

PETERSWELL ICA

By Maresa Burke

Peterswell ICA Guild was officially opened on October 22nd 1986 by Ms. Rita Hannon, President of Galway Federation. This meeting took place in the meeting room of the Joe Cooley Hall (which originally was the classroom of the old school). There were over 30 women in attendance – so one can appreciate the amount of chitchat, tete a tete and consultation that took place. At that time the only heating facility was the open fireplace and unfortunately for us the chimney smoked, not very pleasant for us but we survived – plenty of passive smoke for the night!

However after a lot of consternation and attempted election of officers Celia Farrell was elected first President. Celia, with the support of her committee strove to familiarise all of us with the constitution of ICA- promotion of the lover of home and the arts of peace, preservation of local crafts and traditions, education, encouraging the use of the Irish language, instructions in hand crafts home making and gardening.

ICA was good for all of us in a rural community. Each month it brought together a large proportion of women from Peterswell and adjoining area. It brought the community closer and women worked hard to maintain this structure so that all would benefit. The teaching of handcrafts, flower arranging and cookery classes were always well attended and proved most popular.

Over the years ICA showed special interest in providing classes for the school children. Crafts, painting, linedancing and Irish dancing were some of the summer camps organised and supervised by the women. We were very fortunate to have Brian Holroyd artist from Ennis teach the children skills of water paints and painting on canvas with oil paints. Brian has been very successful since and is now a renowned artist. Also in the summer of 1995 Seanchai Eddie Lenihan from Crusheen (who has made several RTE appearances) held a captive audience with his lovely technique of story telling-all about fairies in the village and leprechauns in the forest. The children loved him, the smaller ones not too impressed; yet he was a winner even with the mothers.

ICA continued to flourish. Some members had the opportunity to attend An Grianan for specialist courses. New presidents were elected, Maresa Burke, Breed Devine, Julie Fahy, Mary Cooney and Maggie Brady continued to serve with elected committees.

In the late 1990's times were changing and there was great demand for women to return to the workforce. This affected the time and commitment to ICA and membership decreased. It was with great regret that Peterswell

ICA ceased in spring of 2001. After 15 years of happy membership we were no more.