

## West of Ireland as a place of pilgrimage

SIXTY tourism businesses from across the West and North West regions met with five European best practice Religious Heritage destinations in Castlebar.

The seminar, part of the European Union's Interreg Atlantic Area Programme, attracted over 100 participants including tourism businesses, local authorities, Ireland West Airport Knock, regional and local agencies and community groups.

Since 2008, Fáilte Ireland has been very proactively developing the West's religious tourism product.

The World Religious Tourism Association (2008) estimated that 200 million visitors engaged in pilgrimage journeys in the 1990s and, by 2000, numbers had increased to 240 million. Other estimates stated that faith based tourism serves some 300 million travellers and produces an estimated \$18 billion in revenue each year.

The opportunities lie within three segments. Sacred tourists - whose primary motivation for visiting a spiritual site is connected to their faith. Christian and cultural tourists - whose primary motivation will be to visit a spiritual site as part of a wider holiday experience.

Said a spokesperson: "We have wonderful religious heritage sites here in our region that are easily accessible by road, rail, regional airports and our international airport Ireland West Knock".

## Burglars are less active in Limerick

LIMERICK has recorded an 1.35% decrease in the incidence of burglary, according to the 2010 eircom PhoneWatch Burglary Report.

For the first time in nine years, Limerick has dropped out of the top five burglary hotspots list and is now ranked number seven.

According to figures published as part of the tenth annual eircom PhoneWatch Burglary Report, a staggering €700 million has been taken from Irish homes nationwide over the past decade.

Burglaries in Ireland have increased by 8.25% in the 12 months between June 2009 and June 2010.

For the first time in a decade the most common method of entry is via the front door (28% of all burglaries).

In addition to which, an alarming 85% of all burglaries now take place while people are at home - up from 80% in 2009.

The findings indicate that burglars are becoming increasingly opportunistic and individuals are not adequately securing their property while they are in the home.

The 2010 report also revealed that burglars no longer strike under the cover of darkness.

For the fourth year in a row, the most likely time of day to be burgled is between 12pm and 4pm (31%).

The 2010 report also revealed July as the most likely month to be burgled. For seven of the past 10 years, October to February has represented the most targeted time of year, which indicates that home owners should remain security aware as we move into the winter months.

# Shannon RC plans to keep head above water

By Rebekah Commans

## Ready to row out the boat for new members

A LANDMARK synonymous with the Limerick skyline is Shannon Rowing Club building on Sarsfield Bridge, where members are gearing up to re-establish the spacious and impressive building as a centre of activity and entertainment.

On a recent visit to the building, which to the onlooker appears to be floating on the river Shannon, the club's rich history shone like a beacon.

Like most other sporting organisations, Shannon RC is going through a difficult period, but it is all shoulders to the wheel to ride out rough waters and strengthen membership.

The plans for the building were drafted up by famous turn of the 20th century architects Clifford-Smith of London, and had originally won a competition for the construction of a clubhouse in

South Africa.

However, the blueprints were used by Goughs of Limerick to build the rowing club on Sarsfield Bridge, which was completed in 1905 and fitted out internally in early 1906 at a total cost of £10,000.

The walls are now adorned with the achievements of their members and each president, the first being WR Clery from 1866 to 1888, are listed on a plaque in the hallway.

Paul O'Dowd, voluntary events manager from Farranshone, whose grandfather and father, both named Gerry O'Dowd, were former presidents, explained that a recruitment drive is currently on for would-be rowers to sign up.

"We are recruiting for junior and novice rowers, as well as experienced oarsmen to return at intermediate level," said Paul.

"It's a tough time for everyone and we don't want to see the club, which has such an important role in Limerick's history, to fall by the wayside. We are hoping everyone will get involved to keep it afloat".

The success of their various crews is obvious throughout the building.

They took the national Senior Mens Eight title in 2007, Aoife Gilligan, Ardnacrusha, won the first ever female rowing scholarship to UCD, while Kenny McDonald's world silver medal has pride of place on the wall.

Honorary members include Michael Noonan TD and Judge Tom O'Donnell, while the club has visited by such legends as Alex Higgins, Ken Doherty and Jimmy White who have availed of the fantastic snooker facilities.

The club is deceptively spacious and includes a members bar, gym, conference room and function rooms that are available for hire.

Jazz is revived in Limerick on a monthly basis when the club becomes a Speakeasy, with live music followed by a local DJ, and the nights have proved hugely popular.

Funds raised through jazz nights and function room hire serve a purpose, with the money pumped into the rowing club, which has been long established as central to the sport in Limerick.

# Moyross looks after its horses, claim

by Marie Hobbins

## Council say no licences have been issued

MANY horse owners in Moyross care passionately about their animals and do not act irresponsibly or break the law, claims a long-time resident, reacting to recent media reports on the disturbing level of abuse.

With Limerick having the highest number of untagged, wandering horses, the resident, who asked not to be identified, said many in Moyross, had done everything requested of them by Limerick City Council.

"The owners I refer to worked very well with the council when they thought it would help provide a horse project for Moyross - at that time, city council asked the owners to tag their horses, have them insured, keep them off the green areas and away from the houses, all of which the owners did.

"Now, however, there is no money available for the horse project and while this is a big disappointment, it seems also that these owners, who have tried to do things the right way, are now treated the same as those who let their horses roam free and who show no responsibility for them". City council confirmed that as no licences have been issued, nobody is entitled to own a horse in the city,

However, the resident insists that many owners in Moyross have sought licences from the council.

"They have been refused, even though they can prove their horses are secure and safe on farmland, city council land and away from the housing estate and its green areas". Insisting that the owners look after their animals very well and pay fees to vets, blacksmiths and for feeding and grooming, as well as for grassing, the resident says they frequently have to sacrifice other things in order to look after their animals.

"Most are unemployed or on social welfare and have many other problems in their lives but in many ways, their horses and the day-to-day interest they have in the horses' well being, keep them away from trouble, which can only be a good thing".

Referring to the aborted horse project, he says that with the economic problems facing the country, perhaps the council could "extend an olive branch to these horse owners, meet with them and on proof of care and security, as well as responsibility for their horses, licences could be granted.

"As a society we play up the bad and play down the good - maybe we should encourage the young people involved to do the right thing and keep them on the right path - this might work to everyone's advantage. "Sometimes, it could be better to try and work with what we've got than try to turn it all around".

