

€30k for garda hit with stone 'the size of melon'

A GARDA who suffers from tinnitus since he was hit on the head five years ago with a stone 'the size of a melon' has been awarded €30,000 damages in the High Court.

Garda John O'Connor, 29, told the court that he was injured in August 2011, when he was attached to Buncrana Garda Station and had been on public order patrol in Clonmany, Co. Donegal, at the area's annual music festival.

Garda O'Connor, who sued the Minister for Public Expenditure, said a number of people had been involved in a disturbance on Main Street and he directed one of the main instigators to leave the area.

The man refused and became aggressive. Following several

By **Saurya Cherfi**

warnings, the man was pepper-sprayed and then restrained by Garda O'Connor and a colleague.

Garda O'Connor told his barrister, Bríd O'Flaherty, during a Garda compensation hearing, that before Garda assistance arrived, the crowd in the area grew larger and became very hostile towards the officers.

Garda O'Connor was struck on the head by the stone when missiles, including glasses and bottles, were thrown at him and his colleagues.

The court heard that during further arrests that night, he had also been kicked on the right side of his face by another man.

Judge Bernard Barton was told that Garda O'Connor woke up the

next morning with severe pain to the right side of his face and in his right ear. He had also suffered bruising to his face.

Garda O'Connor, now based at Swinford Garda Station, Co. Mayo, had later attended his GP, complaining of persistent tinnitus (a ringing or buzzing in the ears) since the assault.

The court heard the tinnitus was ongoing and that Garda O'Connor needed to avoid loud noise situations.

Ms O'Flaherty said Garda O'Connor was not able to attend football matches any more.

Awarding him €30,000, Judge Barton said that although Garda O'Connor was not suffering from a severe type of tinnitus, he was satisfied that it constituted a nuisance in his life.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

My son found beauty and truth last week

REGULAR readers will know that I spent last week at the Edmund Burke International Summer School in Co. Westmeath. The event was held at the magnificent Bloomfield House Hotel on Lough Ennell, and participants travelled there from all across the globe.

My friend, the English philosopher Sir Roger Scruton, was the main attraction. Other speakers included French historian Alexandra Slaby, Irish commentator and former senator Eoghan Harris, and eminent academics Vincent Twomey and Gerard Casey. Our mission was to provide a forum in which ideas could freely circulate, one in which people could speak the truth without restraint.

Too often in our society people feel constrained in what they can say. Even in our universities, places which once served the cause of truth, students are pressurised to conform to the prevailing dogmas. That is why 'little platoons' like this summer school are so important, for it is only in such contexts that students can speak their mind without feeling intimidated.

The students who travelled to the midlands came to hear a message of hope. Sir Roger showed them how to defend Western civilisation from its internal and external enemies. I spoke about the meaning of home, identity and memory at a time when so many feel homeless. Dr Slaby's course on Irish history showed just how remarkable our story is.

Very quickly, it became apparent that this was no ordinary conference. For most of us, it was, in the words of Joaquin Cruz from Mexico, a 'life-changing' experience. At first, we gathered as a school, but we ended as a family. Our students spanned the generations, yet in each other they found common cause. They were intelligent, articulate and passionate. Most of all, they were open to new ideas – even when those ideas undermined their old convictions.

We welcomed loyal readers of this newspaper such as Joe and Gaye Casey, the editor of The European Conservative magazine Alvino-Mario Fantini, and wonderful young students from Ireland, Poland, Sweden, Mexico, Britain and the US. Colin Black and Liz Holmes, whom Colin described as the 'septuagenarians of the school', gave freely of their wisdom. Canadian writer and expert on the art of love, Zan Perrion, blessed the school with colour and grace.

In the thick of it all was my eldest son David, a boy who has grown up watching his father write books about Roger Scruton. That is why I could not deny him the chance to spend a week in the company of the real thing. In sitting through each session, and in partaking of all the events, he discovered the true meaning of joy.

We do no service to children in

denying them access to the world of art, culture, beauty and ideas. David is only 11 years of age, and yet he was intoxicated from beginning to end. On the banks of Lough Ennell, he caught a glimpse of something which will, I hope, change his perception forever. Back home, he is attempting to read Sir Roger's and my books, attempting to hold on to those precious ideals in whose sacred glow we dwell at our best.

It was an extraordinary combination of people, all of whom were there to learn and to freely share their insights. Over dinner, the conversations continued, and did not cease until the mid-summer sun finally descended below the lake. These people were far from home and yet, in that gorgeous place, they found a home away from home.

'It is both a comforting and inspiring thing to experience confirmation... that we are not alone.' Those are the words of one participant Van Parkman, an American student at Trinity College. In saying this, Van captured the general feeling of everyone involved in the summer school.

We arrived as a diverse group of people, but what we discovered as the week progressed far exceeded all our expectations. We had found firm friends who share our concerns about the general state of society. We found good and kind people, all of whom are committed to the preservation of our common home.

BY the end of the week, it was no longer a summer school. If anything, it was like a great family gathering with Sir Roger as its father. And when it was time to depart, there was that palpable sense of loss and longing which all families feel following a reunion.

When Roger Scruton, Alexandra Slaby and I planned this event, I could not have anticipated just how successful it would become. I now realise there is a real hunger for places to which people can go and genuinely engage with ideas and those of like mind. That the universities no longer seem to serve that pivotal function makes ventures such as ours all the more necessary and urgent.

The fact that David has not stopped asking intelligent questions about life, love and learning since leaving Mullingar is a powerful tribute to our little platoon. For our purpose was to ask what must be done so that the gifts of our culture and civilisation can be transmitted to his generation and beyond. That he now knows what is at stake is thanks not only to what he heard, but to the marvellous people he met. I am glad to announce that David has already booked his place at next year's event. His world has been transfigured and he longs for more.

In the heart of the Irish countryside, he finally understood why his father thinks as he does and why he is anything but alone.

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