage as shown through her own health battles. When she lost her son Jim to suicide she helped and inspired others by founding the Suicide awareness and Support Group, who provide intervention services for those at risk of suicide and deliver bereavement support to those bereaved by suicide. The last event Rita attended was a few days before her passing at the tree of hope Christmas service in the garden of reflection in Springhill.

Although very weak she was determined to be there to show her support to all families bereaved by suicide.

Christmas was her favourite time of the year, so perhaps it is fitting that God called her home to be reunited with her daughter Jacqueline and her son Jim at this time. Our thoughts and prayers are with her children Raymond, Margaret, Michele and Tony, her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Her surviving sisters Geraldine, Teresa, Lily and her brother Joseph and wider family circle.

Rita shared this verse on the 50th anniversary of her daughter Jacqueline's death and the words are fitting today as her family and friends gather for her funeral.

Forget me not as time goes by,
For you can find me in the sky.
Forget me not for we're apart,
For you carry me within your heart.
Forget me not although I've gone,
For my memory will always live on.
Instead, remember me
In every special way,
Keep me close to your heart
We'll meet again one day.
St Pio Pray for her.



“Christ in the Rubble”

In Bethlehem all Christmas festivities were cancelled to mourn the death of more than 20,000 Palestinians killed in Gaza.

On Christmas eve, in the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church Bethlehem, Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac gave a powerful liturgy of lament, “Christ in the Rubble”.

At the altar is a nativity scene with the figure of baby Jesus in a keffiyeh, surrounded by rubble.

In Rev Isaac’s sermon he said “If Jesus were to be born today, he would be born under the rubble in Gaza.”

The nativity scene in Bethlehem brought back memories of Fr Des in the mid-seventies when he said if Jesus were born in Belfast now he would be born into a city of military occupation and army brutality.

He asked local artist Liam Andrews to paint the backdrop for the nativity scene with Jesus in a manger. Liam chose to include images of the everyday life of a military occupied Belfast.

The scenes depict: house raids, barbed wire, armoured tank, internment camps and army searches.



Just as Fr Des spoke to us about Jesus being one of us, Rev Isaac told his congregation that Jesus was at home with the “marginalized, the suffering, the oppressed, and displaced. This is his manger.” “He is in solidarity with us in our pain and brokenness.”

More than 20,000 people have been killed, 9,000 of those are children and 1.9 million Gazans have been displaced.

Rev Isaac described this as an a “annihilation” and called for the genocide to stop “This manger is our message to the world today – and it is simply this: this genocide must stop NOW. Let us repeat to the world: STOP this Genocide NOW. This is our call. This is our plea. This is our prayer. Hear oh God. Amen.”

Des would have been pleased to hear Rev Isaac call out the “complicity of the church” by it’s silence. Des too believed that the church had a moral responsibility to stand up against oppression and injustice and to stand on the side of the oppressed.

Let us pray for an end to the genocide and the senseless killing of innocent Palestinians.



Remembering Joe Drotter RIP



Ciaran Cahill shared this tribute to Joe a lifelong friend and supporter of Springhill Community House.

His former headmaster at Austin Prep, Dr James Hickey, said “ If you want to understand the meaning of Veritas (Truth), Unitas (Unity), Caritas (Charity) you need look no further” than Joe Drotter.

It is true to say that Joe’s early Augustinian education had a lasting impact on his life and work none more so than in Ireland.

Debs Lamby recalled the story of Joe’s first trip to Derry while a student in Cork in 1972. After hearing the media coverage of Bloody Sunday, Joe and three other students hitchhiked to Derry to see for themselves the destruction left behind by the British State.

They arrived at a well-known pub in the Bogside and were promptly sussed out by a few locals.

After confessing they had nowhere to stay they were welcomed into the Lamby and Duffy homes.

Deb’s recalled that they stayed for 10 days and “encountered a lot, one being the distinct smell and taste of tear gas.”

Deb’s remembered Joe returning to her family home to see how her parents were, and always bearing gifts for herself and other family members.

Even when her parents passed Joe kept in touch with the family visiting their home and always enquiring after them. Deb's said "he has been a huge part in my family and has watched us all grow up from we were babies and always kept in contact with us ,and for that I am so proud to call him MY ETERNAL FRIEND. Thank you for the memories and being part of our lives I will cherish your journey with us."

Joe made it his business to revisit Derry regularly to take part in the anniversary march and catch up with old friends he made over the years.

He also kept his connection with Cork where he volunteered with an organisation called 'Between' For over 30 years between delivered programmes to promote human relations and reconciliation with and between communities in the North of Ireland.

The Between House in Spurhill, Togher, Cork welcomed children and families from all over Ireland and provided much needed respite from the worst of the troubles. Joe gave of his time during the summer months to assist in the everyday running of the camp and I have no doubt contributed financially to keep the project running.

Joe loved everything Irish and those three core principles of Truth, Unity and Charity were at the heart of everything he did. He couldn't stand injustice and took every opportunity to expose the injustices perpetrated by the British in Ireland.

He had a long association with Springhill Community House and Fr Des. He was always interested in what was going on, always supportive, encouraging and helpful. When he was working with Cisco he used their matched gifting scheme, Cisco would match charitable donations by employees and Joe took great advantage of the scheme to generate even more income for Springhill Community House. He combined efforts with Cisco & Apple to have equipment donated to the project when it was setting up a new a computer suite in the 90's.

Joe was a regular visitor to the community house on his trips to Ireland calling in for a cuppa and chat with Fr Des.

I can recall one of those trips was during the Drumcree crisis.

The Orange Order insisted it should be allowed to march its "traditional route" to and from Drumcree Church through the Catholic areas and along the Garvaghy Road. The march was sectarian, triumphalist and supremacist, and residents wanted the march stopped.

In 1997, the RUC and British Army locked down the Catholic area and let the march through, citing loyalist threats to kill Catholics if it were stopped. This sparked widespread protests and from 1998 onward, the march was banned from Garvaghy Road. The army blocked the route with large steel, concrete and barbed-wire barricades.

Portadown was like to a war zone and under siege, no one except the media were allowed in. Joe came up with a plan to use his 'newly acquired media pass' to get himself and others through the RUC/Army lines right up to the barricades at Drumcree Church and it worked. Joe proceeded to video document the standoff

giving a running commentary as things unfolded. It would be interesting to see the archive of photos and videos he amassed while in Ireland.

He was never afraid to put himself in the front line to expose the truth about what was going on in Ireland.

Joe's truth, unity and charity wasn't confined to Ireland.

While on a trip to Vietnam in 2003 Joe became aware of the devastating effects of Agent Orange, a chemical used by the US military. Although its use stopped in the 1970s the dioxin contaminant continues to have harmful effects on the Vietnamese people causing deformities, cancer and serious health issues.

Joe decided that he needed to do something to help, he bought and converted a factory into the Tam Binh Centre a school for 20 physically disable children. He became an Emergency Medical Technician so that he could give basic medical care. Joe wanted to educate and train the children, many of whom were deaf, so that they would become productive members of society, helping them reach their full potential.

At the entrance to the school are two signs one with the name of the school "Tam Binh Centre" and the other "Tír na nÓg"

Joe explained "Tam Binh Center is the name of the school meaning peace of mind, but I consider the building to be Tír na nÓg from Irish mythology, - the Land of the Young, the Land of Eternal Youth. An island in the Atlantic where one never grows old and lives forever. Symbolically, these children will stay young "forever" - never to become adults and assume the burdens and responsibilities we all carry. And the Trinity knot is an ancient Celtic symbol, with several interpretations. One of which is very Buddhist-like, of birth-life-death and rebirth - as the knot itself is a continuous, never ending loop. Another school of thought sees the trinity knot as a more metaphysical concept where the three corners represent Mind, Body and Spirit - hopefully, what the children will develop for themselves at Tam Binh Center."

The school is going from strength to strength and hopes to build on its capacity to work with 75 children.

Joe continued to keep a close eye on events in Ireland with his regular visits until his last in 2022. Joe was diagnosed with cancer, It was clear that this was his final farewell trip and he used it to do a whistle stop tour from Dublin to Belfast and Derry to Westmeath visiting and saying goodbye to his many friends across Ireland.

When he returned home he continued communicating his displeasure at the "British Colonialists." He was distraught at the fact that two towns in the US were named after General Jeffery Amherst and I quote Joe "Amherst was a homicidal Brit maniac and it is unconscionable to still have 2 towns names after him. Amherst - who, knowing that the Native American Indians had no resistance to European germs, and died even from catching the common cold, Amherst sent over cholera-infested blankets as a "gift" - to the local tribes in Mass. and NH - and of course it wiped them out. Germ warfare compliments of the Brits. The depths of Brit evil know no bounds."

One of his last messages was about the Brits plundering and pillaging every country they colonised and their refusal to return what they stole, he shared this image of the British museum.

Welcome to the British Museum

Ground Floor: Pillage

1st Floor: Treasure

2nd Floor: Plunder

3rd Floor: Theft

4th Floor Swag

5th Floor: More stuff that doesn't belong to us.

He ended his message with Slan go Foill.

Joe was a true friend who was guided by the principles that life is to search for the ultimate truth, not alone, but among friends with love at the heart of every act and respect for each other. Always aware of the virtues of honesty, integrity, and compassion as fundamental to the way of life.

Veritas, Unitas and Caritas at its best.

Slán go fóill mo chara.

Our heartfelt condolences go to Joe's family and friends.

Springhill/Westrock Inquest.

This is the resumption of the inquest which are on track for completion of evidence before the legacy bill of shame deadline of the 1st may

We have supported families through their campaign for truth and justice and they remain resolute that they have:



We Never Gave Up - We Never stayed Quiet - We Spoke Up Against Injustice

Despite the death of Davey McCafferty they have vowed to see it through for him and their loved ones. We too will stand shoulder to shoulder with them on their journey.