# LEITRIM LIBRARIES ON THE MOVE

## Four new branch libraries opened in two and a half years

*Seán Ó Suilleabháin*

### 75 YEARS OF LIBRARY SERVICE REMEMBERED

**Leitrim Library service has made huge progress over the past couple of years. The past twelve months has brought the service to a peak of development, with three new branch libraries opening. Kiltyclogher branch opened in June 2004, Manorhamilton opened to the public in December 2004 and the biggest development of all, a new County Library Headquarters and Branch Library, was officially opened in Ballinamore on 17th June 2005 by Dick Roche, Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Another new branch had been opened in Carrigallen in October 2002, so that makes four new branches in two and a half years.**

**Coincidental with this development, Leitrim has been celebrating 75 years of library service. The service was first provided in March 1931 and a booklet has been produced detailing the history of that development.**

**Leitrim County Council has been implementing a 'Library Development Programme' and County Manager, Danny McLoughlin and Director of Services, Community and Enterprise, Joseph Gilhooly, have overseen these major developments.**

### MANORHAMILTON BRANCH

**Manorhamilton is the largest town in North Leitrim and the new Branch Library there is in a way the central library for North Leitrim. The building was constructed by a developer and the Council purchased the ground floor for a library. It is located on a junction right in the middle of Main St. It has an area of 250 sqm and has 14,000 books and other items. One major change is that the new library is open to the public 43 hours per week instead of 12 hours per week in the old library. The library has a number of special services such as an optical scanner for use by those with vision impairment. There is also a special arts collection.**

**The project cost about €700,000 and was part funded by Dept of Environment. The building was constructed by GKT Construction and sold to Leitrim Co Council. The Architect was Colin Bell, Sligo. Fittings and furniture were supplied by DB Office Supplies, Dublin.**

### BALLINAMORE HEADQUARTERS & BRANCH LIBRARY

**Getting a new County Library Headquarters takes time and patience. As far back as 1986, there were initial plans for a new HQ and branch library in Ballinamore. Various obstacles came in the way and it wasn't until 2003 that the first blocks were laid on this most important development.**

**The Public Library area is about 250 sqm; it is open 49.5 hours per week and has 16,000 books. The headquarters is located on the upstairs of the building. The architects for the project were Murray Ó Laoire, Dublin; the builders were Kilcawley Construction, Sligo. The suppliers of shelving and furniture to the main library were Point Eight. Office furniture was supplied by Leitrim Furniture and additional furnishings by DB Office Supplies. The project cost €2.9m and was part funded by Dept of the Environment.**

*Pictured at the opening of the new Leitrim County Library, Ballinamore:*
*Back Row:*
*Caroline McCartin, County Library;*
*Kathleen Casey, Manorhamilton Library;*
*Mary Conefrey, County Library;*
*Orla Parkinson, Kiltyclogher Library;*
*Mary Bohan, County Library;*
*Marian Mulvey, Drumshanbo Library;*
*Caroline Martin, County Library;*
*Fiona Gilroy, Kinlough Library;*
*Hilda King, County Library;*
*Theresa Kelly, Manorhamilton Library;*
*Margaret McCabe, Martina Feeney, Manorhamilton Library &*
*Breda Sweeney, Dromahair Library.*
*Front Row:*
*Evelyn Kelly, Mohill Library;*
*Mary Corby, County Library;*
*Mary McGowan, Kinlough Library;*
*Seán Ó Suilleabháin, County Library,*
*Dick Roche, Minister for Environment;*
*Anna McKiernan, Carrick on Shannon Library & Gabrielle Flynn, County Library.*

**The library is fully accessible with automatic main doors and a passenger lift. The exhibition/lecture area has an integrated audio/visual system, there is a PA system at the desk and the children's area has a sensory panel to keep young users usefully occupied. It also has an exhibition/lecture area.**

**Apart from the usual fiction and non-fiction collections the library has video, DVD and CD collections, audio books, books 'as Gaeilge' and in a variety of other languages to cater for**

the growing population of foreigners living in the county.

## LOCAL STUDIES

Leitrim Co Library takes special pride in its local studies section. It has one of the most extensive and best developed local studies collections in Ireland.

The local studies section has its own staff and is open 49.5 hours per week, the same hours as the branch library.

*The local studies collection has:*

- Books and Journals
- Newspapers
- Maps
- Photographs
- Archives
- Files
- Microfilm
- Pamphlets and Posters
- Videos and DVDs
- Audio recordings

*There are special collections such as:*

- Fr Dan Gallogly Local History Collection
- Joe McInerney GAA Collection
- Flood's Ballad Collection

## WONDERFUL LOCATIONS

One noticeable feature about all four new branch libraries in Leitrim is that each of them is in an excellent location, right on the main street; you literally could not miss them. All are open on Saturdays and each has two late openings to 8pm.

## OTHER BRANCHES

Leitrim now has a network of nine branch libraries in:

- Ballinamore
- Carrick on Shannon
- Carrigallen
- Dromahair
- Drumshanbo
- Kiltyclogher
- Kinlough
- Manorhamilton
- Mohill

The libraries in Ballinamore, Carrick on Shannon, Drumshanbo, Manorhamilton and Mohill would be considered full-time libraries; that is open more than 30 hours per week. The other four are part-time. Seven of the nine have Saturday opening and all have at least two late night openings. Indeed opening times at all branches have been reviewed and extended over the past couple of years.

## 75 YEARS OF LEITRIM LIBRARIES

This year Leitrim is celebrating 75 years of library service. A decision to set up a service was taken in 1930 and the doors opened in March 1931. County Librarian, Seán Ó Suilleabháin has written a booklet to commemorate the event.

Setting up a small library service in 1931 might seem a simple matter, but it wasn't. In fact it caused huge controversy. So much so that the Council was on the point of being abolished. It was all over the appointment of a County Librarian. The person recommended by the Local Appointments Commission was Kathleen White from Portlaoise. However, Leitrim Co Council were adamant that the job should be given to a Leitrim person. It took a long time to resolve the problem. This and other very interesting and at times amusing controversies can be read in the booklet which is available from Leitrim County Library by calling 071-9645582.

The opening of the new headquarters in June 2005 was a very special event. Mrs Vera McCarthy, who started work in the Co Library in 1935, was back 70 years later to see the new library opened and still hale and hearty at 94 years of age, she spoke about her recollections of earlier years.

*Tá foireann na Leabharlainne an bhróidiúil as an méid oibre atá déanta acu le cupla bliain anuas agus fáiltíonn siad roimh éinne a thagann ar chuairt dhóibh. Gan dabht, is fiú chuairt a thabhairt ar Leabharlann Chontae Liatroma, mar tá éacht déanta ag an gContae ó thaobh leabharlanna de.*

## THE WRITER'S DILEMMA
(Sorry, Shakespeare)

*Sr Thomasina Gilfillan SM*

To write or not to write—that is the question. Whether it is wiser, in the long run, to keep my thoughts untold and bottled up, without an outlet to relieve me of them, or to take the risk of scorn and adverse comment from an irate Editor whose time I will have wasted. To write—to put on paper what I think, and in doing so would fain convince the reader of my prowess in the literary world. To write - to form flowing phrases that would, hopefully express the dreams that haunt my waking hours. 'Tis a consummation devoutly to be ambitioned. To dream – ah! There's the rub, for in our restless yearnings, we can't know what dreams may come, and how we can interpret them and give them voice. That is a concept that must give us pause. For who could bear the scornful lip, the flashing eye, the unheeding ear of some erudite critic who might peruse my feeble efforts. It is the dread of such hostile comments that makes us rather bear the knowledge of ineptitude than risk exposing it to others that we know not of! Thus, writing doth make cowards of us all and thus the native hue of resolution is sicklied over with the pale cast of thought. And enterprises of great moment that were planned, their currents turn away and we will lose the urgency of action.