

Leitrim Peoples Contribution to the

Business Community

in **LONDON**

Since the fifties Irish people have emigrated to the bright lights of British cities in search of gainful employment. With a population of around 60 million there is a huge demand in a diversity of manufacturing and service industries in Britain.

Irish people with a capacity for hard work and a spark of enterprise have helped to satisfy the demands of a growing population. In the early days the construction industry attracted a huge number of Irishmen and still does so today. Household names like Murphy and McNicholas started their climb to the top in a flurry of activity immediately after the war years.



Francis O'Hagan of F.J. O'Hagan Civil Engineering and Gerry Keany Managing Director of Cara Stationery pictured with Albert Reynolds at a recent function in the Irish Club.

PROMINENT LEITRIM CONSTRUCTION FIRMS

The British Construction industry includes a number of Leitrim owned and managed enterprises among their ranks.

Ray O'Rourke originally from Ballinamore is managing director of the O'Rourke group one of the largest private construction companies in the U.K. The group employs 700 people directly and was responsible for building hotels in Barcelona for the Olympics in 1992. Henry O'Rourke Ltd., the groups Irish Subsidiary, was involved in work on the Jamestown/Drumsna by pass.

Another Ballinamore man Pat Gallagher is head of the Gallagher group which has extensive quarrying and construction interests in Kent. The groups annual turnover is approximately £16 million.

The PB Donoghue group of companies founded by Ben Donoghue is a very well known firm throughout London and the Southeast. The firm is based in North London and Ben's family is heavily involved in the day to day running of the business.

MCGOVERN - AUGHAVAS

McGovern - Aughavas is a synonymous with Leitrim's famous Connacht Championship win in 1994. Anthony

and Peter McGovern in London, in conjunction with their brother James in Dublin have provided generous sponsorship over the years to the Leitrim G.A.A.. As well as McGovern Brothers (Haulage) Ltd., McGovern's Taverns are landmark buildings in North West London.

MANORHAMILTON/GLENFARNE

North Leitrim people have also contributed over the years to the business community in London.

The five O'Hara brothers Michael, Patrick, Sean, Seamus and Larry run O'Hara Bros. Surfacing Ltd. This very successful company has a number of local authority contracts on its books. The family come from Kilroosk near Manorhamilton and travel to Ireland frequently to see Leitrim playing. Pat O'Hara left Manorhamilton in 1963 and the company was set up in 1973.

Francis O'Hagan from Glenfarne, together with his brother Raymond, emigrated to London in 1988. Francis had a plant hire business which carried out contracts for Leitrim and Sligo County Councils prior to leaving Ireland.

In 1996 his civil engineering firm - F.J. O'Hagan Civil Engineering carried out major contracts for Kent County Council, McAlpines, Thames Water and Trafalgar House.

Leitrim people are to be found in top management positions in numerous London firms – John McManus in C.J. O'Shea (builders of Cardiff Arms Park), Jim Foley in McGrath brothers, John McGarry in J.J. Coughlans. The listing is almost inexhaustible – Peter Fee of Feecons, Sean Faughan, of SF Builders, all carrying on a proud tradition and the many buildings in London and the surrounding counties are a testimony to their endeavours.

BANKING

In the field of banking Leitrim is well represented amongst the main banks in London. Frank Keegan from Mohill is manager of the Bank of Ireland in Kilburn – one of the banks largest branches in the U.K.. Frank a long time member of the Tara G.A.A. Club in London was a member of the committee which organised the Leitrim Associations fortieth anniversary dinner dance in London.

Another staunch supporter of the Leitrim anniversary celebra-

tions was Jim Burke. The ever popular Jim is manager of the Allied Irish Banks branch in Crickelewood. A keen golfer is Jim and he plays in numerous charity events.

PUBLICANS

Londoners won't be able to blame Leitrim folk if they can't slake their thirst as Leitrim publicans are dotted all over London!

Tony and James McGovern of McGovern's Taverns were mentioned earlier. Drumshanbo man Mick Curry is the host of the Fox and Hounds in North London and was chairman of the Leitrim Association in 1989. Among the numerous other publicans who contributed to recent Leitrim Anniversary celebrations are Pat Gilbride from Kinlough, Drumshanbo's Dorothy Crawford, Tommy Lynch from Gowel, John O'Rourke from Tarmon and Con McGlynn from Aughavas.

SERVICE INDUSTRIES

Service industries, including in recent years the fields of accountancy and computers, have increas-

ingly provided employment for emigrants. The Darcy brothers from Ballinamore, Paul, John and Frank are all involved in accountancy in U.K. Another brother, Gabriel, is a director with Kerry Foods in Surrey. Cara Stationery formed by Glenfarne man Gerry Keany supplies office products, stationery and office furniture to firms all over Britain. Joe Ellis from Drumshanbo is a managing director of H.M. Systems plc. This firm is involved in the supply, installation and support of computer systems including network installation. These people have emigrated to Britain since the mid eighties.

An article such as this can only hope to cover some of the numerous areas in business where Leitrim people can be located.

Leitrim is reputed to have the highest proportion of students as a percentage of population in third level education. Therefore we can expect that the trend of Leitrim people taking an active part in business wherever they locate, to continue.

PUBLICATION OF THESIS ON CONTROVERSIAL CLERICAL TRIAL

IN DECEMBER 1827, REV. THOMAS MAGUIRE parish priest of Drumkeerin, Co. Leitrim was tried in the Court of Exchequer, Dublin for the seduction of a local Protestant woman, Anne McGarrahan, daughter of the village innkeeper. The trial, in which the priest was defended by Daniel O'Connell and Richard Sheil took place over two days before a jury of Catholics and Protestants.

An M.A. thesis, which examines this famous trial, is to be published by the Irish Academic Press in August 1997. Written by Proinsias Ó Duígneáin, a native of Drumkeerin, for the Department of Modern History, Maynooth College, the thesis examines the religious tensions in Leitrim shortly before the granting of Catholic Emancipation, 1829. It describes in detail the circumstances out of which the trial arose and also the courtroom drama which resulted in widespread destruction in the streets of Dublin and in acts of triumphalism, boycotting and vicious revenge in and around the village which spawned this case of seduction. The author also documents and analyses the roles of the Orange Order, the Free Masons and the Catholic Steelboys in the affair.



THOMAS MAGUIRE - 1827