

PRESS RELEASE

Bethany Home Children's Graves discovered

Former residents call for memorial at gravesite

Bethany Home Survivors Group launched

Wednesday 26th May, 12 noon, at MOUNT JEROME Cemetery

A Dublin Cemetery has been discovered as the gravesite of forgotten children from the Bethany Home Dublin. Bethany Home was associated with the Church of Ireland and Church of Ireland missionary society, the Irish Church missions to Roman Catholics. It operated in Blackhall Place, Dublin, from 1921-34 and in Orwell Road, Rathgar, until it closed in 1972.

The Bethany Home was a combined maternity home, children's home and place of detention for women convicted of petty theft, prostitution, and infanticide and birth concealment.

The home and the religious ethos that sustained and ran it was part of what James Smith of Boston College in his book, *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment* (2007), termed an Irish 'containment culture' that focussed on single women and effectively criminalised childbirth out of wedlock.

In 1935-36 Bethany Home Dublin was required to register child mortality under the Maternity Act of 1934. Over 40 children were recorded as dying in a period when the home had 19 babies resident on average per month. The anonymous information was extracted from Bethany Home minutes, by Griffith College Dublin academic, Niall Meehan (087 6428671). The unnamed children were then independently traced by Meehan to Mount Jerome Cemetery, Harold's Cross, Dublin, most of whom are in adjoining unmarked common graves.

Notes on former Bethany residents follows – Leinster & McQuoid only will be at Mt Jerome 26 May.

DEREK LEINSTER – Irish Mobile from 19 May - 087 0940085

Former resident, DEREK LEINSTER, born in the Bethany Home in 1941, who was recently presented with the information, has organised a short meeting at the gravesite for 12 noon, Wednesday 26th May.

At the grave site Leinster will formally launch the BETHANY HOME SURVIVORS GROUP. He said,

“This is the first Bethany Home gravesite to be discovered. It is typical in that it is unmarked, unnoticed and uncared for. This could have been me. I was not expected to live when I was hospitalised from 24 August 1944 to 7 January 1945, suffering, aged three, from Pertussis, Bronchial Pneumonia, Diphtheria and Enteritis”.

“The Bethany Home was a dangerous place for a child”, said Leinster, who today requires regular treatment for Myeloproliferative disorder in the haematology Department of St Cross, hospital, Rugby. His continuing medical problems are common among former residents. Leinster was ‘adopted’ informally in 1945 by a dysfunctional family in County Wicklow, where he was unwanted, abused, starved and left to fend for himself.

Leinster emigrated at age 18 to England illiterate and penniless. Leinster completed two volumes of autobiography, Hannah’s Shame (2005) and Destiny Unknown (2008), about his attempts to make a life, about his long and successful marriage to Carol, and his pioneering attempts to trace his birth parents in the 1960s. Leinster said,

“I received no help in my efforts from the state and mainly indifference from my former Church, the Church of Ireland. That is why I want these children to be remembered. Former residents like PATRICK ANDERSON-McQUOID and I are going to raise money for a proper memorial for the children and I hope the churches that were so keen to claim them spiritually but neglected them physically, emotionally and subsequently, will contribute generously”.

PATRICK ANDERSON-McQUOID - landline - 071 9640980 Mobile 086 3486261

Another former resident present will be PATRICK ANDERSON-McQUOID, an artist who now lives in County Leitrim. He was exported by Bethany to an evangelical Christian family in Northern Ireland. He said,

“Patrick was not my name originally, it was Cecil, but as far as the people I was sent to were concerned I was ‘Paddy from the Home’. The name stuck’.

After Patrick’s adopted mother died when he was 13 years old, he left home at 15 years old on his own and travelled to live in England. On returning to live in Ireland in 1972 he worked with the Irish Ballet Company in Cork City before being the Founder and Artistic Director of the Triskel Arts in the city.

TOM McCLEAN - SAS Parachute Regiment - rowed Atlantic (1969) – planted Union Jack on Rockall (1985) – born Bethany, sent to English orphanage aged 3

Bethany Home exported many children to Northern Ireland and to England, including to Bernardos.

The first man to row the Atlantic, who landed in Mayo in July 1969, was former British paratrooper and SAS soldier, TOM McCLEAN, who left the British Army that year. He lived in Bethany Home and with one of its foster families until he was three. After his

fostering arrangement broke down, in 1947, aged three and a half, McClean was sent to Fegans, a 'tough' evangelical orphanage in Stony, Stratford, England, where 'the religious training was rigorous. We had Bible classes every day, twice on Sunday'. Though reportedly regularly beaten McClean claimed in his 1983 book, *Rough Passage*, Fegan's staff were 'kindly but very strict'. McClean took a number of labouring jobs after he left aged 15, before joining the Parachute Regiment, aged 17 and a half, whose training he thought 'like a kids tea party after Fegans'. In 1985 McClean planted a Union Jack flag on Rockall Island, and stayed there for 40 days to press Britain's claim against Ireland's to the uninhabited rock (in the Atlantic Ocean north-west of Donegal). It is only in recent years, prompted by his children, that McClean has fully traced his roots. He said in 2010 (*Irish Times*), "I claimed Rockall for England when I was Irish!" He observed, "I'm an Irishman, sounding like an Englishman, living in Scotland! My mother, my father, my aunts and my uncles – every single person in my family going back generations is Irish. It's quite a story, with Ireland and England and everything."

BABIES FOR EXPORT

In the 1950s Bethany home participated in the export of children to the US, a trade in children that the author of *Banished Babies*, Mike Millotte wrote had a 'racist subtext' – the children were guaranteed white and, in the case of Bethany, also Protestant.

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NIALL MEEHAN (087 6428671)

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