

BALLINAMORE 44

The story of athletics activities and achievements
in Ballinamore Post Primary Schools 1964 - 2008

Padraig Griffin



Colin Griffin Irish Schools Senior
3000m Walk Champion June 2000

Price €8.00

FOREWORD

It is a great honour to be asked to contribute a foreword to this publication. Pdraig Griffin has completed a wonderful and very compelling history of athletics in Ballinamore Post Primary Schools. It is a marvellous privilege to say that we have known every single one of the people whose names adorn the following pages. Everyone mentioned and some who are not spent countless hours and lonely miles as they represented themselves, their families and our schools with pride and distinction on the tracks of Ireland and further afield. Athletics, because of it's nature, is a lonely sport and schools athletics in particular, because of it's season is not for the fainthearted. For most of the athletes listed over the period of this history showers were natural, outdoors and far from warm.

With typical modesty Pdraig Griffin has understated his own personal role. The observant reader will notice two and a half lines of text summarising his contribution. Forty four years of total dedication to his chosen sport of athletics could not be reflected in forty words. Pdraig Griffin was and is the heartbeat of athletics in Ballinamore for every single one of those years. He introduced the sport to the school following his arrival in 1964. He nurtured and coached it in a gaelic football stronghold to develop the natural talent that existed to provincial, national and international standard. In doing so he has brought joy and heart-break, fitness and fulfilment to several generations and countless numbers of students from Ballinamore and surrounding areas.

His contribution has been enormous and his successes measured only by the enjoyment of those he introduced to the sport. His organisational skills have been tested from Plunketts' field to Munich and Montreal in 1972 and 1980 as Irish Athletics Olympic Team Coach. He has been BLE Director of Coaching and President of BLE. He has long associated with Community Games at local and national level and above all he has coached in muddy windswept fields and roads on bitterly cold days and nights over the entire forty four years- and still going. In 1979 he was elected the Leitrim Guardian Person of the Year.

Pdraig's wife Patricia herself an international athlete now, along with others, shares the workload and they in turn have transmitted their passion to their own family with all four children, Grainne, Niamh, Ronan and Colin active and successful athletes. Colin has recently represented Ireland in Racewalking at the Beijing Olympic Games and with his best years still ahead is already preparing for the London Olympic Games in 2012. We in Ballinamore Post Primary School wish him well.

Pdraig, we thank you for all the hard work and dedication which you have brought to Athletics, Sports Hall fundraising, telephone campaigns, road upgrading and your thirty years teaching in our school and in later years as Director of Carrick on Shannon Education Centre.

The history of schools athletics with it's photographs, texts and records are an invaluable contribution to the history of our schools. Like all such publications this will be appreciated even more in the years to come. We wish you well in your retirement and continued success in whatever projects your active mind will pursue in the years ahead.

BRENDAN BURNS

PADRAIG LEYDEN

Principals Ballinamore Post Primary Schools

December 2008

INTRODUCTION

This is not the history of Ballinamore Athletic Club, that will have to await another occasion. Neither is it a history of post primary education in Ballinamore. An occasion may arise in which such productions might be appropriate. What is being offered is a brief outline of the story of athletics in Ballinamore second level schools over forty four years and items which relate to it or put it into context.

This is an appropriate time for such a production. Forty years ago this year the three post primary schools in Ballinamore entered a ground breaking experiment in co-operation known as "common enrolment" which has been a great success and enabled the children of the area to have the benefits of comprehensive school education over subsequent years. That year also a third year student of the school, Eddie Leddy, set a record never equalled when he won the Irish Schools Intermediate and Senior Cross Country titles on the same day. This student went on to represent Ireland in the Olympic Games of 1972 and 1976. This year another past student Colin Griffin represented Ireland in the Olympic Games in Beijing.

The "Leitrim Observer" files going back over those years has been a major source of information in putting this together. Additional material has been drawn from the files of the "Anglo Celt" and "Longford Leader" as well as some national newspapers and school publications. Outside assistance has been provided by former and current officials of Connacht Schools Athletics and particularly Padraig Callaghan, P J Leddy, Michael Leydon, Matt Flesk and Mary Barrett. My thanks also to Padraig Leyden, Principal Fatima & Felim's Secondary School, for his assistance with this publication and for contributing the foreword. My thanks also for the help given by Brendan Burns, various members of the teaching staff, school secretary Mary Duignan and the staff of Ballinamore Library.

It is important that records and particularly photographic records are not lost so that provides another reason for this publication. Quite a lot of detail is given of early activities in order to ensure that as many participants as possible are mentioned, Unfortunately, it has not been possible to mention everybody who represented the school simply because the full records do not exist.

This publication is dedicated to all who competed for the school whether mentioned or not as well as to all who helped to make forty four years of Ballinamore School athletics possible. On this occasion also we remember those who were part of this project and are now deceased.

Padraig Griffin

December 2008

*LEABHARLANN CHONTAE
LIATROMA
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THE SUMMER OF 1964

Weatherwise the summer of 1964 was among the better ones in recent years. In the United States President Lyndon B Johnson allowed his country to be dragged into the escalating Vietnam conflict. Relations between Greeks and Turks on the island of Cyprus were noticeably deteriorating. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev went on holidays and found his job gone when he got back. American singer Jim Reeves died in a private plane crash at the end of July and by the end of the year Longford singer Larry Cunningham had achieved everlasting fame by marketing a tribute to the dead singer in voice identical to that which had made the American famous in the expanding music world.

Here at home the first signs of prosperity resulting from the success of the First Programme for Economic Expansion were beginning to show. Taoiseach Sean Lemass indicated in a speech that education was a priority and within a few years provision had been made for free second level education and school transport so that the number of children availing of second level education soared to new heights. Education Minister Patrick Hillery introduced a new concept with the announcement of four "comprehensive" schools to supplement the service provided by voluntary secondary and Vocational Schools.

BALLINAMORE AT THAT TIME

Ballinamore had lost its railway station in March 1959 and with it went about sixty jobs which were the heart of the local economy. The town, however, did not remain in economic mourning for long. Six local community leaders, Walter P Toolan, Pat Joe Reynolds, John Joe McGirl, Fr John Young C C, Michael Creamer and Patrick Travers persuaded Leitrim County Council to purchase the site from CIE and subsequently purchased it from the Council for the purpose of establishing a Boys' Secondary School. Ownership of the property was vested in the Diocese of Kilmore and Bishop Austin Quinn appointed Fr Francis J McKiernan, a native of Aughawillan who was teaching in St Patrick's College, Cavan to set up the school. Sean Sweeney, a native of Killargue, was appointed as second teacher and the first class was enrolled in September 1962. The following September Gerry Brady, a native of Longford, joined the staff and in September 1964 another Longfordman Peter Duignan and Mayo born Pdraig Griffin brought the staff to five as a further class enrolled now showed that the school had two third year, one second year and one first year class. Fr Tom Keogan from east Cavan who was later to be principal for a quarter of a century joined the staff two years later. Later in the decade they were joined by Peter Curran (RIP) from Carrigallen.

Like many similar towns Ballinamore now had three separate and unrelated schools. The Mercy Sisters had come to Ballinamore in 1871 and for many years had run a very successful primary school which became a "secondary top" in 1950 enabling girls to study for the Intermediate Certificate, the forerunner of the present Junior Certificate. In 1954 a new Secondary School called Mean Scoil Fatima was opened and Ballinamore native Sr Marie de Lourdes Sharkey was appointed principal.

Ballinamore also had a Vocational School under the County Leitrim Vocational Education Committee. This was originally set up in 1941. Unlike the position in secondary schools where students paid a moderate fee for tuition Vocational School education was free and its principal aim was to provide a general education with emphasis on manual skills. By autumn 1964 the school was now on its third and permanent site where it is today and under its third Principal, Patrick Christopher Gallogly who had been appointed in 1956.

On arriving to join the staff of St Felim's College after teaching part time for a year in St Joseph's College, Nuns'Island, Galway as part of the Higher Diploma in Education programme the first thing one noticed was the quietness during schooltime. It took some time to adjust to this and to the difference of scale in moving from over five hundred students in the severely confined area around that centre city school and less than eighty junior students in the relatively open spaces adjacent the Ballinamore College.

During that October the 1964 the Olympic Games took place in Tokyo and there was some limited pre recorded television coverage, particularly in areas such as Ballinamore where British television could be accessed. It seemed a good time to introduce athletics to the students. Apart from the occasional local sports meeting there was little tradition of athletics competition in the area. Back in the early 1920s a Tipperaryman called Bill Britton had served in the Munster & Leinster (now AIB) Bank in Ballinamore and was Ireland's leading hammer thrower prior to double Olympic Champion Pat O Callaghan. Britton had been transferred to Cavan before he won the British AAA title in 1926 and in 1930 at inaugural Empire (now Commonwealth) Games in Ontario he became the first Irish medal winner when he took the silver medal in the hammer.

This story concerns only St Felim's College for the first four years. During that time the College consisted of two parallel buildings separated by an unpaved yard which had been used by the railway and open to the town square. The block which now joins these buildings and fronts the square was officially opened by then Education Minister Pdraig Faulkner in January 1970.

The current sportsfield was an undeveloped area of typical railway related wasteground covered with black shale and remained so until developed for current use in 1977.

HOW THE TRAINING BEGAN

The first group training took place on the adjoining "Plunketts' Field", the lower part of now houses the Sports Hall and then kindly made available to us for the training by the late Tony Plunkett. It was unsuitable for competitive racing so the showfield at the top of Church St was made available by the late Tony Maguire who took a keen interest in our progress.

At that time and for a few years afterwards the school operated a five and a half day week finishing at lunchtime on Saturday and in the case of St Felim's there was provision for games on Wednesday afternoon. Peter Duignan, himself an accomplished footballer, took football on that day but as yet and for some time the school did not enter existing provincial competitions.

The very first race took place in October 1964 with thirty nine students, a huge proportion of the eligible number, taking part in an Under 15 race over a mile. The "Leitrim Observer" reported that the winner was Thomas J McManus from Templeport from Sean Flanagan of Garadice, Joseph Geoghegan of Ballyduff, John Ellis of Fenagh, Peter Martin Dolan of Derrada and Sean Callaghan of Aughawillan.

The next race soon afterwards had Christy Foley of Gortvagh as winner from T J McManus, Pat Ferguson of Kiltygerry, Joe McGovern of Cloone, Joe Geoghegan and Sean Flanagan who also won the Under 14 award. In the Over 16 two miles race the winner was Thomas P McManus of Derrada from Thomas Joe Harvey of Aughnasheelin, Pat Joe Leddy of Gubbs, Brendan Burns of Clenaghoo, Thomas Joseph Flanagan of Aughawillan and Paul Maguire of Ballyconnell.

The third and final internal race was held in November and the "Leitrim Observer" introduced a report by stating "Cross Country running, an athletic sport almost unknown in this part of the country up to a short time ago, has gained immense popularity in the Ballinamore area particularly with the schoolboys". The winner of the two mile event was Pat Ferguson, followed by Joe McGovern, Thomas J McManus, Kieran McGovern of Cloone, Michael Finnegan of Ballyconnell and Joe Geoghegan. The Under 14 award went to Finnegan and the Under 13 to Peter Martin Dolan with Michael McTague of Church St winning the prize raffled among the other participants.

This was the final internal race. When in future years trials or indeed training sessions were required they were generally held on the road at Ardrum and Aghadark as girls had become involved in the latter years of the decade. After 1978 it was possible to hold any such trials in the all weather playing field beside St Felim's College.

READY FOR COMPETITION

Noel P Henry was an employee of the Northern Bank in Lanesboro. He had been born in Drumshanbo and after taking part in a number of team sports he took up running. By the early 1960s he was one of the top distance runners in Ireland and won the NACA National Marathon in 1963. On Sunday November 22nd 1964 he organised two road races in Kenagh, Co Longford, not far from Lanesboro. We used a few old maroon vests brought from Galway after the UCG club changed their kit in 1963 so in this way maroon became the colour of the club vest. Four runners were brought to Kenagh to compete in the race over a mile.

It was the first involvement of Ballinamore in external competitive athletics. The Sports Log in the "Longford Leader" of November 28th 1964 included a short report which stated that local runner Michael Wall was an easy winner. It went on to say "Interesting feature of this race was the good showing of the newcomers from the newly formed St Felim's club in Ballinamore, Co Leitrim " The results given showed that Thomas J Mc Manus finished fourth and Thomas P McManus fifth. The other two runners were Sean Flanagan and Christy Foley. Noel Henry himself won the accompanying fifteen mile race.

Sunday January 24th 1965 is remembered by many as the day on which Britain's wartime leader Sir Winston Churchill died. For us it was also the day on which we made our debut in major competition when a team of Under 14 boys competed in an open cross country race at Birchgrove, Ballinasloe. Michael McTague was first finisher in eighteenth position followed by Sean Flanagan (23), Gerard McKiernan (24), M. J. Finnegan (29) to complete a scoring quartet with 94 points which gave us fourth position behind St Mary's, Laytown (12), Garbally College (33) and Tuam CBS with 74 points. The other two members of the team were John Ellis and Declan Quinn.

INTER SCHOOL ACTIVITY BEGINS

There were four second level schools in Carrick on Shannon at this time. They included a vocational school and an all girls Marist boarding school. The other two schools were the Presentation Brothers Boys day school and the co-ed lay Rosary High School. In early February a friendly cross country contest between the two Carrick on Shannon schools and St Felim's took place in the showgrounds in Carrick on Shannon and was won by the Presentation team with their Joe Feely first, T.P. McManus second and P J Leddy third. Soon afterwards a new inter schools competition for a trophy presented by the Smithwick Brewery was held at the same venue and was won by St Felim's with 69 pts, from Rosary High School (71), Presentation College (72), Sligo Grammar School (147), Bishop Hodson Grammar School, Elphin (174) and Mohill Vocational School which finished incomplete.

A further warmup competition was held in the grounds of St Patrick's College, Cavan, where the hosts won the junior competition 21-64. The St Felim's placings were – Michael Tighe (8), Joe McGovern (9), Declan Quinn (10), Michael Finnegan (11), Peter Martin Dolan (12) and Seamus Creamer (13). In the senior event over two miles the visitors did better with P.J. Leddy winning from T.P.McManus, Pat Ferguson (9), T.J.Harvey (10), Kieran McGovern (11), Brendan Burns (12), Christy Foley (13) and Peter Harvey (17). The team score was St Pat's 71, St Felim's 75.

INTO CONNACHT COMPETITION

All was now set for the school's debut in official Connacht Schools competition with the Cross Country Championship down for decision at Tuam Racecourse on the evening of Wednesday March 10th. In 1961 the Connacht Schools Athletics Association introduced a cross country competition to be held in March prior to the track and field in May which latter competition had been in existence since 1937. As interest at this early stage was virtually confined to a number of Galway schools it was held midweek and at 5.30.p.m. An All Ireland was introduced in 1964 and held that year in the grounds of Garbally College, Ballinasloe.

Connacht had introduced a new Intermediate (Under 17) event for 1965 at their AGM held in St Jarlath's College one evening in mid October 1964. The makeup of the attendance provided a major contrast with recent years and with all the other school representatives being either priests or religious brothers one almost felt a little out of place. Today the makeup of the AGM still held in mid October but nowadays in St Colman's College, Claremorris, is entirely lay and generally more than fifty per cent female. The last religious involved, a priest from St Jarlath's College by name of Fr Ronnie Boyle, retired from the position of treasurer almost ten years ago. At national level only one religious, Fr Ailbe O Murchu of Franciscan College Gormanston, now continues in administration.

The St Felim's teachers brought competitors to Tuam Racecourse in their own cars. This was the case in respect of all competitions, athletics, football or otherwise and also in the case of non schools competitions. The first government grant aid to sport, announced in May 1969 and implemented in spring 1970, was still some time away. In our case money to provide food and entry fees was raised by film shows and other such local activities supported by the students. It was not much different in the vast majority of schools.

It was a great breakthrough to win the Connacht Senior title on the first occasion out. P. J. Leddy ran in the senior race. On a very windy evening he made light of the three large laps of Tuam Racecourse to record a decisive victory. The boy who finished second was subsequently disqualified for missing out the middle lap. Having rested behind one of the large jumps he joined the race behind Pat Joe in the last lap and was of course reported to those in charge by competitors who saw him join the event in front of them.

The Intermediate team finished fifth with 92 points behind Garbally College (26), Tuam CBS "A" (46), St Jarlath's College (77), Tuam CBS "B" 77 with Kieran McGovern winning a medal. The Senior team was seventh with 130 points behind Garbally (38), Tuam CBS "A" (43), St Joseph's, Galway (57). In this event Thomas P McManus also qualified for a medal. The team results in cross country are obtained by aggregating the positions of the top four finishers of the team so that the team with the lowest aggregate wins the competition.

As a result of winning the Connacht title P J Leddy qualified to run in the All Ireland Schools Cross Country Championship in Belfield (UCD) two weeks later and there he finished seventeenth.

We competed in the Regional Qualifying track and field competition in the grounds of St Mary's College, Galway on Saturday May 22nd. The athletes who competed included Michael McTague, Gerard McKiernan, Michael Tighe, Michael Finnegan, P J Leddy, Christy Foley, Joe McGovern, Tommy Joe Harvey, Kieran McGovern, Brendan Flynn, Pat Ferguson and Peter Harvey. The Galway City Regional was probably the toughest of the three (Garbally College and Claremorris being the others) to qualify competitors for the Connacht Finals in Duggan Park, Ballinasloe, on Thursday May 27th. P J Leddy qualified in the 880 yards intermediate and the senior three miles. Brendan Flynn qualified in the Intermediate Long Jump B competition and Kieran McGovern in the 880 yards B.

In Duggan Park, Ballinasloe, where the twenty seventh Connacht Schools Athletics Championships were held Brendan Flynn took second in the Long Jump and P J Leddy 5th in the 880 and fourth in the three miles behind Peter Kenny of Garbally College who set a new record of 16.02.6. Leddy's time of 16.10.6 was also inside the old record. Kieran McGovern was fifth in the 880 B competition. There was such interest among the students that a busload of supporters travelled to Ballinasloe.

During May of 1965 an Athletic Club was officially established in Ballinamore and affiliated to the National Athletic and Cycling Association of Ireland. Paddy Moran, one of the teachers in the Vocational School, served as honorary secretary of the club for many of the early years. A very successful Open Sports which incorporated a Leitrim Primary Schools Championship for a Trophy presented by the Carrick on Shannon based Gilmartin Cash & Carry was held in mid June. An Inter Primary Schools Relay for a Trophy presented by P J Reynolds T D is, like the Gilmartin Trophy, still competed for in the county primary schools championships. A feature of the Sports was an exhibition of pole vaulting by three top class competitors from Galway. Guests at the Sports were Connacht NACA President F r Kevin Ryle and Secretary Ronnie Long. In this way a memorable first year for school athletics came to an end.

1965/66

Ballinamore hosted the Smithwick Trophy competition at Ardrum on March 2nd. Here Eddie Leddy who was then a student of Ballinamore Vocational School emerged for the first time taking third behind brother P J and Henry Rowan of Summerhill College. Pat Ferguson finished fifth and St Felim's retained the Trophy with 27 points with Grange Vocational School (39) second taking the Brown & Nolan Trophy for the best Vocational School and Ballinamore Vocational School (79) third. The St Felim's team were P J Leddy, Thomas J McManus, Kieran McGovern, Pat Ferguson, Brian McKiernan and Noel Crossan.

The contest between St Patrick's College, Cavan, and St Felim's took place in Ardrum on February 16th. Frank Brady won the Junior race for the visitors with Michael McTague second and Martin Brennan third. The visitors won the team race 37-41. While Eddie Leddy of Ballinamore V S won the Intermediate race the strong visitors team won 10-41. P J Leddy won the senior event with Pat Ferguson third and the hosts were successful 16-22 in the team race.

In the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships in Tuam P J Leddy retained his senior title with his team sixth while Michael McTague won the new Junior title and the team were third. The Intermediate team finished ninth. Junior "B" medals were won by Martin Brennan, Michael Mullen and Killian McGoldrick.

In the All Ireland in Belfield P J Leddy finished fourth behind Donal Walsh of North Monastery, Noel Forrestal of Tullamore CBS and Des McCormack of Colaiste Mhuire.

Six athletes were brought to the North Connacht track & field regional in Claremorris. P J Leddy won the three miles and Michael McTague the Junior 880. Gerard McKiernan qualified in the Junior B 100 yards and intermediate long jump. The three who did not qualify were Martin Brennan (3rd in Junior 880), Kieran McGovern (3rd in Intermediate 880) and Pat Ferguson fifth in the three miles.

The Connacht Finals were fixed for the following Sunday in Claremorris but were postponed due to heavy rain and run off in Tuam Stadium the following Thursday evening. We had arrived in Claremorris before we heard that the event was postponed. However, we went to the neighbouring Bohola where a memorial was being unveiled that afternoon to the former great Olympic athlete Martin Sheridan. In Tuam P J Leddy won the three miles in 16.08.4 and Michael McTague set a new Connacht Schools record in winning the Junior 880 in 2.24.6.

The All Ireland was held in the Iveagh Grounds, Crumlin and here we achieved our first All Ireland Schools medal when P J Leddy (15.30.0) placed third to Donal Walsh (14.53.2 record) and Noel Forrestal (15.20.0) in the three miles. Michael McTague was an impressive fourth in the Junior 880 in a personal of 2.17.9.

1966/67

The following students competed in the Connacht Under 14 Cross Country Championship in Elphin in November 1966- Noel Maxwell (3), Peter Prior (8), Killian McKiernan (9), Liam McGirl (13), Michael McNiffe (14), Liam Kelleher (21), David Toolan (25), Gerry Cumiskey (26), Cathal Cumiskey (31), Michael Doherty (36), Eamon Farrelly (38), Gus Guckian (40). The A" team were second and the Under 16 team won narrowly (34-36) from Portumna with Eddie Leddy 1st and Michael McTague 3rd, Michael Mullen (11), Sean Flanagan (19), John Ellis (20) and Gerry McKiernan (29).

A team was invited to the White Fathers' College in Blacklion for a competition against their students. P J Leddy won the race and the hosts were successful 35-43 in the team event.

In early February the annual competition with St Patrick's College took place in Cavan. The senior race was won by P J Leddy and the visitors won the team event. The junior event was won by Noel Maxwell and the team event was a draw with Peter Prior, Killian McKiernan and Michael McNiffe making up the remainder of the Ballinamore scorers.

The North Western Schools Cross Country competition for the Smithwick trophy was held in the grounds of Rockingham House, Boyle, on March 11th. P J Leddy again won the Senior race and the St Felim's team retained the Trophy. A junior race was won by Noel Maxwell and again St Felim's won the team event.

Another opportunity for local competition came on stream when the White Fathers Seminary at Blacklion put on an Invitation cross country competition. The event was won by St Patrick's College with St Felim's second. There were a few of those very enjoyable races during the next few years (the Community closed the facility at Blacklion in 1970) with schools such as St Columb's, Derry, coming to compete.

The Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships were held as usual in Tuam. P J Leddy retained the senior title and Michael McTague was third in the Intermediate with the team sixth. Noel Maxwell finished 8th in the Junior race and here the team was also sixth. A new Vocational School Championship was held and won by Eddie Leddy with Thomas Flanagan third. Ballinamore Vocational School was second to Grange of Sligo.

The All Ireland in Belfield drew a strong Ulster involvement led by the talented Belfast Junior athlete Malcolm Edgar. The IRISH INDEPENDENT reporter Tom O Riordan made the following comment “ Edgar left no one present in doubt as to his superb fitness and ability to cut out the pace from the beginning. The game P J Leddy (St Felim’s, Ballinamore) tried to stick with Edgar over the first mile and a half but as a result probably lost the runner up position.” P J Leddy finished third behind Edgar and fellow Ulster runner Paul O Hare of St Patrick’s, Belfast.

The All Ireland Under 16 Cross Country Championship was held a few weeks later in Portumna. It brought the Ballinamore Club the first of many national titles over the following years when Eddie Leddy won the event from Frank Roberts of Limerick and Dan O Neill of Kilkenny. On Sunday April 16th in a Dublin the National Athletic and Cycling Association and the Dublin based Amateur Athletic Union both agreed to dissolve and form one new Association called Bord Luthchleas na h-Eireann which would provide access to International competition for all members throughout the country. It was the first decisive move to end a division which has bedevilled Irish Athletics since the late 1920s and was built upon by various further agreements until the establishment of Athletics Association of Ireland in 2000 brought the process to a successful conclusion.

The Connacht Regional in Tuam on a wet Sunday saw P J Leddy win the three miles in 15.32.0 and Michael McTague the Intermediate 800m in 2.26.0. Noel Maxwell was fourth in the junior 880. In the Finals in Tuam Leddy won the three miles in 15.20.0 and Michael McTague was second in the 880.

The All Ireland was held in the Iveagh Grounds on Saturday June 10th. This time P J Leddy held on to Malcolm Edgar for two of the three miles. Then as Leddy attacked and as a tiring Edgar dropped out the St Felim’s runner now doing his Leaving Certificate went on to conclude a glittering schools running career with a deserved gold medal. M J Magill of RBAI was second and Joseph Naughton of St Mary’s, Rathmines third. Leddy’s winning time was 14.41.8. Later that summer he met previous champion Donal Walsh of North Mon in the National Junior three miles in Eamonn Ceannt Stadium, Crumlin, and using similar tactics defeated him for the first time.

Due to difficulties which arose with the Department of Education Examinations that summer the Intermediate Certificate Commerce examination took place on that Saturday. As Michael McTague was taking that Examination he was replaced in the All Ireland 800m by Billy McMullen who was unplaced in a very tough race.

This year also saw the school winning its first senior football title when the team defeated Benada Abbey in the Final of the Sligo/Leitrim Schools Corn Bhreifne competition. The previous year saw the first Connacht success with the winning of the Connacht Juvenile C competition.

1967/68

In February St Felim’s and St Pats met in Ballinamore. The Cavan school won the Junior event 12-32 and Ballinamore the Senior 16-20. Eddie Leddy had moved from the Vocational School to St Felim’s and won this event for his new school with Michael McTague third. At the first BLE National Cross Country Championships in Mallow Eddie Leddy won the National Youths title with his brother P J seventh in the Senior and earning selection for the Irish Cross Country Team to compete in the International in Tunisia.

On March 6th the Connacht Schools Cross Country was held in Tuam. Noel Maxwell was second in the Junior and the team was second to St Mary’s, Boyle. In the Intermediate race Eddie Leddy was first and Michael McTague second. With Michael Murray, Gerard McKiernan and Peter Prior well up St Felim’s won with 34 points from Portumna (49) and Tuam CBS (75). The members of the Junior team were Noel Maxwell, Liam McGovern, Declan Quinn, David Toolan, Gerard Geoghegan and Callaghan McCarthy.

Eddie Leddy was able to win the Intermediate race with such ease that he then went on minutes later to win the Senior race, a double in the Provincial Championship never achieved before or since.

In the All Ireland held in the Phoenix Park on the same Saturday (March 16th) as his older brother ran for Ireland in Tunisia, Eddie Leddy put up a performance never equalled before or since when he won both the Intermediate and Senior titles within fifteen minutes of each other.

MAGNIFICENT DOUBLE IN THE PHOENIX PARK

The fifth running of the All Ireland Secondary Schools Cross Country Championships took place in tough conditions on a wet and blustery afternoon in the Phoenix Park on Saturday March 16th. As of yet there were only boys events so there was a very short interval between each of the three races.

In the Intermediate race Eddie Leddy lined up with his school team along with the top three teams and six individuals from each of the four provinces. He led from gun to tape to record a then first All Ireland Schools Cross Country victory for the Ballinamore school. He was followed home by Frank Brady of St Patrick's College, Cavan, and Neil Cusack of St Munchin's in Limerick with team mate Michael McTague fourth. The team finished fourth with 92 points behind St Pat's (45), St Columbs Derry (82) and North Mon from Cork (90). The other team members were Michael Murray, Gerard McKiernan and Peter Prior. Earlier the Junior Team had finished tenth with 186 points with Noel Maxwell highest placed in 27th position. The intermediate placing was the best ever by a Ballinamore boys team.

While the runners in the intermediate race were being checked in Peter Duignan arranged for Eddie Leddy to change vests and shorts so when he took his place on the line for the Senior race he was not easily recognisable to rivals. After a mile he joined John Allen (Regent House) and Paul O Hare of St Patrick's, Belfast(1967 runner up) in a break. Going into the last mile Allen was dropped and with a half mile to go Leddy went clear away from O Hare and won by a hundred yards.

This was surely the outstanding performance of the Irish Schools Cross Country Championships since they began in 1964. It was a feat never equalled in the long history of the championships.

Reporting in the SUNDAY INDEPENDENT the following day John Comyn wrote - Ireland has produced many outstanding young athletes in the past but I have never seen anything to equal the performance of Leitrim's 16 year old prodigy Eddie Leddy who made a procession of the All Ireland Colleges Intermediate Cross Country Championship in the Phoenix Park and less than ten minutes later made hacks of a very strong senior field . This was certainly a unique double and if there are reasons to question the wisdom of such a young athlete running two races over a total of six miles in terrible conditions there could be no denying that this most exciting middle distance prospect was not in the least concerned by his exertions.

" I could have gone around again, I feel great" was the comment after he had completed the double.

Eddie, younger brother of Senior International P J made practically all the running in both races and he is certainly the best prospect in Ireland today.

The SUNDAY PRESS reporter wrote- *It was a great day for the sixteen year old Eddie Leddy competing for St Phelim's, Ballinamore, in the All Ireland Schools and Colleges Cross Country Championships in the Phoenix Park yesterday.*

This strongly built athlete won the Intermediate title and came out shortly afterwards to win the Senior title. He is a younger brother of well known Connacht and All Ireland athlete P J Leddy.

That day also P J Leddy just a few weeks too old for the Junior Race finished 86th in the International Cross Country Championship in Tunis.

The North Western Schools competition was held at Lough Rynn estate in Mohill on March 27th. Noel Maxwell was second to Noel Hanratty of St Mary's, Boyle and St Felim's (29) second to St Mary's, Boyle. In the Senior event for the Smithwick Trophy St Felim's (20) won from Summerhill College (31) with Eddie Leddy first and Michael McTague second.

In the Connacht Schools track and field championship in Tuam Stadium Eddie Leddy won the mile in a record 4.41.8 and the three miles in 15.50.0 with Michael McTague fourth in 16.46.0. In the All Ireland held in Santry Stadium on June 8th Eddie Leddy won the three miles in 15.00.3 while Michael McTague was fourth in 4.25.5 in the mile won by Paul O'Hare in 4.22.4.

FIRST INTERNATIONAL SELECTION

Back in the early 1960's a Home Countries track and field International between the schools of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland at senior level was established. In 1968 it was decided that there would be an All Ireland team. Eddie Leddy was selected to run in the three miles, one of two Connacht athletes the other being Aidan Kelly of St Jarlath's in the pole vault.

The event was held in Connaught Quay in Wales on Saturday July 20th and the team went from Dun Laoghaire by ferry. One can still remember the group forming up in front of the Hotel along the seafront where the team had assembled and led by Irish Schools Chairman Fr Tom Lonergan S M, followed by the two pole vaulters carrying their poles, proceeding to board the ship. Eddie Leddy even though an Intermediate competing among seniors put up a superb performance in the three miles by taking second position and splitting the two top English runners John King and John Boggis in the process. Ireland had only one winner, John Magee of Castleknock College winning the triple jump.

The result in Eddie Leddy's race was- 1 John King (E) 14.12, 2 Eddie Leddy (I) 14.19.0, 3 John Boggis (E) 15.01.0, 4 Denis Price (I) 15.16.0, 5 G R Hughes-Jones (W) 15.31.0, 6 W Cairns (S) 15.48.2. King and Boggis had previously run 14.05 for the event.

It was a very well run event and the Welsh hosts were most hospitable. The competition has continued on an annual basis to the present day.

On August 1st 1968 a historic agreement between the Sisters of Mercy, Kilmore Diocese and Leitrim VEC came into effect. As a result of this unique arrangement the three Ballinamore second level schools became in effect one school with common enrolment of students, a common timetable and a common pool of teachers. The schools were on three separate sites over a thousand metres apart and retained their separate management structures. As a result of this system which has worked for forty years the schools began to be known as Ballinamore Post Primary Schools.

In the Willwood Tailteann Games held in September in Belfield Eddie Leddy finished third in the Under 19 mile with Michael McTague unplaced while Patricia Quinn was seventh in the Under 15 800m. Ladies athletics competition had begun to flourish in the Republic of Ireland during the previous two years and Ballinamore Athletic Club were now catering for girls.

1968/69

VISIT TO BLACKROCK COLLEGE

Saturday December 14th 1968 was a unique occasion when the school visited Blackrock College for Junior and Senior Cross Country races. Jim Burns who had shared with Tommy McTiernan responsibility for athletics at St Patrick's in Cavan had taken up a teaching post in Blackrock and St Pats top runner Frank Brady had also moved there. The invitation to visit arose from this.

Blackrock College had been particularly strong in cross country running both at schools and Dublin inter club level. In 1964 they were odds on favourites to win the first All Ireland Schools Cross Country title and were so strong that they had two of the three Leinster teams in Garbally College that day. However, things did not go to plan and Tullamore CBS relegated both teams to the minor positions.

In the Junior event Blackrock won 14-24 with Christy Creamer and Sean Crossan finishing second and fifth respectively for the visitors. Eddie Leddy won the senior race from Frank Brady and with Michael McTague third, Billy McMullen ninth and Noel Maxwell tenth the result was 16-24 in favour of the home team. It was a very enjoyable and hospitable once off occasion. Jim Burns went on to make a major contribution to Leinster and Irish Schools athletics over the years which followed.

Some traditional fixtures were, for various reasons, coming to the end of their time. The fixture in Blacklion took place in snow with Eddie Leddy winning the senior race and the senior and junior teams finishing second and third respectively with St Columb's, Derry, winning both events. This was the second last running of the fixture as the Blacklion College closed the following year.

SUCCESS IN SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL

The Smithwick Cup was won by Summerhill College as part of the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships as the North Western Schools fixture had now ceased as a separate fixture in a programme getting more and more crowded having achieved it's purpose of encouraging cross country running in the north western schools.

The inter school competition took place in Cavan with John Boyd of the host school winning the junior race from Christy Creamer but the visiting team won the team race. Eddie Leddy won the senior event from Michael McTague and Noel Maxwell. The other visiting runners' positions were Billy McMullan (8) and Martin Conway (10) to provide the visitors with an overall victory. This was also the final competition in this series.

A three week secondary teachers strike this spring had an effect of some competition rescheduling and the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships at Tuam were put back two weeks. Eddie Leddy retained his senior title and the team were fourth to Summerhill. Girls events were introduced for the first time at this level as now the Championships were open to all second level schools. Patricia Quinn of Mean Scoil Fatima won the Junior title with Mary Early second and Sylvia Gormley seventh and Antoinette Callaghan twenty first to give Ballinamore victory. The other placings were Gerardine McGoldrick (23) and Ruth Creamer (27). Mary Flanagan was the only Ballinamore runner in the senior event and finished twenty fourth.

In the All Ireland (boys only) in Belfield Eddie Leddy retained his title and Michael McTague finished twentieth.

Earlier Eddie Leddy retained his BLE Youths title in Mallow and was selected for the Irish Junior Cross Country team for the International Championship in Glasgow. His brother P J also made the Senior team. The Junior team finished second to England with John Hartnett (4), Eddie Leddy (6) and David Gilsenan (11).

Five boys and, for the first time, three girls were brought to the Connacht Schools Regional in Sligo. Eddie Leddy won the 880 in 2.07.4 and the mile in a Connacht record of 4.39.6. He won the three miles in a record 15.04.0 with Michael McTague second. Patricia Quinn won the 880 in 2.42.5, 100 yards in 13.2 and high jump with 3'9" and was second in the long jump. Mary Early was third in the 880 and like Antoinette Callaghan did not qualify for the Finals in Duggan Park, Ballinasloe.

In the Finals at Duggan Park Leddy won the 880 in a record 2.04.6 and the mile in 4.31.9 as well as the three miles in 15.01.8. Michael McTague was second. Patricia Quinn won the 880 in 2.41.8, the high jump with 4'1" and was second in the 100 yards in 12.8. In the All Ireland in Santry, Leddy won the three miles in 14.27.5 with McTague 6th in 15.20.5.

In the Schools International at Hartford near Crewe Eddie Leddy won the 5000m race in 15.07.0 with England's John Kendrick second in 15.17.6 and England's Dave Walker third in 15.47.4.

The Willwood Tailteann Games in September brought Ballinamore the first gold medal when Eddie Leddy won the Under 19 three miles where Michael McTague finished sixth. Patricia Quinn brought home a bronze medal won in the Under 15 800m behind Jean Appleby of Dublin and Una Grace of Kilkenny. Francis Holohan competed in the Under 13 800m.

1969/70

In January Eddie Leddy was selected on a three man Invitation Irish Junior Cross Country team that travelled to San Sebastian where he finished 5th. The junior boys won the last White Fathers Trophy race in Blacklion beating St Columb's, Derry, in the process. Noel Maxwell was third in the intermediate race and Eddie Leddy won the senior event.

The Connacht Schools Championships at Tuam on Wednesday March 4th was the first involving full boys and girls competition with All Ireland places at stake in all events. In the junior Girls event Josephine Masterson finished sixth and the team were third with 29 points behind Mercy Claremorris (14) and IWC Dunmore (20). Patricia Quinn won the Intermediate race with Mary Early third and team won with 12 points. Ballinamore finished seventh in the junior boys race with 145 points. The runners were Peter Heaney, Gabriel McManus, Frank Holohan, Sean Crossan, Michael Reynolds and T P Dolan. Christy Creamer and Noel Maxwell ran in the intermediate race and Eddie Leddy won the senior to complete his own hatrick and six in a row for his family and school.

The All Ireland was held at the same venue and provided Eddie Leddy with his third senior title in a row, a feat never equalled before or since. In the Junior Girls race Ballinamore were seventh and in the Intermediate were runners up (36) to Presentation, Cashel (14). Patricia Quinn finished fifth. The other Ballinamore placings were- Mary Early (8), Mary Greenan (23), Geraldine Beirne (32). The Junior positions were- Josephine Masterson (30), Sylvia Gormley (35), Margaret Duignan(38) and Monica McNiffe (39).

In the International Junior Cross Country Championship in Vichy, France, Eddie Leddy finished twenty third as team mate John Hartnett won the event. The Irish team finished fifth.

Ballinamore hosted the Northern Regional of the Connacht Schools in Sean O Heslin GAA Park on May 16th. P J Martin, a woodwork teacher at Ballinamore Vocational School shortly to become Leitrim County Development Officer, made a large steeplechase hurdle which enabled Eddie Leddy to do this event. Qualifiers were Eddie Leddy, Patricia Quinn, Mary Early and Frank Holohan. Others to compete included Christy Creamer, Marie Quinn, Peter Heaney, Gabriel McManus and T P Dolan.

In the Connacht Schools Finals in Ballinasloe where metric measurements were used for the first time Eddie Leddy won the 5000m in 15.18.8 with two minutes and two seconds to spare over the second runner. He received great applause around the track during the race as this marked the final appearance in Connacht Schools athletics of an athlete who brought so much honour to the province. He also won the new 2000m steeplechase in 6.22. Patricia Quinn won the senior 400m in 65.2 and the 100 hurdles in 21.2 She also won the intermediate 800m in 2.28.7. Mary Early was third (2.50) in the senior 800m and three other qualifiers, Kathleen Leddy, Bernadette Honeyman and Frank Holohan were unplaced in their respective events.

In the All Ireland in Santry Eddie won the 5000m in 15.16.8 completing a three in a row for himself and four in a row for his family. He also won the 2000m steeplechase in 6.03.5. Patricia Quinn finished second in the senior 400m (62.6) behind Vera Sherry and also in the 800m (2.22.4) behind Jean Appleby.

In the SUNDAY PRESS on the following day sports reporter Jimmy Meagan was quoted as follows- "Eddie Leddy, the St Felim's schoolboy, predictably won the 2000m steeplechase and the senior 5000m. The well built Ballinamore boy was his usual confident self, running smoothly and effortlessly all the way through."

TWO BALLINAMORE ATHLETES ON IRISH SCHOOLS TEAM

Both Eddie and Patricia were selected for the Schools International held in Santry on the evening of July 13th and Leddy was honoured with the position of team captain. He finished second in the 5000m after opening a large lead which he held until the last 500m when the strong English runner Julian Goater reined him in and went to win by 14.35.6. Leddy, however, equalled his personal best of 14.41.0 and probably would have won if he had paced himself better and had not gone off so fast in the first half of the race.

Vera Sherry and Patricia Quinn (61.9) finished fourth and fifth respectively behind the two English runners and one Scot.

On completing school Eddie obtained an Athletics Scholarship to East Tennessee State University where his brother P J had gone on Scholarship the previous year after spending a period in the Garda Siochana.

One must acknowledge the support given by the Sisters of Mercy and the staff of Mean Scoil Fatima to enable the development of athletics in the school.

1970/71

AN ALL IRELAND SCHOOLS TEAM VICTORY

The highlight of this year was the School's only All Ireland Cross Country Team victory when the quartet of Mary Early (2), Patricia Quinn (3), Bernadette Honeyman (8) and Kathleen Leddy (14) became the first Connacht team to win an All Ireland title when they took the Senior award in Monaghan. The overall winner of the race was Marian Kiernan of St Clare's, Ballyjamesduff.

The Ballinamore quartet had already won the Connacht title in Tuam. The positions in Tuam were- Patricia Quinn (1), Mary Early (3), Kathleen Leddy (4) and Bernadette Honeyman (5). The runner up in the race was Christine Gleeson of Incarnate Word College, Dunmore. The team won the C J Fallon Trophy with 24 points to spare over Mercy, Claremorris. The Intermediate team of Marie Quinn, Catherine Toolan and Mary Quinn finished fourth. The junior team of Bernadette Young, Mona Kiernan and Stelle McKeon were unplaced. Also involved with this team were Bernadette Leddy and Eithne Canning. The Intermediate Boys team were down the field in their race. The scoring positions were- Thomas McGovern (27), Peter Heaney (35), T P Dolan (37) and Bernie Quinn (85). The other members were- Noel Darcy, Tom Clyne and Frank Smyth.

The North Connacht Regional Track & Field qualifiers were again held in Ballinamore at the Sean O Heslin GAA Park. Patricia Quinn qualified in the Senior 400m, 100m Hurdles, High Jump and 800m events while Mary Earley qualified in the Senior 800m. Kathleen Leddy won the Intermediate 200m and Junior 800m while Bernadette Honeyman qualified in the Junior 200m and 800m. Peter Heaney raced in the steeplechase and 1500m but did not qualify.

The Connacht Finals were held in Duggan Park, Ballinasloe, the last occasion on a grass track. Patricia Quinn won the 800m in 2.29.8, the 400m in 64.7 and the 100m hurdles in 21.5. Mary Earley was fourth in the Senior 800m. Kathleen Leddy and Bernadette Honeyman were unplaced.

In the Irish Schools track and field Championship Patricia Quinn finish third in the Senior 400m in 59.2 at Santry. Later in the summer she finished third (2842) in the BLE Senior Pentathlon behind Margaret Murphy (Cork) and Aideen Morrison of Crusaders.

In the Willwood Tailteann Games in Belfield she finished second (2.25.2) to Jean Appleby (2.19.6) of Eccles St School in the Under 17 800m.

1971/72

ANOTHER SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL VEST

The Ballinamore team of Patricia Quinn, Kathleen Leddy and Margaret McGovern filled the first three places in that order at the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships in Tuam and so retained the team event with the minimum score. The Junior girls team in fourth position lost third to Ballyhaunis by one point with Colette Young fourth overall. In the intermediate girls race the team were sixth. Roland (Roly) Curran was the first junior boy home in 31st place.

In the All Ireland at Rockwell College Patricia Quinn finished second to Marie Buckley of Mercy Kinsale. The team finished third (42) behind Loreto Fermoy (16) and Kings Hospital (32). Margaret McGovern was 17th and Colette Young 23rd. Kathleen Leddy did not take to the heavy conditions and finished 42nd.

As a result Patricia Quinn was selected for the first Schools International in Cross Country to be held in Clydebank, Glasgow. England did not compete on this first occasion and Ireland had an easy

victory with Patricia Quinn finishing eighth. She was also named as non travelling reserve for the Irish Womens' Team for the International Cross Country Championship in Cambridge as a result of placing eighth in the National Championship.

The Connacht Schools track and field championship moved to a Saturday and were held in the new all weather track in Claremorris. Patricia Quinn won the senior 400m and 800m setting a new record of 63.8 in the former. She was third in the 100m hurdles. In an inaugural Connacht Schools pentathlon held at the same venue a week later she won the Girls event with 2208 points.

In the All Ireland in Santry Patricia Quinn (2.20.2) finished second to Jean Appleby in the 800m (2.12). Later in the afternoon she was fourth to the same athlete (60.0) in the 400m in a time of 61.1. In the Willwood Tailteann Games she won the Under 17 800m title and finished second to Jean Appleby in the Under 19 1500m.

1972/73

Nineteen competitors which included four teams competed in the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championship in Tuam. The Junior Boys finished sixth, the placings being- Padraig Gilheany (14), Michael (Micky) Quinn (33), Kevin Geoghegan (35), Colm Reynolds (52) and Gerry McLoughlin (70). In the Intermediate race Roland Curran was 30th, Brendan McLoughlin (73), Gregory McGovern (74) and Sean Moran (80) to give a position of twelfth team. Also among the runners was Thomas McGovern.

Margaret McKiernan won the Girls Intermediate race having led all the way and with Marie Meehan 5th, Deirdre Quinn 11th and Bernadette Leddy 21st. The team placed first overall. Patricia Quinn led the Senior from the start and with Margaret McGovern 2nd, Colette Young 6th and Kathleen Leddy 8th this team also won.

The All Ireland was in Templeogue and the senior team placed second to Loreto Fermoy with 39 points against 26. The scorers were Patricia Quinn 6th. Margaret McGovern 12th and Bernadette Young 21st. The Intermediate team placed eighth.

The Track and Field was held on the new cinder track in Claremorris. Patricia Quinn won the 400m in 61.9, the high jump with 1.37 and was second to Anne Lyons of Dunmore IWC in the 800m with a time of 2.25.9.

In the All Ireland in Santry she finished fifth in both the 400m (60.3) and 800m (2.21.6).

She won the Connacht Schools pentathlon with 2490 points ahead of Joan Gibney (2296) of Mercy Claremorris. She was also third in the BLE National Pentathlon.

1973/74

A minor grade in introduced to the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championship this year. There was no All Ireland in this grade. The Ballinamore minor boys team finished eighth with Seamus Quinn (26), Noel Gilheany (28), Fergus Conlon (29), Des McGovern (47), John McHugh (50) and Michael Byrne (110)

The Senior Girls were fifth in Connacht. Margaret McGovern won, Kathleen Leddy was 11th, and Concepta Quinn 25th. Mercy Claremorris won the Fallon Trophy which Ballinamore had held since

1971. The Intermediate team were third and were made up of Margaret McKiernan, Lucy Callaghan and Anne McGovern. Pdraig Gilheany was third in the Junior Boys event and the team which included Kevin McGovern, Gerry McGovern and Seamus Reynolds finished eighth.

With Ballyhaunis and Roscommon withdrawing from the All Ireland Ballinamore joined Claremorris and Tuam VS to finish sixth. The scoring positions were- Margaret McGovern (15), Kathleen Leddy (35) and Lucy Callaghan (42). The Intermediate team were tenth with the scorers being – Concepta Quinn (41), Margaret McKiernan (49) and Anne McGovern (52). Pdraig Gilheany who missed the junior race ran in the intermediate.

This was the last Championship held on the Tuam Racecourse locally known as known as Parkmore. It was sold for housing development soon afterwards.

The age for the Schools International was this year reduced to Intermediate level.

When the Connacht track and field was held in Claremorris Margaret McGovern took third in the Intermediate 1500m. We had no qualifiers for the All Ireland.

1974/75

Having lost it's traditional home in Tuam the Connacht Schools Cross Country moved to Sligo Racecourse. Here Margaret McGovern won the senior race and the team were third behind Ballyhaunis and Claremorris. Ballinamore were sixth in the Intermediate race. The junior boys team which was unplaced consisted of Owen Corrigan, Ciaran McGovern, Pdraig Gallagher, Damien Gilheany, Eugene McGovern and P J McGovern. Also unplaced was a junior girls team made up of Mary Baxter, Marie McGovern, Mary McTeigue and Catherine Heavey.

In tough conditions in Monaghan the senior team were seventh with Margaret McGovern first home in 23rd position.

In the Connacht Schools track and field Margaret McGovern won the 800m.

1975/76

In the Connacht Cross Country Margaret McGovern was second to Roseleen Chambers of Sligo. She finished tenth in the All Ireland in Rockwell College.

We had no qualifiers in the track and field.

1976/77

The Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships took place in Claremorris and the Junior Girls finished third after Castlebar and Ballygar. The scorers were- Edel Kelleher (10), Anne McGovern (14) and Pauline Gilheany (15). Gregory Smyth finished fifteenth in the Junior Boys race. The senior Girls were fourth. In the All Ireland at Coolmine the junior team finished 11th.

We had no track and field qualifiers.

1977/78

In the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships in Claremorris Ballinamore finished seventh in the Minor Girls race with Cora McKiernan in 15th position. The other team members were Margaret Benison, Imelda Davis, Orla Maguire and Geraldine Reynolds. The Intermediate Girls team was fifth with Pauline Flanagan 11th. The other members were Imelda Callaghan, Pauline Gilheany and Anita O Reilly. In the All Ireland, also in Claremorris, Pauline Flanagan was placed forty eighth. Two junior boys, Kieran Lee and Pat Moran, were unplaced.

In 1978 the national juvenile athletics body Bord Luthchleas Oganach na h-Eireann introduced racewalking into their championships. In the Under 16 event in Limerick Gregory Smyth took the silver medal. It was the beginning of the school's long and successful association with racewalking.

In the track and field Regional the 400m was won by Padraig Duignan. Others who competed were Anita McKiernan, Pauline Flanagan, Cora McKiernan, Kieran Lee and Gregory Smyth.

On Sunday May 14th the new playing ground and outdoor basketball courts at St Felim's were blessed and opened by Most Rev Dr Francis McKiernan. Celebrations included a football match, basketball and exhibition high jumping by Michael Cox and David McLoughlin, two top class athletes from St Mary's College, Boyle who were Irish Schools Champions.

1978/79

FIRST SUCCESS IN RACEWALKING

At the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships in Claremorris Gregory Smyth finished tenth in the Intermediate race and in the All Ireland in Monaghan he was placed forty fifth. The other members of the Boys' Intermediate team in Claremorris were Kieran Lee, Michael Flynn, Seamus McLoughlin, Peter Meehan and Robert Boyle. Padraig Creamer and Eamonn Benison were unplaced in the Junior race.

An Irish Team was sent to the Youths Nations Cup in Lille and Gregory Smyth won the racewalking position at a trial in Belfield. In Lille he finished seventh behind one Briton, three French, one Austrian and one Spanish competitor. He also won the BLE Junior 3000m Walk.

The World Cross Country Championship was staged in Limerick Racecourse in March 1979 and John Treacy retained the title he had won in Glasgow the previous year. This success was very helpful to the sport of athletics. In July the new track in Tullamore was opened. It was soon to become the venue for the Connacht Schools Athletics Championships which it remained until the new Galway track became available in 2002. The Ballinamore PPS School Sports was held for the first time this year. A Leitrim Post Primary Schools Cross Country Championship was also held for a few years around this time.

1979/80

The Connacht Cross Country Championships were held in Claremorris and the representatives were- Fiona Lee (Junior), Michael Flynn (Intermediate), Gregory Smyth and Kieran Lee (Senior). This year the Irish Schools Athletic Association introduced racewalking into the Championships. At the Connacht Championships in Claremorris Gregory Smyth won the Walk and Fiona Lee was second in the Junior Walk. Fiona Lee was also third in the minor 800m.

In the All Ireland Fiona Lee finished fourth in the Junior Walk. There was no senior Walk. Gregory Smyth won the Nations Cup 3000m Walk in Turin. Also that year he retained the BLE Junior Walk title.

1980/81

ANOTHER ALL IRELAND SUCCESS

This year because of the huge increase in the number of schools taking part during the late 1970s Regional qualifying competitions were introduced similar to those which applied in track and field since the early sixties. Gregory Smyth qualified in sixth position in the Senior Boys event at the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships. In the All Ireland in Kilmacud he was unplaced.

In the track and field championships in Claremorris Gregory Smyth won the Senior Walk, Fiona Lee was second in the Junior Girls Walk and Gary Smyth was third in the Junior Boys Walk.

At the All Ireland in Belfield Gregory Smyth (15.52.0) was second in the Senior Walk to Jimmy McDonald (14.44.2) who was to go on to take sixth place for Ireland in the 20K Walk in the Barcelona Olympic Games in 1992. Fiona Lee won the Junior Walk to bring the first All Ireland Schools title since 1971 to Ballinamore. Her time was 7.08.3. Gary Smyth finished sixth in the Junior Boys race in 6.51.0.

1981/82

The Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships were held in Claremorris. In the Senior race Maeve Quinn was 8th and Fiona Chambers 12th. In the All Ireland Maeve Quinn finished 23rd and Fiona Chambers 18th.

In the Connacht Schools track and field Maeve Quinn was third in the Junior Walk and Fiona Lee won the Intermediate Walk.

In the track and field in Belfield Gary Smyth was third in the Junior Walk and Fiona Lee third in the Intermediate Walk.

1982/83

In the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships in Claremorris Maeve Quinn was 3rd in the Senior Race with Fiona Chambers 8th and Fiona Lee 34th. Lorna Curry was the fourth runner. The team finished fourth with 45 points behind Bower, Athlone (33), Mercy, Longford (40) and Incarnate Word, Dunmore (43) but qualified to compete in the All Ireland as Mercy, Longford, did not go forward.

In the All Ireland in Mallusk, Belfast, Maeve Quinn finished ninth, Fiona Chambers 32nd, Lorna Curry 54th and Fiona Lee 57th and the team were placed 7th on 95 points behind winners Ennis VS on 42. ICW, Dunmore were 5th on 71 and Bower, Athlone 6th on 75.

The Connacht Schools Track & Field Championships moved from Claremorris to Tullamore in 1983. In the Intermediate Girls Walk Fiona Lee was second and Fiona Chambers third while Gary Smyth won the Intermediate Boys Walk.



1960's: 1: Smithwick Cup winning team 1966- front: Pat Ferguson, Brian McKiernan, Noel Crossan, back: Thomas J McManus, Pat Joe Leddy (Captain) Kieran McGovern. **2:** Group of athletes after training 1966 - front: Gabriel Prior, Killian McGoldrick, Michael J Finnegan, Joe McGovern, Sean Flanagan, back: Michael Tighe, Gerry McKiernan, Peter Harvey, Eddie Leddy, Pat Cassidy, Christy Foley, Seamus McDermott, Kevin Conlon.



3: Michael McTague. **4:** Group of athletes 1967/68 - front: Des Quinn, Gabriel Maguire, Noel Maxwell, Callaghan McCarthy, Gerard Creamer, back: Michael Doherty, David Toolan, Gerard Geoghegan, Liam McGovern, Gerard Charles. **5:** March 16th 1968 Eddie Leddy coming in a clear winner of the Irish Schools Intermediate Cross Country Championship in the Phoenix Park.



6: March 16th 1968 Eddie Leddy leads the field on his way to victory in the All Ireland Schools Senior Cross Country Championship followed by Paul O Hare of St Patrick's, Belfast, and John Allen of Regent House. **7:** First group of girls who competed for Mean Scoil Fatima 1969 - Ruth Creamer, Sylvia Gormley, Gerardine McGoldrick, Patricia Quinn, Janey Quinn, Mary Early.



1970's1: Eddie Leddy on the way to his third successive All Ireland Schools 5000m title in Santry Stadium in June 1970. **2:** All Ireland Schools Senior Cross Country Champions 1971 with Mean Scoil Fatima Principal Sister Marie de Lourdes - from left Patricia Quinn, Kathleen Leddy, Bernadette Honeyman, Mary Early. **2A:** Peter Heaney, Bernie Quinn and Thomas McGovern on a training training run 1971.



3: Willwood Tailteann Games Under 17 800m presentation –from left: Mary Donnellan (Mercy, Roscommon) 2nd, Patricia Quinn (Ballinamore) winner, Sally Curry (St Leo's, Carlow) 3rd. **4:** 1972 Group - front left: Colette Young, Margaret McGovern, Deirdre Quinn, Bernadette Honeyman, Bernadette Young - back left: Bernadette Leddy, Marie Meehan, Patricia Quinn, Kathleen Leddy, Mary Quinn, Anne Bannon.



5: The Connacht Schools Intermediate and Senior Cross Country Teams of 1973 with their Trophies. **6:** Margaret McGovern winning the Connacht Schools Senior Cross Country title in Sligo 1975



7: Gregory Smyth winning the 1979 BLE National Junior 3000m Walk title in Belfield. **1980's 1:** Group at Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships in Boyle 1984 - from left Marguerite Keating (Marian College Mohill and Ballinamore A C), Maeve Quinn, Lorna Curry, Fiona Chambers, David Curry.



2: Group which includes 1981 All Ireland Schools Junior Walk Champion Fiona Lee - from left: Seamus McLoughlin, Padraig Creamer, Kieran Lee, Fiona Lee, Gregory Smyth, Michael Flynn, Paul Kieran`. **3:** Connacht Schools Minor Cross Country Champions 1987 - from left - Sara Bradbury, Maureen Moran, Jacinta McNiffe, Siobhan O Rourke, Noelle Ryan.



4: School Team at the 1984 All Ireland Schools Cross Country Championship in Dungarvan- Fiona Chambers, Maeve Quinn, Lorna Curry. **5:** Connacht Schools Track & Field Tullamore 1987 - from left Padraig Gallogly, Siobhan O Rourke, Emma Plant, Lisa Cryan, George O Rourke.



1990's: 1: Intermediate Girls Cross Country Team 1990- from left: Siobhan O Rourke, Sharon Foley, Kathy Reynolds, Olivia McCartin, Jane Dolan. **2:** 1992 Junior Girls Cross Country Team in Boyle - from left: Michelle Hanly, Claire McIntyre, Claire Sharpley, Claire Dolan, Ruth McLoughlin.



3: Junior Boys' Cross Country Team 1994 - from left Peter McLoughlin, Damien Kelleher, Gary Burke, Peter Dolan. **4:** Senior Girls Connacht Cross Country Champions in Boyle 1994 -from left Ruth McLoughlin, Claire Dolan, Linda Harte, Yvonne Maxwell.



5: Entire school team at the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships in Boyle 1994 with Linda Harte holding the Shield won by the Senior Girls Team. **6:** Senior Girls Team Winners at Ballina in 1995 - from left Aileen Cassidy, Yvonne Maxwell, Ruth McLoughlin, Linda Tighe, Denise Murray.



7: Entire school team at the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships in Ballina 1995.



8: Intermediate Boys Cross Country Team at Ballina 1996- from left Enda Kelleher, Damien Martin, David Page, Gary Burke, Thomas McLoughlin, Damien Kelleher.



9: Damien Martin competing in the 200m at the Connacht Schools Championships in Tullamore 1998.



10: Colin Griffin winning the Tailteann Games 3000m Walk in Tullamore 1998.



11: Connacht Schools Minor Girls Cross Country Champions 1999 from left- Anita Martin, Eilis Quinn, Sara McLoughlin.



12: School Group at the Connacht Schools Cross Country Boyle 1999- from left Anita Martin, Colin Griffin, Liam Ferguson, Ronan Griffin, Eilis Quinn, David Duignan, Sara McLoughlin.



13: All Ireland Schools Intermediate 2000m Walk Tullamore 1999 - from left Sean Kyle (medal presenter), Hugh O'Donnell (Falcarragh CS) 2nd, Colin Griffin (Ballinamore) winner, Thomas Foskin (St Paul's, Waterford) 3rd.



14: Four Heads- Brendan Burns (Principal Ballinamore Vocational School) makes a presentation to retiring Principal Christy Gallogly with Sr Kathleen Gormley and Fr Thomas Keogan also in picture.



15: World Youths Championships, Bydgoszcz July 1999- Colin Griffin after finishing seventh in the 10K Walk.



2000's: 1: Colin Griffin winning the Irish Schools Senior 3000m Walk in a new Schools and Irish Junior Record at Tullamore in June 2000.



2: Presentation of medals for 3000m Walk- from left: Paul Kelly (Belvedere College) 2nd, Colin Griffin (Ballinamore) winner, David Harrington (Belvedere College) 3rd, Michael Hunt (President Irish Schools AA). **3:** Naomi Lee finishes third to take the bronze medal in the Senior Girls 3000m Walk at the 2000 Irish Schools Championships.





4: Ronan Griffin on his way to victory in the Senior Boys 3000m Walk at the 2001 Irish Schools Championships in Tullamore. 5: Presentation of 3000m Walk medals at the Irish Schools Championships- from left Gabriel O'Donnell (Falcarragh CS) 2nd, Ronan Griffin (Ballinamore) winner, Padraig Lennon (Kilkenny CBS) 3rd, Colin Griffin (Medal Presenter).



6: Presentation of Awards for the Boys' Walk at the 2002 National Scholastic Indoor Championships in New York. Ronan Griffin is second from right. 7: Presentation of medals for the Senior Boys 3000m Walk at the All Ireland Schools Championships 2002- from left Mrs Ann McGill (Medal Presenter), Brian McGill (B'more V S, Donegal) 2nd, Ronan Griffin (Ballinamore) winner, Joe O'Halloran (Causeway CS) 3rd, Bill Hyland (Nestle, Ireland).



8: Nevan McCartin taking part in the long jump at the 2003 Connacht Schools Championships in Galway.



9: Claire Plunkett and Fergal Ellis, award winners at the 2004 Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships in Boyle



10: Fergal Ellis and Padraig Griffin after the 2007 Tailteann Games 800m in Tullamore where Fergal finished second to qualify for the Irish Schools International team. **11:** Laura O Dowd with Michael Hunt, President of the Irish Schools Athletics Association after winning the 2008 Connacht Schools Minor Cross Country title in Loughrea.



12:Fergal Ellis finishes a close second to Anthony Leighio of Crumlin College in the Senior 800m at the 2008 All Ireland Schools Championships in Tullamore. **13:** At the Official opening of Ballinamore Sports Hall in November 2000 from left- Fr Francis Duffy (Principal Fatima & Felim's SS, Dr Francis J McKiernan (retired Bishop of Kilmore and former Principal), John Ellis T D (past pupil) and Fr Tom Keogan (former Principal).



St Patricks College, Cavan: St Felim's (white shorts) and St. Pat's Junior Cross Country teams line up before the start of the race, February 1967. *Courtesy Noel Maxwell.*

1983/84

In the Regional Cross Country event the Intermediate Girls team of Maeve Quinn, Fiona Chambers and Lorna Curry won while David Curry qualified in the Intermediate Boys event. This team finished third in the Connacht Finals held in Boyle for the first time. In the All Ireland in Dungarvan they finished seventh.

In the Connacht Schools Track & Field Championships in Tullamore Patrick Maguire won the Junior Walk.

1984/85

The Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships were held in the Forest Park in Boyle.

In the Senior Girls event Maeve Quinn was 6th, Fiona Chambers 10th and Lorna Curry 31st. This would have been sufficient to give them second team position behind Mercy, Boyle, but they had not qualified as a team in the Regional and so had to run as qualified individuals. Patrick Maguire was 8th in the Junior Boys event. In the All Ireland in Kilmacud Maeve Quinn placed 25th and Fiona Chambers 27th. Patrick Maguire was 35th.

The Connacht Schools Track and Field in Tullamore moved from Sunday to Saturday this year. Patrick Maguire was 2nd in the Junior Walk. Maeve Quinn won the Senior Walk and placed 3rd in the 400m hurdles and 3000m races. In the All Ireland in Belfield both Maeve Quinn and Patrick Maguire were 6th in their respective races.

1985/86

In the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships Maeve Quinn qualified for the All Ireland which was held in Boyle where she was placed 40th.

In the Connacht Schools Track & Field in Tullamore Pam Cryan won the Senior Walk and Evelyn Martin was second in the Intermediate Walk. Pam Cryan was unavailable for the All Ireland in Belfield where Evelyn Martin placed 6th

1986/87

Siobhan O Rourke won the Connacht Schools Regional Cross Country Championship in Boyle and with Noelle Ryan 2nd, Maureen Moran 5th the team won. The other members were Sara Bradbury and Jacinta McNiffe. Derek Ryan finished 9th in the Minor Boys event.

The Team won the Connacht Finals in Boyle with the following placings - Siobhan O Rourke 1st, Noelle Ryan 7th, Sara Bradbury 10th, Maureen Moran 17th and Jacinta McNiffe 77th. Derek Ryan finished 30th in the Boys event. There was no All Ireland in the minor grade.

In the Connacht Schools Track & Field Championships in Tullamore Siobhan O Rourke finished 2nd in the Junior 1200m Walk with Lisa Cryan 3rd. Siobhan O Rourke was 3rd in the Minor 800m.

1987/88

In the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships in Boyle Siobhan O Rourke finished 2nd in the Junior Girls race and Lisa Cryan 27th in the Inter Girls event.

In the Track & Field Championships Siobhan O Rourke was 3rd in the Junior 1500m. Emma Plant won the Junior Walk with Siobhan O Rourke 2nd. Before coming to second level school Emma Plant had won the National Community Games Under 13 Walk gold medal. In the All Ireland the two girls finished 6th and 9th respectively in the Junior Walk.

1988/89

In the Intermediate Girls race at the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships Siobhan O'Rourke finished 3rd. She was unplaced in the All Ireland.

1989/90

In the Intermediate Girls race at the Connacht Schools Cross Country Regional Championships Siobhan O Rourke finished 3rd and the team also finished third with 29 points behind Moate (12) and Summerhill, Athlone (20). The other positions were- Sharon Foley (6), Olivia McCartin (20), and Cathy Reynolds (29). In the Finals the team was not placed.

1990/91

In the 1991 Championships Ruth McLoughlin finished 5th in the Minor race. Sharon Foley was 11th in the Senior event and Claire Dolan 34th in the minor race. Siobhan O Rourke finished 46th in the Senior event.

In the Minor 800m in the track and field Ruth McLoughlin finished 2nd and 1st in the Junior 1500m. In the Intermediate 400m and also the 3000m Sharon Foley finished 3rd. In the Intermediate 300m Kathy Reynolds finished 3rd.

Ruth McLoughlin finished 9th in the Junior Walk in the All Ireland.

1991/92

The Regional Cross Country Championships were held in Boyle. The Ballinamore Minor Boys team finished fourth with 87 points. Emmet Lee placed ninth and the other members were Paul McLoughlin, David Hanly and Gary Burke. The Junior Girls finished third with 36 points. The team members were-Ruth McLoughlin, Clare Dolan, Olive Sharpley and Claire McIntyre. Michelle Hanly and Clare Sharpley were unplaced in the Intermediate race.

In the Connacht Finals in Boyle the Junior Girls finished seventh. The placings were- Ruth McLoughlin (17), Clare Dolan (36), Olive Sharpley (37) and Linda Harte (50). Emmet Lee placed 15th in the Minor race.

In the Track & Field Championships David Hanly won the Minor Long Jump with a leap of 5.24m. Gary Burke was 2nd in the Junior Walk while Ruth McLoughlin was 4th in the Junior Girls Walk. Ruth was also 5th in the Minor shot, 6th in the Junior Walk and 6th in the Junior 1500m. Michelle Hanly was 5th in the Intermediate 300m and 6th in the Intermediate Walk.

In the All Ireland Gary Burke was eighth in the Junior Walk.

1992/93

In the Intermediate Cross Country at the Connacht Championships Ruth McLoughlin finished 6th with Clare Dolan 19th and Claire Sharpley 28th. The team were fourth.

The Junior Boys team finished 5th. The placings were- Emmet Lee (22), Brian Cafferty (42), Gary Burke (48) and Damien Kelleher (52).

In the All Ireland in Coolmine Ruth McLoughlin finished 51st.

In the track and field Ruth McLoughlin won the Intermediate 1500m in 5.10. She was 2nd in the 250m Hurdles and 3rd in the Walk where Michelle Hanly finished 5th. Gary Burke won the Junior Walk and David Hanly the Junior Long Jump. Damien Kelleher was 3rd in the Minor 1500m.

In the All Ireland Gary Burke took the silver medal in the Junior Walk. Ruth McLoughlin was unplaced in the 1500m.

In the All Ireland Schools Senior Combined Events Championships held in Tullamore in September Ruth McLoughlin finished fourth with a total of 2279 points. Claire McIntyre finished seventh in the Intermediate event with 2316 points.

1993/94

GARY BURKE WINS ALL IRELAND WALK

In the Regional Cross Country Championships the Junior Team finished third with Damien Kelleher winning the event. The other placings were- Gary Burke (2), Peter McLoughlin (23) and Peter Dolan (32). The Senior Girls team were third.

In the Connacht Finals the Senior Girls won the team event with 38 points with Ruth McLoughlin winning the event. The other placings were- Clare Dolan (15) and Yvonne Maxwell (22). In the Junior Boys event Damien Kelleher finished fifth and Gary Burke ninth. The team finished fifth.

In the All Ireland the placings were- Ruth McLoughlin (33), Clare Dolan (56), Yvonne Maxwell (58), Linda Harte (79) and the team finished eighth. Gary Burke was 35th and Damien Kelleher 66th.

At the Regional track and field Ruth McLoughlin won the Intermediate 1500m and 3000m. Damien Kelleher won the Junior 800m and was 2nd in the 1500m.

In the Finals Gary Burke won the Junior Walk. Damien Kelleher was second in the 800m and 5th in the 1500m. Ruth McLoughlin won the 3000m, was second in the 300m hurdles and fourth in the 1500m. Peter McLoughlin was unplaced in the triple jump.

In the All Ireland in Tullamore Gary Burke won the Junior 1200m Walk in 5.32.7 bringing the first individual All Ireland title to Ballinamore since 1981.

At the end of the 1993/94 school year St Felim's College and Mean Scoil Fatima amalgamated into one school to be known as Fatima & Felim's Secondary School. Fr Tom Keogan became Principal of the new amalgamated school. The common enrolment arrangement was not affected.

1994/95

The Connacht Schools Regional Cross Country Championship for this year was to have been the very last at the Forest Park in Boyle where construction work was scheduled to commence soon afterwards.

The Senior Girls won their event with Ruth McLoughlin (1), Linda Tighe (5) and Yvonne Maxwell (8). The Intermediate Boys team were third with Gary Burke (10), Damien Kelleher (13), David Page (24) and Paul Mc Loughlin (25). Colin Griffin made his schools debut by finishing fifth in the Minor race where Damien Martin finished tenth.

The Connacht Finals were held in a wet and windy Belleek course in Ballina. Ruth McLoughlin finished second to Tracy Murphy of Galway. Miranda Burke was ninth, Linda Tighe tenth and Yvonne Maxwell 20th to provide a team victory. Gary Burke was 16th in the Intermediate race with Damien Martin 15th and Colin Griffin 24th in the Minor.

The All Ireland was held in Mallusk near Belfast. The Girls team were ninth with Ruth McLoughlin 25th, Linda Tighe 46th, Miranda Burke 54th and Yvonne Maxwell 66th.

In the Connacht track and field finals Ruth McLoughlin won the Senior 3000m. Gary Burke was second in the Intermediate Walk. Miranda Burke was second in the Junior Walk, Colin Griffin was third in the Junior Walk and Jasper Woods took fifth in the Junior Shot.

In the All Ireland Schools Championships Gary Burke finished fourth in the Intermediate Walk, Colin Griffin seventh in the Junior Walk, Miranda Burke seventh in the Girls Junior Walk and Ruth McLoughlin sixth in the Senior 3000m in a time of 11.46.

Gary Burke took the silver medal in a personal best of 9.16.3 in the 2000m Walk at the Tailteann Games Schools Inter Provincial in Santry behind Mark Lennon of Kilkenny CBS. Unfortunately Walks were not included in the Home Countries Schools International until 1997 as so Gary missed out on a Schools International vest.

1995/96

The Connacht Schools Regional Cross Country was again held in the Forest Park where the proposed construction works had not yet begun. Colin Griffin was 3rd in the Minor race, Gary Burke third in the Intermediate and Ruth McLoughlin fourth in the Senior event. Naomi Lee was 13th in the Minor Girls and Damien Martin tenth in the Junior race. The Intermediate team of Gary Burke (3), Damien Kelleher (6), David Page (7) and Thomas McLoughlin (49) were second behind Roscommon CBS. The Senior Girls Team of Ruth McLoughlin (4), Linda Tighe (7), Yvonne Maxwell (16) and Aileen Cassidy (32) were second to Lanesboro Community College. Other placings were - Minor Girls - Denise Murray (62), Minor Boys - Michael Cunningham (32), Junior Boys - Enda Kelleher (28)

The Finals were again held in Ballina. Colin Griffin was 4th in the Minor race and the Girls Team second (37) to Lanesboro CC (7) with Ballyhaunis CC (43) third. The positions were - Ruth McLoughlin (6), Linda Tighe (13), Yvonne Maxwell (18) Denise Murray(62), Aileen Cassidy (72). The Intermediate Boys positions were- David Page (18), Gary Burke (23), Damien Kelleher (26), Damien Martin (61), Thomas McLoughlin (69), Enda Kelleher (71).

In the All Ireland at St Augustine's College, Dungarvan, the Girls Team were tenth with Ruth McLoughlin finishing thirty second.

In the Regional Track & Field Competition Colin Griffin won the minor 1500m and was 4th in the 800m. Damien Martin won the Junior 100m and was 2nd in the 200m. Damien Kelleher won the Intermediate 1500m and was 2nd in the 800m. Denise Murray was 6th in the Junior Shot. Thomas McLoughlin was 10th in the Intermediate 1500m.

The Finals were, as usual, in Tullamore. Damien Martin won the 100m and was 2nd in the 200m. Damien Kelleher was 4th in Intermediate 800m and 5th in the 1500m. Gary Burke won the Intermediate Walk with a Connacht Record of 9.18. Naomi Lee won the Junior Walk with a Connacht Record of 6.19. Colin Griffin won the Minor 1500m and was 2nd in the Junior Walk. David Page was 5th in the Intermediate 3000m. Damien Kelleher was 4th in the Intermediate 800m and 5th in the 1500m

In the All Ireland Gary Burke was 3rd in the Intermediate Walk and Colin Griffin 4th in the Junior Walk. Damien Martin was 8th in the 100m and 7th in the 200m.

In the Tailteann Games in Santry Colin Griffin was 5th in the 2000m Walk and Naomi Lee 9th in the 800m.

1996/97

The Regional Cross Country was again held in Forest Park and as the construction work had not begun the Finals returned there also for another few years.

In the Finals Naomi Lee finished 8th in the Junior event, Gary Burke 11th in the Senior while Colin Griffin was 4th in the Intermediate and Ronan Griffin 12th in the Minor.

In the All Ireland at the Curragh Naomi Lee finished 69th and Colin Griffin 47th.

At the Regional Track & Field in Roscommon Ronan Griffin won the Minor 800m and 1500m. Damien Martin was 2nd in the 100m, 200m and 400m. Denise Murray won the Junior Discus.

The Connacht Finals in Tullamore saw Colin Griffin win the Junior Walk in a record time of 5.35.5 with Ronan Griffin second in 6.08.7. Ronan was also 2nd in the Minor 800m and 1500m. Naomi Lee was 2nd in the Junior Walk and Gary Burke 2nd in the Senior Walk behind Nigel Madden of Westport in 14.31.7.

Gary Burke completed his school athletics career with 3rd in the Senior 3000m Walk at the All Ireland. The winner here was Robbie Heffernan of North Mon who went on to become one of Ireland's most successful Walkers and finished eighth in the 20K Walk at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Damien Martin was 8th in the 200m with a personal best of 24.88. In the Tailteann Games in Tullamore Colin Griffin was 3rd behind David Kidd of Carlow and Martin Conroy of Ballina who became Ireland's first representatives in the Schools International Racewalk. The event was introduced this year and Kidd became the first winner. Naomi Lee was 8th in the Girls Walk and Damien Martin 8th in the 200m in 25.8.

1997/98

MORE ALL IRELAND TITLES AND INTERNATIONAL VESTS

At the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships in Boyle Colin Griffin was 11th in the Intermediate race, Linda Tighe 7th in the Senior, Claire Rehill third in the Minor and Ronan Griffin 13th in the Junior event.

In the Track & Field Championships Damien Martin won the Intermediate 400m and was 2nd in the 100m and 200m. Colin Griffin won the Intermediate Walk in a new Connacht Schools Record of 9.06.0. Emma Burke was 2nd in the Junior Walk and Naomi Lee 2nd in the Intermediate Walk. Ronan Griffin was 3rd in the Junior Walk.

In the All Ireland Colin Griffin won the Intermediate 2000m Walk in 8.39.35. Ronan Griffin was 3rd in the Junior Walk and Naomi Lee 6th in the Intermediate Walk. Emma Burke finished 6th in her event.

In the Tailteann Games Colin Griffin won the 3000m Walk in a new record of 13.37.4. Naomi Lee was 7th in the Girls Walk and Damien Martin 7th in both 100m and 200m, setting a time of 53.5 for the 400m where he finished 8th.

Colin Griffin won the 3000m Walk in the Schools International in Ayr emulating Eddie Leddy's feat of winning the 5000m in Hartford in 1969.

Also that summer Colin Griffin won the British AAA Under 17 Walk in Sheffield.

1998/99

The School Minor Girls Cross Country team of Eilis Quinn (2nd), Sara McLoughlin (3rd) and Anita Martin (7th) won the event in Boyle. Colin Griffin was 3rd in the Intermediate event and Ronan Griffin 27th. David Duignan was 3rd and Liam Ferguson 34th in the Minor race.

In the All Ireland in Ballyclare Colin Griffin finished 33rd. There was no All Ireland in Minor Grade.

At the Connacht Schools Track & Field Finals Colin Griffin won the Intermediate 2000m Walk in 8.32.9 with Ronan Griffin 2nd in 9.55.1. Eilis Quinn won the Minor 800m in 2.30.9 and was 2nd in the Junior Walk. In the Intermediate Walk Naomi Lee was 1st and Emma Burke 2nd Denise Murray was 3rd in the Intermediate Discus with a throw of 18.55m. Sara McLoughlin finished 5th in the Minor Long Jump.

In the All Ireland Colin Griffin won the Intermediate Walk in 8.38.80 with Ronan Griffin 3rd. Naomi Lee and Eilis Quinn were both 5th in their Walks. Denise Murray was 9th in the Intermediate Discus.

In the Tailteann Games 3000m Walk Ronan Griffin finished 5th.

BREAKTHROUGH IN BYDGOSZCZ

The International Governing Body IAAF introduced a new World Championship at Youths or Under 18 level this year and awarded the first competition to Bydgoszcz in Poland. The Racewalking event for boys was at 10K and as there were virtually no competitions for that age group in this part of the world and very few suitable 10K events at any level it became virtually impossible for Colin Griffin to get the qualifying standard of 47 minutes. The National Governing Body BLE were insisting on the achievement of the IAAF standards although a country could enter one competitor without achieving this difficult target.

A stroke of luck for Colin followed. BLE had selected a number of athletes for the European Youth Olympics also that summer where the standards were lower but the programme did not include walking. A dispute occurred between BLE and the Olympic Council of Ireland over the gear to be worn by the athletes. BLE withdrew the team from the Youth Olympics and decided to send them to the IAAF World Championships instead. Although he did not have the standard for the 10K Walk Colin had to be included in these circumstances as many of the others did not have it either.

What followed was an extraordinary performance that Sunday in the hot and tough conditions in Bdygoszcz. Colin walked a well judged race to finish seventh in a time of 46. 14, over a minute and a half faster than he had walked when finishing second in the British AAA Junior (Under 20) 10K Championships in Bedford a number of weeks earlier. Ahead of him were two Russians, a Japanese, a Pole, a Mexican and one athlete from Belarus.

As a result he was included in the newly established Irish Sports Council Carding Scheme for elite athletes which provided a small training grant and substantial backup services.

1999/2000

In the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships still held in the Forest Park, Ronan Griffin finished 17th in the Intermediate event, Eilis Quinn 5th in the Minor and Sara McLoughlin 9th in the Junior. Sara was 43rd in the All Ireland in Dungarvan.

At the Connacht Championships in Tullamore Colin Griffin won the Senior 3000m walk in 12.30.7 which was not alone a Connacht Schools Record but also inside the All Ireland record. Ronan Griffin won the Intermediate Walk in 9.26.2. Naomi Lee won the Senior Walk. Eilis Quinn won the Junior Walk and was 5th in the 800m. Sara McLoughlin was 3rd the Junior 1500m and Denise Murray was 2nd in both Shot and Discus.

A GREAT DAY IN TULLAMORE

The first Saturday of June 2000 in Tullamore Stadium was one of the most successful for the Ballinamore Schools for many years. Colin Griffin set a new Irish Schools Senior and Irish National Junior Record of 12.15.93 in winning the Senior 3000m Walk. Both figures still stand as National Records. In addition, Ronan Griffin (9.09.26) was 2nd to Pdraig Lennon of Kilkenny CBS in the Intermediate Walk and put himself in line for a Schools International vest, Eilis Quinn took the bronze medal in the Junior Walk in 5.57.8 and Naomi Lee also took bronze in the Senior Girls 3000m Walk in 18.16.73.

Denise Murray was 8th in the Shot and 9th in the Discus while Sara McLoughlin was 9th in the Junior 1500.

Ronan Griffin finished 2nd in the 3000m Walk in the Tailteann Games. With Padraig Lennon who won the event he qualified for the Irish Schools Team for the Home Countries International in Blackpool where he finished fourth in 14.13.0.

Colin Griffin won the National Junior track 10K Walk in Tullamore in a time of 43.53.11 which was inside the qualifying standard for the World Junior Championships in Santiago de Chile. He finished 23rd there in October 2000.

2000/2001

SCHOOL REPRESENTED IN USA INDOOR EVENT

In the Cross Country still held in Forest Park Eilis Quinn was 8th in the Intermediate race. Her sister Cathriona was 13th in the Minor with Sara McHugh 53rd. Paul Ellis finished 8th in the Minor Boys event.

The 2001 All Ireland was cancelled due to the foot and mouth disease threat.

On March 11th 2001 Ronan Griffin competed in the one mile Walk in the US National Scholastic Indoor Championships at the Armory Track & Field Centre, New York, finishing fourth in 7.09.04. His team mate Padraig Lennon of Kilkenny was disqualified for a technical offence. The race was won by Benjamin Shorey of Maine in 6.15.12 from Owen Schoppe of Maine (6.59.34) and Zachary Pollinger of New Jersey (7.08.55). Anne Loughnane of Loughrea finished 6th in the Girls event. The first six in each race received medals. The three Irish school athletes along with a Manager had been invited and their costs met by a wealthy Irish American benefactor.

At the track and field in Tullamore Ronan Griffin won the Senior Walk in 13.39.6 and Eilis Quinn was 3rd in the Intermediate Walk and also the 1500m. Cathriona Quinn was 2nd in the Junior Walk while brothers Paul and David Evans finished 2nd and 3rd in the Junior Boys event. Paul Ellis was 6th in the minor 1500m.

Ronan Griffin won the Senior 3000m Walk at the All Ireland in a time of 13.18.38. Eilis Quinn was 12th in the Intermediate 1500m and 7th in the Walk. Cathriona Quinn was 7th in the Junior Walk. Paul and David Evans finished 6th and 8th respectively in the Junior Boys Walk.

2001/2002

EILIS REPRESENTS IRISH SCHOOLS

The Connacht Schools Cross Country was still in Forest Park and Eilis Quinn finished 10th and Paul Evans 21st in their respective Intermediate races. In the Regionals prior to that Paul Ellis was 11th in the Junior with Martin Doonan 33rd. In the Minor race Ciaran Smith and Lorcan Kavanagh were placed 25th and 26th respectively.

In the All Ireland at Tinryland, Carlow, Eilis Quinn placed 50th.

This year the Track and Field Championships moved to the new Galway track after a number of years in Tullamore. Ronan Griffin won the Senior 3000m Walk in 13.48.4. Eilis Quinn won the 300m Hurdles and was also 3rd in the Intermediate 300m. Nevan McCartin was 2nd in the Intermediate Long Jump (5.41m), 3rd in the 800m and 6th in the 100m.

At the All Ireland in Tullamore Ronan Griffin retained his Senior 3000m Walk title in 13.36.90. Eilis Quinn was 5th in the Intermediate 300m in 42.72 and 6th in the 300m hurdles in 48.85.

In the Tailteann Games also in Tullamore Eilis Quinn took third in the 300m and secured a place on the Irish Schools Team for the Home Countries International as a member of the 4 x 300m Relay Team.

2002/03

Nevan McCartin took 10th position in the Senior race at the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships in Boyle.

He competed in the All Ireland Schools Championships in Dublin City University.

The Track & Field Championships were held in Galway. Eilis Quinn won the Senior 400m and was second in the 800m. Nevan McCartin won the Senior 800m in 2.11.0 and was third in the Long Jump with a mark of 5.46m.

Nevan McCartin ran a first lap of 53 seconds in the 800m at Tullamore in the All Ireland. This was away too fast for him and, indeed, the other competitors. He eventually finished 6th in 2.17.61. Eilis Quinn was 6th in the 400m in 62.11.

2003/04

Claire Plunkett finished 2nd and Fergal Ellis 3rd in their respective Minor events at the Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships in Boyle. The previous year, while still in Primary School, Claire Plunkett had won the gold medal in the 900m Walk at the National Community Games in Mosney.

In the Track & Field Fergal Ellis won the Minor 1500m and Claire Plunkett took 2nd in the Junior Walk.

At the All Ireland in Tullamore Claire Plunkett was placed 6th in the Junior Walk.

2004/05

ANOTHER SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL

The Connacht Schools Cross Country Championships are held in the Forest Park for the last time. This time a different construction programme was for real. This had been a wonderful venue for Connacht regionals and Championships since 1985. It had hosted the All Ireland Schools on three occasions and the Home Countries Schools International twice. Credit for this work goes to Pdraig Callaghan, then a teacher at St Mary's College in Boyle, who put trojan work into the organisation of those events and had acted as Connacht Schools Roscommon Regional secretary and Irish Schools Executive member for many years.

After winning the Regional Championship at Junior level Fergal Ellis was 2nd in the Finals. Claire Plunkett finished 15th in the Girls Junior.

In the All Ireland at St Augustine's College, Dungarvan, Fergal Ellis finished 9th in the Junior event and won a place on the Irish Schools Team for the Home Countries International in Wales where he finished 23rd. On the same day Claire Plunkett won the AAI Indoor Under 16 Walk in Nenagh.

In the Track & Field in Galway Fergal won the Junior 800m and 1500m while Claire Plunkett won the Walk.

In the All Ireland at Tullamore Claire Plunkett was 2nd in the Junior Walk in 6.19.1. Fergal Ellis was third in the 800m in 2.09.4 and 8th in the 1500m.

2005/06

With Forest Park no longer available the Roscommon Regional was broken up between the other three in Ballina, Tuam and Galway. We opted to compete in the Tuam Regional at St Jarlath's College, just beside what was once the old Tuam Racecourse where it all began for us.

Noel Plunkett won the Minor Boys race and Fergal Ellis the Intermediate. In the Minor girls Ciara O Dowd (3) and Niamh Griffin (7) qualified for the Finals. Claire Plunkett just missed out in the Intermediate Girls race.

The Finals were held in Athlone Institute of Technology. Fergal Ellis was injured and could not compete. Noel Plunkett was second in the Minor Boys race. Ciara O Dowd finished 12th and Niamh Griffin 14th in the Minor Girls event.

We, therefore, had no competitor in the All Ireland Schools at the DCU Grounds.

The Regional for track and field moved to Sligo's new track with the number of Regionals being reduced to two. These were held on the modern tracks in NUIG Galway and Sligo IT. Noel Plunkett, Ciara O Dowd, Niamh Griffin and Fergal Ellis were the four who competed and all qualified for Galway.

In Galway Noel Plunkett won the minor 200m and finished 2nd in the 1500m. Niamh Griffin was 5th in both the minor 200m and minor 1500m. Ciara O Dowd was seventh in the minor 800m and was unplaced in the minor long jump. She finished 2nd in the Junior Walk where Niamh Griffin finished 5th. Claire Plunkett was 2nd in the Intermediate Walk and Fergal Ellis won the Intermediate 3000m.

In the All Ireland Ciara O Dowd was 5th in the Junior Walk and Claire Plunkett 7th in the Intermediate Walk. Fergal Ellis was unable to compete.

2006/07

FERGAL REPRESENTS IRELAND AGAIN

We went to Tuam again for the Regional Cross Country. It was this writer's last regional Cross Country event held adjacent to the venue where it all began with P J Leddy's win forty two years earlier. It was also the last regional to be held in the grounds of St Jarlath's College, Tuam.

Four qualified for the Finals in Athlone IT.

Here Fergal Ellis, Noel Plunkett and Ciara O Dowd qualified for the All Ireland in DCU and Niamh Griffin missed out by one position.

For the All Ireland Niamh Griffin took the position of Ciara O Dowd who decided to concentrate on the upcoming racewalking events. In the Junior race Noel Plunkett finished 48th and Niamh Griffin 49th in the Girls event. Fergal Ellis was 57th in the Intermediate.

In the Track & Field Finals in Galway Fergal Ellis broke the Intermediate record set by 1980 Olympian Ray Flynn of St Mel's College in 1974 when he won in 1.57.8. Niamh Griffin won the Junior 800m in 2.26.4 and Ciara O Dowd was 2nd in the Junior Walk.

In the All Ireland in Tullamore Fergal Ellis ran a superb race in the Intermediate 800m to secure second position behind Mark McDonald of St Aidan's CBS, Cabra. Ciara O Dowd was 4th in the Junior Walk and Niamh Griffin 6th in the 800m.

Fergal was again second to Mark McDonald in the Tailteann Games Schools Interprovincial trial and both were selected for the event in the Schools International in Wales. Here Fergal ran a great race to take third behind the two English runners and was also a member of the Irish 4 x 400m team which finished second to England.

2007/08

On the retirement of Pdraig Griffin Paddy McDermott took over responsibility for Athletics in the School. At the Regional Cross Country in Belleek, Ballina, Laura O Dowd won the Minor race with Fergal Ellis finishing second in the Senior event. Ciara O Dowd and Niamh Griffin qualified from the Intermediate race in 4th and 7th positions respectively.

The Finals were held in Dartfield Equestrian Centre in Loughrea. Laura O Dowd won the minor title while Fergal Ellis was 4th in the Senior race. Ciara O Dowd was 7th and Niamh Griffin 16th in the Intermediate event.

Ciara O Dowd finished 40th in the All Ireland at Dartfield.

Early in April Fergal Ellis won the AAI National Indoor Under 19 400m and 800m on successive weekends.

After qualifying at the Regional in Sligo Laura O Dowd won the minor 800m at the Finals in Galway. Fergal Ellis won the Senior 400m and 800m double. Niamh Griffin won the Intermediate 300m and was 2nd in the 800m. Ciara O Dowd was 2nd in the Intermediate Walk. Noel Plunkett was 3rd in the Intermediate 800m.

At the All Ireland in Tullamore Fergal Ellis (1.54.11) was 2nd to Anthony Leighio of Crumlin in the Senior 800m. Ciara O Dowd (10.35.34) was 5th in the Walk and Niamh Griffin finished 6th in the 800m (2.24.78) and 7th (44.50) in the 300m. Fergal Ellis was 7th (53.89) in the 400m after the tough 800m.

Niamh Griffin was the only competitor from the school in the Tailteann Games in Santry where she finished 6th in 2.23.55 in the 800m.

When Laura O Dowd won the National Community Games Under 14 800m title in Mosney in August she became the first student to win a National Community Games title. The following month she won the Connacht Schools Minor Combined Events title in Galway.

SOME WHO MADE IT TO THE TOP

For many of those mentioned as is the case with participants in all sports and indeed in all schools the experience of athletics while in school in Ballinamore constituted the major part of their involvement in competitive sport. For others such as Kieran McGovern, a priest of the diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise who was one of the first group to compete there was to be a long career as a member of Tullamore Harriers. Likewise Pat Cassidy who was in the second year group enrolled at St Felim's enjoyed considerable activity in later years as a member of Donore Harriers. Others like Mickey Quinn, Frank Holohan and Maeve Quinn had successful careers playing Gaelic Football at a high level.

Of the first group of participants Pat Joe Leddy completed his education on an Athletic Scholarship at the University of East Tennessee and after representing Ireland in the International Cross Country Championship in 1968 and 1968 had a distinguished career in American College Athletics with ETSU. Following graduation he made use of his PE qualification to take up a position in the newly established St Clare's Comprehensive School in Manorhamilton where he taught until early retirement a few years ago. He played a considerable role in the administration of Connacht Schools and local county athletics. He is now involved in journalism and local radio.

Eddie Leddy completed secondary education in 1970 and took an Athletics Scholarship to East Tennessee State University joining his brother and other Irish athletes there that autumn. He represented Ireland on a number of occasions in track and field as well as cross country. He was first Irish finisher in the World Cross Country Championships in Ghent (1973) and Monza (1974). He was also on the Irish team in Glasgow (1978) and Limerick (1979) on both of which occasions John Treacy won this prestigious event for Ireland. The Limerick race was his final race for Ireland.

The highlight of his career was representing Ireland in the Olympic Games in Munich (1972) and Montreal (1976).

In 1972 he qualified for Munich in the 3000m Steeplechase where he finished ninth in a very tough heat in a time of 8.47.4. Four years later he competed in Montreal in both the 10,000m and 5000m. In the latter event he set a new Irish record of 13.40.54 while coming eleventh in his heat. In the 10000m heat he finished ninth in 28.55.9 He also competed in the 3000m Steeplechase at the European Championships in Rome in 1974. For a period in the mid 1970 before the advent of John Treacy he simultaneously held the Irish Senior Record for 3000m steeplechase, 5000m and 10,000m. Having graduated from ETSU with a business degree he settled in Tennessee.

Patricia Quinn completed second level in 1973 and worked in Dublin for some years afterwards before her marriage to Pdraig Griffin in 1978 and settling in Ballinamore. In 1977 she represented Ireland in the 4 x 400m in the European Cup semi final in Dublin and the following year won the BLE National 800m title in Belfield. She was selected on a number of occasions for the Irish Team in the Home Countries Cross Country match held in those years and in 1986 won a place on the Irish Team for the World Cross Country Championship in Switzerland. She won the Dublin Ladies Mini Marathon in 1988 and 1989 as well as representing Ireland in the World 15K and half marathon at venues which included Australia and Brazil. Having competed in the London Marathon on a few occasions she completed her career in mainstream athletics by winning the Belfast Marathon in May 1995. She has also been involved at local and national level in administration, coaching and team management.

For the younger ones the situation is still ongoing and Colin Griffin's selection to represent Ireland in the 50K walk at the Beijing Olympic Games is the highlight so far of a career which has seen him take part in numerous major world and European events at junior and senior level, set an Irish record in the 50K Walk and win two British AAA Senior Track Walk titles back to back in 2005 and 2006, the last two occasions on which those prestigious championships which go back over a century and a quarter have been held. At the Dudince European Grand Prix Meeting on March 21st 2007 he set an Irish Senior Record for the 50K Walk of 3:51.32 in winning the event and also surpassed the Olympic "A" Standard four hours. He holds the Irish Schools Senior 3000m Walk record as well as the National Junior records at 3000m, 5000m, 10K and 20K.

Fergal Ellis has become a student of Dublin City University and a member of the elite sportspersons group which receives support from the College.

The period covered has been good to this writer also with the opportunities having arisen of being BLE Director of Coaching between 1972 and 1981, Olympic Athletics Coach in 1972 and 1980 as well as President of BLE 1991-1994 and being honoured with a number of national team coach and management positions between 1970 and 1990.



Padraig Leyden recently appointed Principal of Fatima & Felim's Secondary School, Ballinamore

CONCLUSION

The support of Principals and co-operation of staff have been essential ingredients in the development of athletics, other sports and cultural activities in the Ballinamore Schools. In addition to transporting competitors in their private cars particularly in the early years the release of competitors from class and co-operation with both supervision and examinations have been of vital importance. When Fr Francis McKiernan became Bishop of Kilmore towards the end of 1972 he was succeeded by Fr Tom Keogan who remained principal until 1996. He was then succeeded by Fr Francis Duffy.

Sr Marie de Lourdes retired in September 1974 and passed away a number of weeks later. She was succeeded by Sr Kathleen Gormley who remained principal until the amalgamation in 1994. Christy Gallogly retired in 1991 and passed away decade later. He was succeeded by Brendan Burns who is a past student.

The School has down the years engaged in a wide number of sporting and cultural activities. There have been many highlights including the winning of the Connacht "C" senior Gaelic Football Championship in 1973, the Connacht "B" title in 1976 losing an All Ireland semi final to Armagh CBS in Mullingar and the All Ireland "C" title in 2000. A Boys Team won the Connacht Schools Badminton title in 1975 and took part in the round robin All Ireland with the other Provincial winners in Dublin. A Girls Basketball Team won an All Ireland title in 1996. The Junior Girls Football Team reached the All Ireland final in 2007. The school also competed successfully in Connacht Schools Golf and played some non championship Camogie games in the early 1970s.

In May 2001 the Minister for Education and Science Michael Woods T D announced a new single building Community School for Ballinamore. With Common Enrolment in operation forty years in August 2008 this building still has not progressed despite a strong ongoing campaign by the Parents' Association. At the end of August 2008 Fr Francis Duffy retired from Principalship and the succession of Padraig Leyden (himself a past student) to the post ushers in a new era for the Fatima and Felim's section of Ballinamore Post Primary School.

APPENDIX 1

ATHLETICS ROLL OF HONOUR 1965-2008

INTERNATIONAL SELECTION

Eddie Leddy 1968,1969,1970
 Patricia Quinn 1970, 1972
 Gregory Smyth 1979,1980
 Colin Griffin 1998, 1999, 2000
 Ronan Griffin 2000, 2001
 Ellis Quinn 2003
 Fergal Ellis 2005, 2007

ALL IRELAND INDIVIDUAL TITLES

Pat Joe Leddy	1967
Eddie Leddy	1968, 1969, 1970
Fiona Lee	1981
Gary Burke	1994
Colin Griffin	1998, 1999, 2000
Ronan Griffin	2001, 2002

ALL IRELAND TEAM TITLES

Senior Girls Cross Country 1971

ALL IRELAND TEAMPLACINGS

1968	Intermediate Boys	4th
1970	Intermediate Girls	2nd
1972	Senior Girls	3rd
1973	Senior Girls	2nd

TAILTEANN GAMES Winners

1969	Eddie Leddy	3 miles
1972	Patricia Quinn	U-17 800m
1998	Colin Griffin	3000m Walk

TAILTEANN GAMES Silver Medals

1971	Patricia Quinn	U-17 800m
1972	Patricia Quinn	U-19 800m
1995	Gary Burke	3000m Walk
2000	Ronan Griffin	3000m Walk
2007	Fergal Ellis	800m

TAILTEANN GAMES Bronze Medals

1968	Eddie Leddy	Mile
1969	Patricia Quinn	U-15 800m
1997	Colin Griffin	3000m Walk
2002	Eilis Quinn	300m

CONNACHT SCHOOLS TEAM TITLES

1968	Intermediate Boys	
1969	Junior Girls	
1970	Intermediate Girls	
1971	Senior Girls	
1972	Senior Girls	
1973	Senior Girls	Intermediate Girls
1987	Minor Girls	
1994	Senior Girls	
1995	Senior Girls	
1999	Minor Girls	

CONNACHT SCHOOLS INDIVIDUAL TITLES

Name	Cross Country	Track & Field
Pat Joe Leddy	3	2
Michael McTague	1	1
Eddie Leddy	4	7
Patricia Quinn	5	15
Margaret McKiernan	1	0
Margaret McGovern	2	0
Gregory Smyth	0	2
Fiona Lee	0	1
Gary Smyth	0	1
Patrick Maguire	0	1
Maeve Quinn	0	1
Pam Cryan	0	1
Siobhan O Rourke	1	0
David Hanly	0	2
Ruth McLoughlin	1	4
Gary Burke	0	2
Colin Griffin	0	5
Damien Martin	0	2
Naomi Lee	0	3
Eilis Quinn	0	4
Ronan Griffin	0	3
Nevin McCartin	0	1
Fergal Ellis	0	7
Claire Plunkett	0	1
Noel Plunkett	0	2
Niamh Griffin	0	2
Laura O Dowd	1	2

APPENDIX 2

SCHOOLS ATHLETICS ORGANISATION

Very little of any of the above could have happened but for the fact that structural organisations had been put in place down the years to organise second level schools athletes and that large numbers of men and women had given a vast amount of their free time in pursuit of this.

Organised Connacht Schools athletics dates from 1937 when a Fr Jack Flannery of Garbally College, Ballinasloe, set up the inaugural championship with five schools taking part- Garbally, St Jarlath's, St Mary's of Galway, St Joseph's of Galway and Colaiste Einde in Galway. In 1940 a protégé of his called Kevin Ryle won the Senior All Ireland 880 yards and having studied for the priesthood took up a teaching position in Garbally. In the interim, the Championships were not held in 1941 and 1942 due to the Emergency. Fr Ryle studied the coaching of athletics in the UK and during the late forties and fifties spread the interest and knowledge around numerous schools in Connacht and elsewhere.

At national level a loose organisation called the Irish Secondary Schools Athletics Association emerged with three autonomous provinces, Connacht, Leinster and Munster. It's function was to hold an Annual General Meeting late each autumn and an annual All Ireland Schools track and field championship the hosting of which rotated among the three provinces. This was led in the early sixties by Fr Tom Lonergan who taught in Dublin's Catholic University School and in his last few years (he died in 1973 while still Honorary President of Irish Schools Athletics) in Chanel College, Coolock. Others who were prominent in administration during the sixties included Br L S O Muireagain (St Declan's, Cabra), Jack Sweeney (CUS), Sam Evans and Bill O Connor (both of High School).

In 1961 senior inter schools cross country was contested in the Connacht Schools- the race taking place in Tuam Racecourse late on a March Wednesday afternoon. The first All Ireland was in Garbally in 1964 and the Schools International commenced in Glasgow in 1972.

Connacht Schools track and field took place on a Sunday in May in one of three GAA venues, Claremorris, Tuam Stadium or Duggan Park, Ballinasloe. The prominent officers of Connacht Schools in the sixties included Fr Ryle who was President, Fr Paddy Williams, Fr Brendan Kavanagh and Fr Tom Waldron of St Jarlath's, Br Simeon of St Joseph's, Galway, Fr John Green of Summerhill and Fr Augustine Kelly of St Mary's in Galway. In October 1969 Frs Williams and Waldron retired as joint hon secretaries and Padraig Griffin did one year in the position being succeeded by Fr Michael O Malley of St Jarlath's and then Fr Des Fahey of St Colman's, Claremorris who held the position for a few years.

The positions of Chairperson of Connacht Schools down the years since then has been held by Br Canice Tierney of St Joseph's, Padraig Callaghan of St Mary's, Boyle, Michael Leydon of St Jarlath's, Michael Roche of Moneenageisha Vocational School, Galway, Pat Corcoran (Summerhill), Daithi Quinn (St Jarlath's) and Fergal Woods of Marymount, Carrick on Shannon. Maura Allen of Mercy College, Roscommon, has held it since 1987.

Following Fr Fahey secretaries have included Ray Leonard of Mount St Michael, Claremorris, Fr Anthony O Grady of Ballinafad College, Br Canice, Michael Leydon, P J Leddy of St Clare's, Manorhamilton, Matt Flesk of Tuam CBS and the current incumbent Mary Barrett of St Bridget's, Loughrea who has held it since 1995. P J Leddy, a past pupil of this school, held the position from 1983 to 1989 and 1990 to 1995. He is currently vice chairperson. Treasurers have included Fr Martin Newell (St Colmans), Danny McHugh (St Colman's), Tony O Neill (Castlereah), Michael Leydon, Fr Mairtin O Morain (St Jarlath's) and Fr Ronnie Boyle (St Jarlath's). The current treasurer is Michael Roche who took over in 2000.

There have been fewer office holders at national level where a four province Irish Schools Athletics Association evolved in the late sixties following the entry of Ulster Schools in 1967 and the extension of Leaving Certificate here to Vocational Schools at the same time. Connacht ran their first Girls Championships in 1969 and the following year a full programme of Cross Country (six races) for boys and girls as was held in Tuam Racecourse with a full track & field programme in Santry Stadium in June. Around that time Br O Muireagain who was national secretary was based for a few years in Tuam CBS before being transferred back to O Connell Schools. The competition structure has continued largely unchanged since.

On January 2nd 1970 Padraig Griffin attended his first Irish Schools AGM in Dublin representing Connacht with Fr Kevin Ryle (who was elected Chairman) and Br O Muireagain who was re elected secretary. Fr Ryle served for a few years as Chairman and then Honorary President of the ISAA. He was succeeded as Chairman by Darcy Chillingworth of Ulster as Chairman and by Jack Sweeney as honorary President. His successor was Fr Ronald Bennett of Gormanston College and after him came Michael Hunt of Rathmines College. Br O Muireagain was succeeded as secretary by Sean Nyhan of St Finbarr's College, Farranferris, who served for very many years until a new structure saw the post of Administrative Director put in place.

Fr Barney King S M of CUS became treasurer in the early 1970's and was succeeded by Fr J. Madden of Terenure College. His successor in the early 1980s was John Shields and under the new structures the position of Financial Director is held by Derek Clements of Drumglass H. S, Dungannon. Billy Cunningham of Grosvenor High School was responsible for International arrangements in the early years to be succeeded by Michael Hunt. The current International Competition Director is George Barclay of Cookstown High School. Also from Cookstown HS came long serving administrator Robert Stevenson.

In the last few years the Irish Schools Athletics Association has become an affiliated member of the Athletics Association of Ireland which is to become a Company Limited by Guarantee from January 1st 2009. It has one seat on the Board of AAI.

In 1963 the Willwood Company which sold a number of food products joined the Irish Secondary Schools Athletics Association and other parties interested in under age athletics to found the Willwood Tailteann Foundation. This organisation provided a Junior Athletics Tailteann Games (along with other sporting and cultural events) based on the Tailteann Multisport Festival held in Dublin in 1924, 1928 and 1932. Because of the divisions in Irish Athletics it was not feasible to attempt to revise the Senior Games at that time.

In the early years competitions were held in Croke Park and during the 1970s the competition became an Inter Provincial which assisted in the selection of the Irish Team for the Schools International. Distinctive Tailteann medals continued to be awarded as well as a number of perpetual trophies. The Games have continued as an Inter Provincial down to 2008.

RECORD SPONSORSHIP COMES TO AN END

In 1986 Willwood became the full sponsor of Irish Schools Athletics after a spell of sponsorship by Esso and one year by the Ulster Bank and under the brands of Nestle and later Kit Kat poured huge sums of money into Irish Schools Athletics. This year the long running sponsorship (forty six years must be close to a world record for a continuous sponsorship) comes to an end. The support will be greatly missed as will the personal involvement of representatives like Ciaran Sullivan, Paddy Marron and Bill Hyland (now retired) who for many years has been an outstanding contributor to the organisation and development of second level School Athletics in Ireland. It is fitting to end this little booklet with a tribute to Willwood/Nestle for their magnificent contribution to our sport and the support which more than spanned the entire duration covered by this work.

The Publishers acknowledge a generous contribution towards this publication from National Irish Bank under it's Community Grants Scheme.



Eddie Leddy in Munich

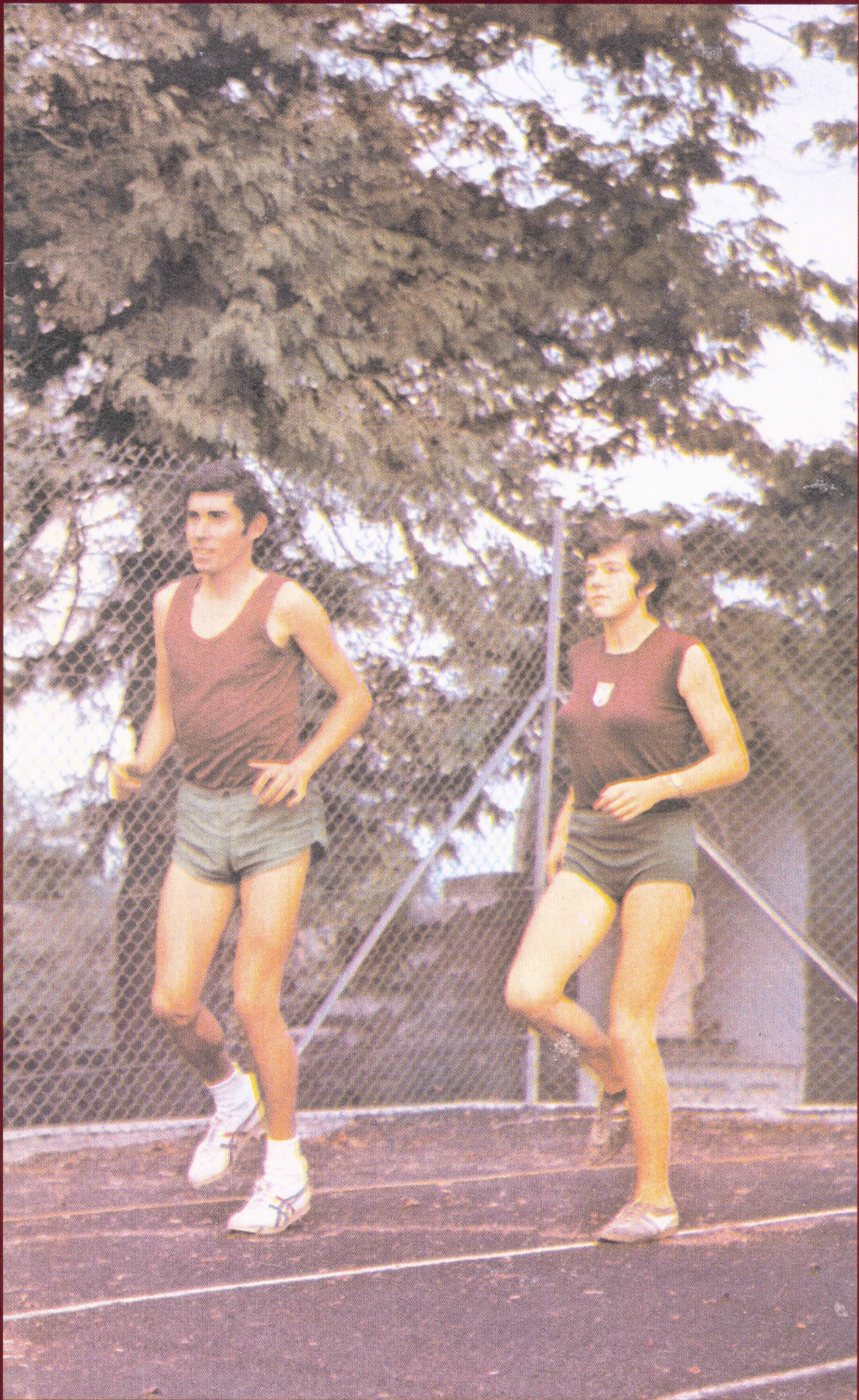


Colin Griffin in Beijing

LEABHARLANN CHONTAE LIATROMA



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Eddie Leddy and Patricia Quinn
Irish Schools Internationals July 1970
Courtesy John Keaney and Leitrim Guardian