

Editorial

WELCOME TO the 50th issue of the *Leitrim Guardian*.

On behalf my co-editors, Fr Gerry Comiskey, Eamonn

Daly, Tommy Moran and Myra Reynolds, I wish you joy and contentment as you read through the many pages of this bumper 50th issue of the *Leitrim Guardian*. Thank you to Hubert McHugh for his dedication to his community and their well being, and serving so well as ambassador for the *Leitrim Guardian*. This year we acknowledge Michael Fox, our Founder. You can read a wonderful article by Dominic Rooney, which tries to capture the essence of his life, rooted in community contribution.



Photo: Heike Thiele

In between the lines of the roll of honour on the back of this journal, which lists people who have been acknowledged by the Leitrim Guardian Committee for their great contribution to our society, are many, many more people who are busy, constantly beavering away, keeping the cogs of our society oiled and moving, not always smoothly. Yet each and every day these people get up and ask, to coin the words of one of our famous diaspora, what can I do today to help my fellow women and men, children and community? A tiny fraction of these people are publicly, deservedly lauded, but so many keep going without recognition. The day they stop helping is the day our society is doomed. Michael Fox, in establishing the Leitrim Guardian set out to bolster confidence, inspire optimism and promote pride in the Leitrim people, at home and abroad. The Leitrim Guardian would portray a new image of a revitalised Leitrim and her people. Did Michael Fox imagine that we would be here fifty years later remembering him, honouring the work that he started, standing tall as a proud pluralist community, who are successfully encouraging people from around the country and the world to come and settle in our beautiful county, where they can enjoy a better quality of life, in a welcoming community. The Kilty Live campaign epitomises much of what Michael Fox set out to achieve. This community gathered their resources and put them to good use. As a result of their hard work and commitment they have saved their school and are in the process of regenerating their village while planning how to sustain the future of their community.

As you read through the many articles featured in this edition you will see how strong the engagement with community is in Leitrim. We are a resilient people. One of our literary award winners Lionel Mullaly tells the story of escape from terror and an uncertain welcome to our

community. We must reflect on what is going on in the world, so much human displacement. What can we do to make the lives of refugees and immigrants a little more bearable? Even a simple welcoming smile can change someone's day. Our own people had to flee in droves from our shores in order to sustain their lives and their futures. It behoves us all to reflect on how we would like to be welcomed. Stop and think for one moment about the horrors experienced and endured by those seeking safe shelter in our land. As we welcome our brothers and sisters to their new home we can help them transform from refugee to resident, encouraging their full participation in our society. As they become fully included members of our community we can look forward to the day where we may be cheering them on as they represent our county and even our country. We want to be able to look back with pride at how we contributed to their integration. Encouraging such inclusiveness and cultural diversity in our community will be part of our regeneration.

In this issue you will find stories from our diaspora, first, second and third generation, a much needed reminder of our own dependency on other lands, which in a world of rising right wing selfishness, seems so quickly forgotten.

Over the past two decades Leitrim has become a hub for arts, culture and heritage, which is evidenced through the following pages with stories from the Leitrim Sculpture Centre, The Glens Centre, The Dock, and Leitrim Design Centre. We can read about drama, filmmaking, cinema, music, and dancing. Brian Leyden writes about how creative community collaboration has resulted in our becoming a home for artists, while Vincent Woods suggests a way of building on the amazing arts infrastructure that has been developed now in Leitrim. As always we have many stories, poems and articles which cover a variety of themes. The adjudicators had a very busy and difficult time choosing the award winners.

The stories within these pages are testament to the strong community spirit that is alive in Leitrim. I would say we are a confident, resourceful people who are very proud of our place. I would like to think Michael Fox would agree that the Leitrim of today reflects his ambitions in establishing the Leitrim Guardian. We owe Michael and all those who work quietly and tirelessly for the betterment of our community, a great debt of gratitude. On behalf of my co-editors, I wish you all a wonderful year ahead and easy reading. Enjoy the 50th issue of your journal.

Bláithín Gallagher

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Acknowledgements

The Leitrim Guardian Committee would like to thank everyone who helped in compiling this year's edition.

The Editors and the committee of the Leitrim Guardian wish to extend their heartfelt sympathy to Tony Fahy and family on the death of his wife Janet.

*Fred Corcoran, photographer; Glencar Waterfall: Front Cover
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Our adjudicators for their work on the Youth & Adult Literary Awards.

The adjudicator of the Adult Literary and Poetry Awards is Fergus Mulligan, publisher and author: www.publishing.ie

We regret that some articles had to be held over due to pressure of space.

Front & back cover Concept & Design

Fiachra Gallagher Lawson; Tony Fahy; Julian Stewart & Bláithín Gallagher

Inside back cover

Tony Fahy

This year the Leitrim Guardian is launched by Vincent Woods

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