

The Winds of Change

The winds of change are blowing through Leitrim. The face of the county has altered. The minds of the people are in a positive frame.

For too long we bemoaned the empty homesteads, the neglected farms, the replacement of people with trees, the potholed roads, the lack of resources, the absence of employment, the uncertain future for our young people, the lure of the emigrant trail.

What happened? Did the gods wave a magic wand?

Maybe we just started believing in ourselves.

From the mid 1990s one could sense a greater pride in the Leitrim psyche—fuelled, no doubt, by the success of the county team, a Eurovision win for Charlie McGettigan and the re-opening of the multi-million Shannon Erne Waterway. Then along came an international company, Masonite Ireland, to set up home in Drumsna. The world began to take notice of Leitrim. But more importantly, we began to take notice of ourselves.

The economic boom suddenly seems to reverberate through Leitrim and reflects itself in an unprecedented mushrooming of housing estates and apartment blocks. Rushy fields become expensive building sites and abandoned houses become ultra-modern homes. Townlands become villages and villages become towns. Another international company, MBNA, makes an act of faith in Leitrim. Small businesses expand

and innovative entrepreneurs set up shop. Local communities respond to the promptings of stage agencies. Tourism in the county caters for a more cosmopolitan clientele. The high standards of our roads become the envy of others. Emigrants begin to trickle back home. Leitrim becomes trendy.

But surely it's all a dream; maybe we better stay on the negative side. Won't the bubble burst? Who'll occupy all these new houses? Will Kilburn and Broadway beckon again? Won't it be back to the same old story?

No, Leitrim is transformed—in body, but especially in mind. We look at our county with different eyes now. Yes, we do need more industry and a government department and...

But nothing will come if we play ourselves down, if we sell ourselves short.

The Leitrim Guardian 2001 attempts to mirror the new spirit in the county and to acknowledge the contribution of individuals, organisations, businesses and public bodies in making Leitrim the vibrant society it is today—a place that has a future for coming generations. We have also tried to retain our regard and respect for our culture, heritage, history and most of all our people.

The world has shrunk, but Leitrim expands.

Ar aghaidh linn le céile.
Rath Dé ar mhuintir Liatroma sa
bhaile is thar lear.

Tommy Moran
EDITOR

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Leitrim Guardian Coat of Arms

The coat of arms, designed by Des Smith and executed by Sean Gill, chief Draftsman, Leitrim Co. Council, incorporates the crests of Leitrim's major clans combined with the scroll and quill, symbols of literary endeavour.

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- M J McManus Award sponsored by McCartin Bros., Newtowngore (winner Jim Murphy for "Closing the Distance").
- Sligo Estates Award sponsored by Frances Kelly (winner -Michelle Flood for "To Hell or to Connaught")