

The Last Word

Brendan Harvey

IT IS THAT time of year again. As we approach the end of another calendar year, it's also *Leitrim Guardian* time, specifically the launch of the 44th edition. Much has happened in the last twelve months since the Shannon Key hotel in Rooskey hosted the arrival of the 43rd helping from the printing presses. It was a wonderful night, big crowds from all parts of Leitrim and beyond and I was honoured to be installed as *Leitrim Guardian Person of the Year* for 2011. It's always special being singled out by your peers but to have it done by the *Leitrim Guardian* on

behalf of the people of one's own county is different, emotional and very special.

In accepting the award, as I said at the time, I felt I was representing the people of Sliabh-an-Iarainn, my ancestors and all the many people who emigrated, died on famine ships or stayed at home and eked out a living on the unforgiving mountain side. In short for those who lived there in the past and those who live there at present. I undertook then to make myself available to any communities or groups who wished me to attend their functions and I have done this to the best of my ability.

20th JANUARY...

My year of engagements commenced with a function in the Herbert Park hotel, Ballsbridge, Dublin and the 25th

anniver-

sary of the

Leitrim

GAA

supporters

club.

Leitrim

people

generally

are sports

mad and

particularly

when it

comes to

Gaelic

football.

Were it not

for the

great work

done by so many people it would be quite impossible for Leitrim, with its limited resources to field so many teams every year. In this regard the supporters club formed by Eamonn Duignan in 1986 and developed with the help and co-operation of the County Board has been outstanding. Yearly the Dublin side of the promotion make an enormous contribution and particular thanks for this must go to Joe Leydon, Michael Feeney, Seamus Lavin, Seán Flynn, Gerry Flynn, Barry Donnellan, Frank Darcy, James McGovern, Gerry and Ciaran Mahon, Jackie Dolan, the Sorohans, the Deanes and really all Leitrim people in Dublin. Eamonn look what you started! It was a wonderful night and many old friendships were renewed.

25th FEBRUARY ...

County Associations always do

a wonderful service whether in

Dublin, Provincial towns or

outside the country. The

Leitrim Peoples Association

Sligo founded in 1969 and

getting stronger by the year

does a great job and yearly

passes over a substantial sum

to a local charity. Kay Horan,

one of its founders and still its

secretary, kindly invited me to

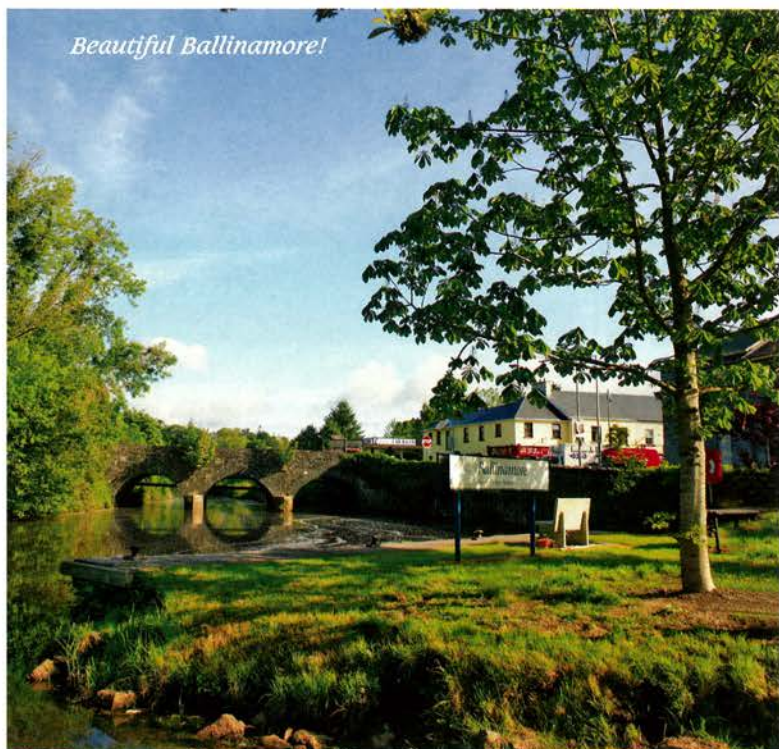
attend their annual dinner

dance. There was plenty of

dancing and speech making

and a very happy crowd had a

Beautiful Ballinamore!





great night, well organised by Seamus Dolan, Chairman and MC, Peter Kiernan PRO, Secretary Kay, Mary Clancy, Assistant Secretary and Frances Kelly. Dr Christopher Jones, Bishop of Elphin was deservedly presented with the Michael Higgins Memorial award and Michael's widow, Evelyn was in attendance. I was to meet many old friends: Oliver and Joan Hazlett, Seán and Margaret Sweeney, Terry Gannon, Kay and Declan McCabe, Peter and Margaret Farrell, Dermot Leyden, Tommy and Florence Reynolds.

Not much time to enjoy the Sligo fresh air as Nuala and I had to check in at Knock Airport at 11 the next morning and head for the London annual dance.

Above: Pat Gallagher with friends and family enjoying the golf at Ballinamore.
Below: Launch of 2011 Leitrim Guardian. Ollie Honeyman, Brendan Harvey, John O'Mahoney & Joe Reynolds.





Launch of Wheelyboat (Ernest's Pride) at Lough Rynn: Howard Cusack, Paul Beck, Rosaleen Kielty, Brendan Harvey, Adrian McKeague & Peter Logan.

26th FEBRUARY ...

Leitrim People's Association Dinner Dance at the Crown Moran Hotel, Cricklewood. A great dinner dance and a massive crowd attended. Many people travelled from Leitrim and in this regard a special thanks for the sponsorship of the Gallaghers Group, Ben

The 25th anniversary GAA supporters club celebrations. Eamonn Duignan, Mike Feeney, Joe Flynn, Brendan Harvey, Declan Darcy, Joe Leyden and Joe Flynn.



Donoghue, Mc Governs, Moffatts, Mulveys and O'Haras. Great to meet the Redicans, Keegans, Angela and Gerry Geoghegan, the Keegan girls Marie and Veron and countless other people—I had a ball.

17th APRIL ...

Lough Rynn, Mohill. Launch of Wheelie Boat (Ernest's Pride). The coming together of Leitrim Association of People with Disabilities and the Rinn-Shannon Angling Club produced a very novel project, a wheelie boat specially rigged out and amenable for people with disabilities. The boat was launched in the fantastic setting of Lough Rynn. It was a beautiful sunny day along the lake-side with Sliabh-an-Iarainn as a

backdrop. I met some wonderful people and enjoyed chatting to people like Howard Cusack, John Ward, Andy McGovern, Tina Slevin, Eileen Boyle and of course Rosaleen Kielty. I subsequently enjoyed a couple of days fishing at the invitation of some good friends. Thanks lads!

18/19th JUNE ...

In golfing circles around Ballinamore mid June is associated with the Gallagher Golf Classic. Padraig and Michéal empty out their offices at Leitrim House in Kent and bring the entire group to Ballinamore. It's great for the area and particularly for the Golf Club.

More than Golfers join in the celebrations that follow. This can sometimes include a trip across the mountain and a very pleasant stop to re-fuel for the journey back home.

6th AUGUST ...

Aughnasheelin hosted a special fund raising night in aid of the North West Hospice. It was a great success due to the magnificent efforts of Aughnasheelin people. Wonderful music was provided by the Annaly Céili Band and the result was a substantial cheque for the hospice.

7th AUGUST ...

The opening of the 46th Ballinamore Festival. Having received an invitation in early March I was delighted to open

the Festival in my home town. I remember well the great people who started the event in 1966 and I know that they would have been very pleased that it has stood the test of time. Unfortunately most of them have now passed on.

This festival rightly boasts of fun and entertainment for all the family with one of the main attractions during the week being the long running and very successful Agricultural Show.

14th OCTOBER

Being *Leitrim Person of the Year* brought me to events I might otherwise not have considered attending and what a shame that would have been in the case of Johnnie Lawson's Art Exhibition, 'Once I was a child', in the Leitrim Sculpture Centre, Manorhamilton.

Seán O'Reilly, Director, gave a wonderful, informative

At the exhibition of 'Once I was a child': Sean O'Reilly, Director of the Leitrim Sculpture Centre & Brendan Harvey who launched the exhibition observe the work of artist Johnnie Lawson as he looks on.



introduction and Bláithín was the perfect hostess.

In his work Johnnie makes a real connection with the emotions attached to memory. Using a unique style he explores the much travelled path of regression to childhood and captures the emotions that accompany such a journey.

This idea was the theme of the evening with a tea and home baking reception served

2011 Guardian launch: Hubert McMorrow, Aoife Duignan, Brendan Harvey, Bláithín Gallagher.

in an atmosphere of a country kitchen. This was Art with a difference and I enjoyed it very much. Great to see it also being enjoyed by so many people like Peggy and Catriona Horan, Michael Colreavy TD, Fr Sexton, Cllr Seán McSharry and the Gallagher family, Mohill.

16th NOVEMBER ...

The Bush Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon. I was privileged to have been invited to address the Carrick-on-Shannon and District Historical Society on the subject of Sliabh-an-Iarainn (The Life and Times of a Mountain Community). It was for me a real labour of love but also a little intimidating to



Brendan harvey, family and friends at the launch of the Leitrim Guardian 2011

speak to such a large, well informed crowd. The Society has been pro-active over the last number of years and has done some great work in this area.

It turned out to be a wonderful night and as usual the atmosphere and ambience in the Bush Hotel was first class. Undoubtedly, this was for me, a highlight of the year.

25th NOVEMBER...

The Bush Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon. As I write about this last engagement on 17th November I have just another week plus to go before I hand over to next year's Leitrim People of the Year — The Corn Mill Theatre Group, Carrigallen. They are very worthy recipients of the award and have produced and performed so much quality

drama both at national and local level. They have brought honour and renown to Carrigallen and to Leitrim. I wish them the best and hope they enjoy it as much as I did. I have known many of them personally over the years and I am certain they will do a wonderful job.

Due to circumstances beyond my control I was unable to be with my American friends for St Patrick's Day and for this I apologise, Lads and Lassies I'll make it up to you again.

As my year as Leitrim honorary Ambassador comes to a conclusion I can say for certain that the spirit of the Guardian's Founding Fathers is alive and well. The objectives as set out in those early editions have been achieved and surpassed. Yearly it brings

the news from every parish to the four butts of the winds and to wherever Leitrim people or their descendents live. It is like a well written Christmas card.

It still remains a fact that the roads and boreens in Leitrim are long and narrow and the hills are steep but so long as we continue to produce people of vision and ideals coupled with courage and imagination then Leitrim will continue to be a place where people can live in peace and comfort and enjoy the things that don't cost anything.

Finally, I thank the Head Sheaf committee for nominating me, the Guardian committee for electing me and you the readers and general public for accepting me and making the year a very special one indeed.

UP LEITRIM!