



Hygeia

# Fields of Athenry

10km Road Race 2017



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# Chairperson's Words



It is my pleasure as chairperson of Athenry Athletic Club to welcome you to the 16th running of the Fields of Athenry 10KM road race. It is a huge tribute to our small army of volunteers, who turn up unfailingly year after year, that the race is alive and prospering – thank you all.

But the most important person is you, the participant. Without you, there would be no race and we are very grateful for you taking the time and effort to support us. If you have been here before, you know what to expect and we hope it lives up to your previous experience. If it's your first time then you are doubly welcome and we hope to make it as good a race as possible for you.

We do try to build on the race experience every year and if you think there is any area that could be made better, we would very much appreciate you taking the time to let us know.

**Brendan Galvin.**

# Race Director's Note



Dear runners and walkers,

You are all very welcome to Athenry for the 16th running of the Fields of Athenry 10KM road race.

Once again Hygeia are our title sponsor this year. We are very grateful to them for their continued support, and the support of all our other sponsors. I ask that you support them wherever and whenever you can.

This is my 3rd and final year as race director. It has been an huge honour and privilege to work with such a great team. They have made my job so easy I often feel I have nothing at all to do, other than tell others what to do. I would like to thank each and every one of them sincerely for all their help over my three years.

We have decided to mark the brilliant achievement of the Galway hurling teams – both senior and minor – in winning their All-Ireland by having this year's hat in the Galway colours, which also happen to be the club's colours. It seems to be very popular already and we hope you like it too.

As always the team has worked hard since August to put on a top-quality race and their attention to detail has never waned.

We are delighted to support Athenry Cancer Care again this year; they do a fantastic job helping local people with cancer and their families in very many ways.

Finally, I would like to thank each and every one of you for supporting our race. I hope you have a really enjoyable run and wish you all the very best for 2018.

**Jim Leahy.**

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## 2016 Galway AI Athlete Award Winners

Female 12-15 years old – Seren O'Toole (GCH)

Male 12-15 years old – Evan Hallinan (Craughwell AC)

Female 16-19 years old – Nicole King (GCH)

Male 16-19 years old – Cillín Greene (GCH)

Female Senior – Niamh Hennelly (GCH)

Male Senior – Sean Breathnach (GCH)

Female Master – Mary Barrett (Loughrea AC)

Male Master – Gary Thornton (GCH)

Women's Team – GCH Senior Marathon team  
 Grainne Ní Uallacháin, Sarah Collins, Siobhan Egan

Men's Team – GCH National Premier League team  
 Sean Breathnach, Keith Fallon, Seamus Leddy, Linus Mitkus, Brendan Staunton, Cillín Greene, Igor Muntean, Sean Kilmartin, Jack Dempsey, Bryan Ndego, Henrique Nkolovata, Robert Meagher, Cliff Jennings, Andrew Ó Donnghaile, Kelvin Samson, Luke O'Shaughnessy, Brendan Glynn. Gary Thornton, Eanna Folan, Mark Powell, Eoghan Dobey, Darragh Whyte, Evan McGuire, Simon Callaghan, Michael Breathnach

Outstanding Contribution – PJ Coyle (GCH)

Hall of Fame – Brian Geraghty (GCH)



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**Fields of Athenry**  
10km Road Race 2017

**TOP 50 FINISHER**

# 2017 Galway 5K Series Report

(www.5km.ie)

James London

The Galway 5K Series moved into its second decade of existence with another excellent set of races this year. It welcomed aboard another new co-ordinator, the extremely venerable Andrew Talbot (Clare River Harriers). He came with bags of experience, self proclaimedly having been on the roads of Galway – literally speaking – for over 50 years. No one knows more about road running in Galway than this gent does and he proved it this year. He even got to run five of the legs himself, all pretty niftily too for a gent of his many years. BRADLEY RENAULT continued to sponsor the series, as did the HSE in their own smaller way.

The web site Active.com did not blink an electronic eyelid on Friday, 24 March @ 8PM when online entries became available. Over 750 people entered via this mechanism, with nearly 700 entering in the first 30 minutes alone. Cost of entry was €30, as has been the case for a number of years now. If you hadn't registered by 9PM, you were out of luck. A limited number of others were able to enter through their affiliated club, to bring the numbers registered to near 1,000.

There were some substantial changes in the series this year, especially the sequencing of the legs, with GCH first up, at Ballybrit around another slightly-changed course on a bracing April evening. Number pick-up was under the new stand like last year. Red Tag Timing provided expert timing services, as John Cunniffe & Co have every year since almost before the flood i.e. 2010! A record number finished that evening, 746.

Caltra & District were next up. Caltra! Where's that? Google Maps may have helped many people safely find the place. For those who didn't travel, or who got lost on the way (probably somewhere between Mountbellew and Castleblakenny), ye missed a fantastic event. A lovely evening, on a fast course, with the locals coming out in force, both to spectate and steward the half-panhandle course. This course would also be used for the County Championship 5KM later in the year. Caltra took the place of Tuam in the 5KM Series, who could not participate this year due to the impending opening of the M18 which cut their course in two.

Craughwell attracted a massive crowd the week after. The usual start and finish: outside the primary school to the old

railway bridge near the modern level crossing. The only course that has not massively changed over the lifetime of the 5KM Series! 'Nirvana' cross takes longer to round as the years go by and the race was a painfully slow one for me personally, especially after turning that corner to get to 4KM. The lack of early-season training really showed that evening. Elvis looked shook at the finish, obviously. At least 109 people broke 20 minutes, on a lighteningly fast course.

Loughrea's course was the same as last year. It stayed dry for the duration of the race too but the ground was wet underfoot. The finish line is well back up the road to Tulla Hill. Not a course for PBs. Loughrea AC were out in style and a goodly numbers of locals cheered on the race too. One leg closer to the series T-shirt.

Claregalway unveiled their new 5KM course, starting outside the main entrance to the new secondary school, and finishing halfway up the driveway of the same school. This course had been used earlier in the year for the local club's 5KM, so it was no surprise to those who had done their homework. The course still included Rock Road, going down. It was a misty evening for running with the organising club, as always, in top form.

Athenry again hosted the last leg of the series. The race HQ was the Raheen Woods Hotel, both before and after the race. The start was at the pitches in Raheen. The finish was at the Athenry Primary Care Centre. It was a warm and sunny evening, which suited some but not others! There were a lot more refreshments available this year.

The 2017 technical top was red in colour and 683 were eligible to receive one by the Athenry leg. Emil Zatopek said, "A runner must run with dreams in his heart." John O'Connor (Flickr: 77edenhill) was at all six legs again this year and recorded everyone equally for posterity in 20 albums of top-quality images, available in original resolution to all at no cost.

Conor Dolan won four of the six legs, with Kevin Bartholomew (Claregalway) and Mike O'Connor (Athenry) sharing one leg win each, the latter winner's time being by far the fastest recorded in the series this year, 15:57. Sarah Collins (Ballybrit & Caltra) and Barbara Dunne (Claregalway and Athenry) won two legs each, while



Galway City 25th April  
Loughrea 16th May  
Caltra 2nd May  
Claregalway 23rd May  
Craughwell 9th May  
Athenry 10th May

"A runner must run with dreams in his heart."  
Emil Zatopek

Jane Ann Meehan (Craughwell) and Caron Ryan (Loughrea) won one leg each, with Sarah running the fast women's leg in Caltra! Except for Shauna Bocquet, of course, who competed in five of the legs this year and recorded an outstanding 15:05 in Athenry.

The excess of €16,492 from the series was given to the Galway AAI county board for the continued advancement of both adult and juvenile athletics in the county. This is the 9th year that an excess has been generated and on all occasions it has been given to the local county board, for which the board are deeply grateful. Martin Smyth, 5K Series treasurer, presented the cheque to the county board at its monthly meeting in September.

The two 5K Series stalwarts remain standing (surprisingly!) after the 2017 series: Tony O'Callaghan (Craughwell AC) and Gary Doherty (Athenry AC). Each has successfully completed all 69 legs (2006: 4; 2007: 5; 2008-2017: 6 each year). A number of other people have run at least 66 legs each: Adrian Fitzmaurice, Jim Maher, James London and Tony Nevyn.

Race	No.	Director	Date
Ballybrit (GCH)	746	Brendan Kennelly	25 April
Caltra	571	Michael Fallon	2 May
Craughwell	711	Brian Gorman	9 May
Loughrea	602	Martin Smyth	16 May
Claregalway	613	Tom Kilgariff	23 May
Athenry	685	Kieran Guiry	30 May

Races Run per Person	No.	Gender	No.
Six	196	Male	534
Five	290	Female	479
Four	197		
Three	95		

Club	No.
Athenry AC	126
GCH	94
Craughwell AC	57
Tuam AC	38
Loughrea AC	33
Castlegar AC	28
Clare River Harriers	21
Caltra & District AC	16
Corofin AC	16
South Galway AC	16
Maree AC	14
East Galway AC	13
HPE Running Club	13
DXC Galway Running Club	5
CL Conamara	4
Corrib AC	2



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# Still Going Strong, Still Going Forward Anyhow – Martin Keane

Ten years ago I decided I'd give the marathon one last go, and ten years later I'm still at it! During the summer I had a few health problems which left me sidelined for a while. By early July the Dublin Marathon office were running the sales mantra of 'When It's Gone It's Gone' and before the middle of the month it duly was.

I started training a bit around that time. I'm not a lover of running on the roads, preferring parks and off-road surfaces, which I find to be quieter and safer. This year, as the building of the M17 motorway neared completion, I would sneak onto it on Sunday mornings, when things would be very quiet, for my long run. When they put on the last coat of Tarmac it was a runner's paradise. It runs very close to my house in Athenry and ready access was not a problem.

Although I heard some mention of a charity cycle in early September, little did I know one Sunday morning I'd meet about two and a half THOUSAND cyclists coming in the opposite direction to me, as I made my way from the Rathmorrissey interchange to north of Annagh Cross, Ballyglunin. Having to exchange pleasant greetings with nearly all of them used a lot of mental energy, but they were friendly and complimentary with some very witty comments being passed. Many of them seemed to know me too!

Another place that I sometime use for a run is Ballybrit racecourse, which has a perimeter road around the race track. One day as I was running there, I was amused to see up ahead of me a group of about 10 people, all dressed to the nines, and nearly all of them holding a tray with a pint of beer on it. As I got closer, one of them approached me asking, "Would you care to avail of the drinks' station?" I replied "No, thanks," on this occasion.

This reminds me of back in the mid-1980s when I went up to Belfast to run the Belfast marathon. This was at the height of The Troubles and, yes, there was tension in the air. The race circled around the whole city, finishing in Ormeau Park. That time Guinness were the main sponsors, and when the race was over, they opened up a 'no-limit' free bar for everyone. I think some people left that evening doing the John Wayne walk and maybe the effects of the race wasn't to blame for all of it.

Many years ago I must have been leaning to one side like that tower down in Italy, because a foot specialist recommended I wear insoles, which he called 'orthotics', and I've been fine ever since. A month before the Dublin Marathon (no longer the Dublin City Marathon), I bought a pair of new runners, which the salesman suggested to wear without said orthotics, and after wearing them for a month all was fine, or so I thought.

Come Sunday, 29 October 2017, and I'm on the start line along with nearly twenty thousand others, and before we reached Phoenix Park I was to discover all was not well with my orthotic-less shoes, as they started to sting the side of my foot. A few miles further on and I'm convinced they also caused me cramp, something I never got so early in a race before. At that stage I knew it wasn't going to be my day but I



decided I'd suffer it out and try to finish, if at all possible. Somewhere about Inchicore, Caroline Mitchell passed me and she was going very steady.

I reached half-way in 2:09 but it was not at all comfortable now. From here on, it was no blood, a lot of sweat and a few tears. A few miles further on, I caught up to a man called Billy Harpur from North Wexford. Billy is in my age group and I've competed against him for years. Like myself he seemed to be suffering a bit and like our own Peadar he's one of a small group who has ran all Dublins (38th). A few Galway people passed me around here and it was nice to get a bit of reassurance when you need it very badly. A woman from Craughwell on the side of the road gave me a small packet of sugary sweets (probably her last few too); thanks Julie: not since I was a child did sweets taste so nice.

Before the race, I was undecided between trying to keep up to the 4:20 pacers for as long as possible, or go with the 4:30 'balloons' instead. At 20 miles, the 4:20 pacers passed me, breaking my heart when I wasn't able to keep with them. At 21 miles I was still running at 10 minute per mile pace but to use some golf jargon: I had a few bogeys on the back nine, having to hobble now due to severe cramp, although otherwise I was full of energy.

Anyone who has played Scrabble, with its 26 letters (miles?), will know how hard it is playing when you've a Z, Q and a J; the last few of the 26+ miles was a lot like that, except you cannot start again with a new rack during the marathon!

As now is usual, the supporters were out in their droves, but in the last mile the cheering was like the last few minutes of the recent All-Ireland senior hurling final. It did help me to pick it up again. In the last half mile, I could see another Athenry AC singlet up ahead, who I recognised as Bridget (Bid) Kissane, originally from Ballyunion. Bid and I go back a long way as we were at about the same level years ago. Although she started 10 minutes after me I couldn't catch up to her as she was finishing very strong. Well done Bid, a massive PB on the day.

I finished 6th of 43 in the 'gone to seed' category and missed out on a National medal by less than a minute, finishing 4th in the National Marathon Championship. 4:34 was my chip time.

Maybe marathon running is a young person's game but it seems that I'm still a believer in the George B. Shaw adage, "We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing."

# Galway 5KM Series Stalwart – Tony O'Callaghan

Back in early May 2006 I was talking to someone on a Monday afternoon and he mentioned that he had heard about someone in Athenry organising some 5KMs and that there was one on the following evening somewhere out near there.

Being of a curious nature I headed out that way the next evening. I initially ended up wandering up and down some side roads before I found this guy setting up in the boot of his car, taking registrations before we did an 'out & back' on a side road.

A lovely evening for a run and in fact my recollection is that we started with some lovely evenings except for some light rain in Tuam (this seemed to be a pattern that followed for the next couple of years with showers in Tuam most years).

Things got more organised as the years went on, with online registration

and chip times, but the important things still seemed to continue – the socialising, the crack & general good humour people brought along. The numbers seemed to build up pretty quickly and there was the annual rush to make sure that you got entered but that seemed part of the crack.

A few years into it, James Lundon's interest was piqued and he checked how many people had participated in the races and I think we were all shocked that it was down to three people having run them all, with a few more people having missed only one or two.

So now 12 full series on, I think back to wondering how runs I did when I was injured (all of last year's legs) or even the nights after the Belfast Marathon when my legs were definitely logs of timber, or just heading out to Loughrea from the office after working late and realising I



had two left shoes, so chasing home and getting to the start line as it was just clearing from the start.

I think of folks like Mick Rice – to name but one – who pulled the series together and kept it going, can't be thanked enough for all their hard work: the series is an annual landmark in the local running calendar and is a great target for people to look forward to in the spring of each year.

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# 2017 AAC in Dublin

Anne Lyng



A group of 44 athletes from Athenry AC ran the Dublin Marathon this year. Some were seasoned marathoners, while others were first timers!

There were a number of PBs as well as some very competitive times. Tammie Corrigan ran her second Dublin marathon and achieved a 13 minute PB running 3:10:06, Kenneth O'Hara ran his fourth DCM and completed this year's race in 3:50:35, while Patrick Forde ran his 10th consecutive Dublin marathon clocking 3:49:11.

David O'Sullivan achieved a PB recording 3:25:56. Brian Somers ran a 6 minute PB, finishing in 3:12:02 in his second time running Dublin. Kieran Staunton was first home from AAC in an excellent 2:52:50. A 16 minute PB was recorded by Kieran Walsh in 3:19:46, running his second marathon.

Martin Keane finished sixth out of a field of 43 competitors in the M70 age category. Peadar Nugent completed his 38th DCM this year, still an ever-present of the event. Michael Glynn also finished like a young fella this year. These three gentlemen are an example to all of us!

## The following took part in this year's race from Athenry AC:

Kieran Staunton 2:52:50

Frank Burke 3:08:17

Tammie Corrigan 3:10:06

Brian Somers 3:12:02

Jim Leahy 3:14:50

Ray Treacy 3:16:46

Justin Fahy 3:19:03

Kieran Walsh 3:19:46

Colin Duane 3:21:25

Martin McGrath 3:25:05

David O'Sullivan 3:25:56

Michael Duane 3:30:32

Brendan Galvin 3:33:51

Martin O'Hara 3:39:39

Basil King 3:42:20

Orla Stevens 3:47:24

Patrick Forde 3:49:11

Noel Conway 3:50:38

Maeve Noone 3:50:35

Kenneth O'Hara 3:50:36

Cormac Nicholson 4:02:14

Sjoerd Le Noble 4:02:07

Peter Lowney 4:05:36

Marguerite Wilkinson 4:05:19

David Murray 4:07:24

Sean Flaherty 4:09:10

Luciano Lualdi 4:09:13

Caroline Mitchell 4:12:54

Philip Magnier 4:18:18

Bridget Kissane 4:23:57

Frances Leahy 4:23:51

Martin Keane 4:34:01

Majella Cummins 4:38:26

Assumption King 4:40:00

Kevin Devane 4:41:19

Maureen Ryan 4:47:32

Sean Freney 4:54:49

Martin Hynes 4:59:06

Michael Glynn 5:28:20

Valerie Glavin 5:29:17

Maire Beatty 5:33:56

Peadar Nugent 5:33:57

Bernie Rogers 5:52:49

Sinead Walsh 6:43:54

# Abounding in Horses

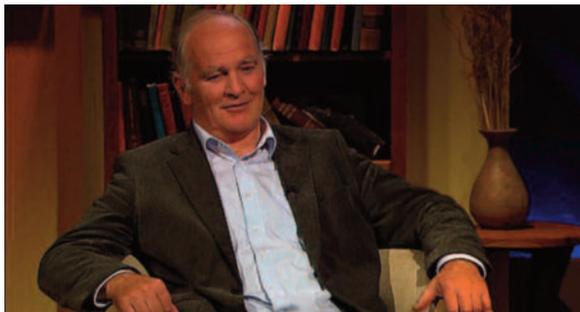
## Tomás Mac Lochlainn

Each year as we gather for the Fields of Athenry 10KM outside Coláiste an Eachréidh, I am buoyed to see that such a facility exists in the historic town. Coláiste an Eachréidh continues a tradition of oideachas tré Ghaeilge that stretches back to the time of the brehons and bards. And what a name. I love this wonderful resonant word for East Galway, Eachréidh—plain abounding in horses.

Never did it abound in horses as much as on that fateful Autumn day in 1316 when the Norman Lords defeated the Irish Chieftains in the Battle of Athenry. The dead included Féilim O Connor, King of Connacht, Tadhg O Kelly, King of Uí Máine and Sligo man Art na gCapall O Hara prince of Luighne and kinsman to Club Captain Martin of Athenry A.C. But all so long ago.

It seems appropriate in such a location to wonder if the 10k has any place in the Irish tradition. Of course it does. There was a time, no longer within living memory when everybody, the women in particular, walked prodigious distances to the markets in Galway city. They carried their knitting, bread, butter, eggs, hens, vegetables and home produce of every kind. Fifteen and twenty mile trips were common. Hence the phrase “is trom cearc i bhfad”—a hen gets heavier the longer it’s carried. Our forebears understood the folly of carrying excess ballast. Runners need to understand this too and need to do something about it!

Joggers are often advised to run in the company of others. Companionship provides moral support and encouragement. That wise old fox of our school days, An Gobán Saor understood this well when he coined the phrase “Giorraíonn beirt bóthar”. Company shortens the journey. Despite the obvious truth of this maxim I am constantly amazed at the amount of talking that takes place during a run



as if participants hadn’t met for years. Imagine the times that could be posted if the chatters concentrated on running.

Every student that ever sat in a classroom has been advised that the beginning of any project is of paramount importance. “Tosach maith leath na hoibre”. It applies equally on the racecourse. Start too fast and you will suffer later on. Runners must pace themselves for optimum performance and maybe even hold a little in reserve for that final dash under the iconic Arch as Mary Porter enthusiastically calls the finishers and convinces one and all that they are bordering on the heroic.

“Go néiri an bóthar leat” is a blessing to one who is about to go on a journey. It simply means may your journey go well. But nothing is simple and probably back in the 60’s some eejit translated this as “May the road rise with you” and we’re stuck with it ever since. Oh my God! It’s on a par with “Tá mé tobar” for “I am well”. It has become institutionalised on mugs, T-shirts and Oirish posters etc. I blame the Yanks! Still, if you find yourself on the starting line for the 2017 renewal of the ‘Fields, go néiri an bóthar leat!

On any journey our superstitious ancestors feared nothing more than ‘an féar gortach’ and ‘an fóidín mearaí’. The féar gortach refers to the

belief that one could step on a certain type of grass or special spot on the road and be struck with an overwhelming hunger that left one immobile and exhausted. For this reason old timers carried a little oatmeal in the pocket for revival if the dreaded féar gortach struck. Maybe it’s to honour this tradition that some runners carry bottles, bars, energy snacks etc. There really can be no other reason. Who on earth needs to eat and drink their way around a 10k. But you’ll have that.

With the fóidín mearaí, the unlucky pedestrian who stepped in the wrong spot was rendered utterly confused and could wander aimlessly for hours. With today’s volume of traffic the fóidín mearaí could be fatal. Hopefully no runner will succumb. The victim could find themselves on the new motorway and end up in Tuam or Gort, missing the most important part of the day-- the tea and goodies in the hall and we don’t want that.

To finish these cúpla focal, you will want to know that Coláiste an Eachréidh, the Galway Roscommon ETB next door to it and the train station across the road are located in the townland of An Coiréal Bán—The White Quarry.

Agus anois a chomrádaí, away leat agus go néiri an bóthar leat!

# 2017 Road Races in Galway

James Landon



Athletics Ireland permitted events in Galway had a decent year with 60 races being run across 51 different days (70 - 2013, 64 - 2014, 60 - 2015, 56 - 2016).

We gained a few races in 2017 but lost a few too. Some races were up in their number of participants, while others were down. There was a slight decrease in the overall number of finishers in events held in the county this year.

All the pillar events continue to perform very well: The Streets, The 5K Series and The Fields. The Kinvara Rock and Road (2 races), the Connemara Marathon (3) and the Galway Bay (3) series of races all held up their numbers. Other events where multiple races were run on the same day, sometimes at the same time were: The Forest Marathon (3) and Clarenbridge (3). These events seem to suit many race organisers. They allow people to choose their race, anything from 5KM to 100KM, usually over the same enclosed course.

Fourteen different Galway clubs (Athenry, Craughwell, Loughrea, South Galway, CRH, Tuam, Caltra, Corrib, East Galway, GCH, Castlegar, Clúb Chonamara, Corofin, Maree) sponsored at least one road race permit during 2017

7th Galway (Resolution Run) 5K, 1 January  
1st Athenry AC Mile, 14 January (Club)  
13th Tuam 8K, 15 January (Club)  
5th Coldwood 5K, 29 January  
6th Gort (Gorgeous) 4M, 12 February (Club)  
9th Kilconieron 5M, 26 February  
7th Kinvara (Rock and Road) 10K & Half, 4 March  
5th Abbey 10K, 12 March  
8th Craughwell 10M, 19 March (Club) [County Half]  
4th Ballinderry 5K, 26 March  
6th New Inn 5K, 2 April  
4th Claregalway 5K, 4 April  
3rd Loughrea 5K, 17 April (Club)  
16th Connemara Marathon Half & Full, 23 April  
14th Connemara Marathon Ultra, 23 April

12th 5K Series #1 @ Ballybrit, 25 April  
12th 5K Series #2 @ Caltra, 2 May  
6th Labane 10K, 7 May  
12th 5K Series #3 @ Craughwell, 9 May  
12th 5K Series #4 @ Loughrea, 16 May  
7th Oughterard (Mayfly) 10K, 21 May (Club)  
11th 5K Series #5 @ Claregalway, 23 May  
10th 5K Series #6 @ Athenry, 30 May  
1st Castlegar AC Paced Mile, 2 June  
10th Maree 8K, 5 June (Club)  
8th Portumna (Forest) Half, Full & 50K, 10 June  
9th Clifden (Lifeboats) 10K, 11 June  
4th Killeenkeen 5K, 15 June  
3rd Bullaun 8K, 17 June  
11th Annaghdown 10K, 18 June  
5th Monivea Half & 5K, 24 June (Club) [County Half]  
13th Headford 8K, 1 July  
1st East Galway 5K, 22 July  
3rd Cappataggle 8K, 29 July  
9th Connemara 100M, 12 August  
32st Streets 8K, 12 August (Club)  
2nd Caltra 5K, 19 August (Club) [County 5KM]  
2nd Craughwell Full, 26 August  
32nd Claregalway 10K, 26 August (Club)  
2nd Clarinbridge 10K, Half & Full, 9 September  
2nd Castlegar XC, 23 September  
19th Loughrea 10K, 24 September (Club)  
7th Colemanstown 10K, 30 September  
15th Galway Bay 10K & Half, 7 October  
3rd Galway Bay Full, 7 October  
7th Conamara 10K, 14 October  
7th Moylough 10K, 15 October  
4th Killannin 8K & 4K, 28 October (Club)  
8th Corofin (Winning Ways) 8K, 5 November (Club)  
8th Athenry AC F4L 5K, 11 November (Club)  
5th Ballindereen 10K, 19 November (Club) [County 10KM]  
16th Fields 10KM, 26 December (Club)

# What a First Year's Running

Sean Freeney

I started to walk 'the block' in early September 2016. By the start of October, I decided to try to run some of it. After a week I could run one K, then one mile!

Caroline got me to register for the Athenry AC Fit4Life 5K in November, my first race. After that I got the confidence to register for the Fields 10KM in late December.

With that done in 54 minutes, I was on the look out for my next step-up. I registered for the Craughwell 10M, doing the Tuam 8K, Coldwood 4M and Kilconieron 5M races as useful warm-up events.

I successfully completed the 10M in 1:42 and set myself the goal of a half marathon during the summer. A little early, in May, I completed my first half in the Burren in 2:07.

Next up was the Athenry Half in 1:58, but in-between was the 5K Series of 6 races, which really helped my fitness. I improved my 5K time from 24:51 in Ballybrit to 22:56 in Athenry, running all 6 and improving each evening.

So feeling very brave I set my sights on the Dublin Marathon! I ran the

Longwood (Enfield) 3/4th marathon in 3:07 in early October. I knew I was ready to give the full distance a shot.

Many thanks to Marguerite Wilkinson and Kevin Devane, my training buddies, and all the advice I got along the way from my other running and non-running friends!

I completed Dublin in under five hours, 4:54. Being passed by my old neighbour Martin Keane near the end was a small price to pay for the finisher's medal.

A week later, while talking to Kevin, we decided to do Clonakilty before the end of 2017. And on 9 December we completed it. I ran ONE MINUTE more than my Dublin time, just five weeks before, 4:55. Another marathon medal in the pocket!

I am already looking forward to next year! Oh, before I forget, I've lost 50 lbs in weight too. **Five Zero!**

Finally, a big 'Thank You' to my wife, Caroline, who first pushed me in this direction, and for keeping me on the right road over the last year.



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# 2016 Ballycotton Road Trip

James Lundon



End of 2016 Ballycotton.

I ran an even dozen Ballycotton 10 road races. I should have ran at least four more though. "My Bad!"

If I knew then what I know now, I would have ran more of them. There was only one year when I was sorta injured that I gave it a proper miss (2010). The other years, I have no such excuse:

2007 – I was flying and decided to give Ballycotton a skip as I thought I wasn't in as good shape as I was the previous year. The folly of a "young" runner! I was in 67 minute shape. What a criminal waste of good form! Instead I ran 20.5M in 2:45 on a training jaunt that afternoon when I should have been in deepest East Cork.

2011 – I ran the Craughwell 10 in 74 a few weeks after but didn't feel up to the journey down when not going that well. I should have gone anyhow, if only for the drive.

2015 – I am not sure why I didn't travel two years ago. I was running OK but probably didn't feel up to the trip, or my running wasn't good enough to break 72.

My first year down was in the company of Mick Rice, in 2002. I think we overnighted in a guest house outside Cork city and then travelled out to Ballycotton on race morning as complete neophytes, not knowing what to expect. We had already heard and read much about this mythical race and wanted to experience it ourselves. We probably parked in the small field (car park) across from the old church and walked up from there. What innocence! It was the year after the Foot & Mouth outbreak, when only 870 turned up to run Ballycotton that summer. I started at the back end of the field and ran with a nice young lady who was out race walk training that morning. I left her after four miles

and beat her by a few minutes. It was the first time I'd laid eye on Olive Loughane. We were hooked on Ballycotton. Even though I'd be running for nearly a year, it was only my third ever race. I already knew this race was special. **74:33**, but had a few more minutes in me, if I'd gone about my job properly. I would be back to do the job properly.

I was better prepared in 2003 and got my time down to **71:25**. I probably went out too quickly and paid the price on the way back, doing a 7:43 for mile 9 – positive splits are all the rage in Ballycotton, don't you know. I would not be the first, or the last, to make that mistake. Ballycotton has a way of teaching you valuable pacing lessons. I don't remember much else about that race – it is nearly 15 years ago and I sometimes can't remember what I did this morning.

In 2004, I did slightly less training than I had in 2003 but ran a minute quicker – that doesn't happen any more by the way! I was getting used to this racing lark and had brought my 10KM PB down under 42 minutes in the previous November's Hollymount. I knew what it would take to break 70, whether I would or not was a different matter. Mile 9 destroyed me again, as did mile 10: 7:54 and 7:33. That really hurt! I was on track for a sub-70, right to the chip van after the 9 mile marker, but saw it go up in cooking oil over those last very painful 1500 metres. The smell of chips from that van is seared into a very sensitive part of my running mind forever more. I believe I wrote a report on that race, though unpublished as it was crash reading. **70:31**.

Around then, an experienced runner said to someone who knew me that I would never break 70. I wasn't build for it and I wasn't doing enough training either. Perhaps the friend was

just rising me? With those words silently burning in my soul, I started 2005 with the express intention of breaking 70 in that year's Ballycotton. I have no easy recollection of the logistics of that year's trip, other than that we likely stayed down the night before and travelled out to the hallowed venue early Sunday morning, so as to avoid the lockdown of the village – it was still possible to do that back in the good old days. Not even Trump himself would have gotten into Ballycotton village by car on race morning this year! I know, as I tried, on a mission of mercy too :-).

Again, my memory of the race is patchy but I know I wrote something on it at the time – those reports are classic gold with the rapid onset of time and many other races and middle age. They evoke the raw emotions and the trials & tribulations of the race being reported upon, if done properly; something that raw figures of finish times and mile splits fail to. This was just before the general availability of GPS watches, or certainly instruments that you didn't have to carry around in a wheelbarrow, or strap onto your torso. I started with a 6:13 mile but, this time, I finished with a 6:57, tossing in a relatively quick 7:25 on mile 9. **69:19** was probably my best ever race to date. My running 'advisor' was none the wiser afterwards! My soul was cleansed. I ran another 10KM PB that year and completed my first marathon (my fastest ever but still butchered). It was before the Galway 5KM Series and the explosion of races in the country, so races were still relatively few and very far apart. There was the HP Series (Ballybrit) of races but that's for another article. I believe this was the year that I was passed by both Dave Dunne and Jim Maher. Both thought I was going poorly after only three miles, which was probably not untrue but I dug in and survive. They were surprised to see that I broke 70 on the day!

2006 was my running annus mirabilis. I can say that now without any fear of contradiction: the figures in my running log do not lie. PBs at all significant distances were achieved: 5KM (probably, but will never know for sure as all the courses I ran on were not properly measured and were most likely short, sometimes very), 8KM and 10KM. I didn't run any decent halves that year, but should have! I butchered [I am not a fan of

Rugby or its terminology but it's true in this case] another marathon, again totally my own fault – this became a recurring pattern in subsequent years! All this running was without the aid of any speed work, which was another tragedy on my part. My running age was now five, which was a perfect time to do fast times, in my life circumstances. I now had sufficient race craft, to go with the longer runs, to go with the ability to cope with the necessary pain. I was also running without any injuries (mental or physical) etc.

As for Ballycotton, I did more miles than ever before. I had run a very fast Tuam two months before and did some outstanding training, including a 21M training run of 2:39 the week before. No other races were run before Ballycotton that year. I was ready. I was lean. I still had some hair. I was on a mission! Mick Rice, Peter Delmer and I travelled down the night before. We met Johnny O'Connor (See JO'C inputs elsewhere) there, before and after. We also bumped into Bernie Kelly (GCH), who has run all Ballycottons since 1999. Athery AC was still a pretty small bunch of (mostly men) people at this stage. I have a few photos of the day but not enough. Was that the year when the race was delayed by 45 minutes due to traffic issues on the course?

There was no real target. Just give it my best shot. I started the cold, brisk day with a 6:04! Suicidal. Then a 21. A 26. A 36. A 42. Waved in at Myrtle, passing the five mile mark – I have still to make it inside the door in Ballymaloe, though I've passed in dozens of times in both directions over many years. I've always been going somewhere else ☺. A 39 to get to 6, and still in good shape. I passed JO'C stopped on the side of the road having a fag. I chased up to the informal 10KM mark in 1:25 more. That was a 40:13 10KM, which was technically a PB I only realised later. I still get a shiver when I think about how fast I was going that day. OK, the start and finish were probably not to IAAF record-breaking specifications but I would easily have run a sub-40 that day and still finished the race, but there were bigger fish to fry that day and I kept my discipline.

There were still 3.78 miles to go and by Chr'st was I going to give it my best shot. 5:10 got me to 7. A 38 to 8.

I had left both Dave Dunne and Jim Maher in the dust as I ran back over the pan-handle. I completed what was probably my best ever single mile to mile 9 that year, a sub 7, split up into halves of 3:24 and 3:34. My last mile was a 39. **65:40** (a 39:32 10KM in McMillan). All my splits were in the 6 minute range, which was even more satisfying. I may have gone off quick but I held it together the whole way through. I gave that race my best shot and couldn't walk properly for a few hours/days afterwards. I licked the salt off my brow with pride that day. I could now consider myself a proper runner, at the classic distance too. It took me three times as long to write the report from the race than it did to run it, but it was a sweet one. Much later on, I even prevailed on John Walshe to give me another 2006 mug, on the pretext that I'd mislaid my original. I still drink from 'the replacement' occasionally. My 'mislaid' cup has never been sipped from by anyone, sitting in amongst my other 11 cups in a special cardboard box. Please don't tell John!

I ran PBs for 8KM (31:32) and 10KM (40:09) later in that year, a week apart – too close together to fully recover from one to the other. I never got very close to either time ever since. Neither did I get within a half mile (literally!) of my 65:40 that early-March day. The day when everything was possible.

Two thousand and seven came and went. I didn't think I would break 67, let alone 66, and gave it a miss. The race went on without me.

I came back in 2008 and ran another sub-70, running probably my second best paced race of the 12 down there, tossing in a 6:32 mile 1 and 7:27 mile 9. I have no particular other recollection of the race almost 10 years on. The race seemed to be growing each year and it was becoming more difficult getting in and out of Ballycotton, not that we were particularly worried, once we gave ourselves enough time before and after the race. The buzz was still the same nonetheless. Another cup and another good day out! **69:48**.

I ran particularly well in 2009 too, in what was my best paced race. Training had gone really well and I had run most days in February. I got very close to breaking 69, alongside Dave Dunne. If I'd known that I was that close to 68, I would have ran harder

up the final incline. I may have eased back a bit knowing that I was going to break 70, not realising that Dave was just up the road from me. We have gotten separated at the start of the race. My other recollection of that race was a neighbour from home collapsing into one of the metals barriers with less than 800M to go and my passing him a minute or so later. He recovered just fine and still doesn't quite know what happened to him that day. I must ask him again. **69:08**.

The next two years are the wilderness ones, as written about above. Not sure exactly when Martin Keane came on the scene but this gentleman is intrinsically linked with my last five Ballycottons. Either Martin or I drove up and down on the day those last five times. One year I was to drive and my car didn't start so Martin stumped up instead, drove and ran, already over 70 at the time. I was embarrassed that a man who had many years on me was willing and able to do that and still complete the 10 miles smiling.

I went back down for the first time since 2009 in 2012 and ran an adequate **71:24**. I ran Craughwell two weeks after and was only 18 seconds slower, good or bad ☺? No other recollection of the day at this remove. I once thought I would remember every race I ever ran, and probably did, when I'd only 20 or 30 under my belt. It's much harder when the number is over 400 nowadays.

2013 wasn't a great year for me and I lacked training at the start of the year but still I skated around Ballycotton in **73:33**, purely a function of my lack of training. I believe this was the year that a work colleague of mine also ran Ballycotton. He started out ahead of me, as would any man who has 15 years on me and had a running age of about three, to my, now, 10. I passed him on the hill going up to four miles and he looked really, really, really poorly. I waited for him at the finish and heard his name being mentioned over the tannoy a good few minutes after I finished, but he never passed me in the chute back around. I waited and waited for him. He collapsed in a heap and was carted away for oxygen and treatment after staggering to the finish, he thinks! Lucky then that he didn't have my car keys so :-). I also remember that year for other reasons:

picking Martin up hours afterwards in Cork city after a feed of pints [\*] (him not me!) as I was unavoidably delayed elsewhere on another mission. Martin was to get a bus back but he hadn't booked a ticket beforehand and the only bus available was full.

I gave Ballycotton a really good shot in 2014 too, running **70:37**. Only two weeks before, I'd run a very soft PB for the half in Kinvara, 95:27. If only I'd run a decent half on the back of my 2006 Ballycotton ☺! I went to Craughwell two weeks later, as in 2012, and was at exactly the same time for 9 miles but had to factor in the final hill in Craughwell, which took 23 agonising seconds out of me. That last mile of 7:33 was horrible. I wasn't recovering as well as I once did. I did break 20 in the Galway 5KM Series later that summer so all that early season work did stand to me in the end.

Martin had to make his own way to Ballycotton in 2015, again for reasons I don't recall at this stage, or don't want to! I was back in 2016 and gave it as much stick as I could. **72:15** was my best effort and I managed the splits as well as a man who can run that sort of time with years of experience could. There were mile splits of 7:10, 7:12, 7:13, 7:14 and 7:15 thrown in through the race. And still I was passed by 100s of people during the entire 72 minutes. If it's hard at the top of the field, it's not pretty down the way either. It was a procession all through, with no really clean road at any stage – I am not a fan of running with many others and detest running in small groups. It takes too much energy minding my step in among others.

Ballycotton had become like a big city marathon, either by accident or design. The event was still top class in every way but the roads are quite narrow on occasion – we are in the middle of nowhere in reality. Getting in and out of the place was still problematic and fraught with delays but worth every minute of it. This was the year of very cheap diesel, in East Limerick on the way down it was 96.8 per litre. Will we ever see those days again?

This past year was not pretty for me. I tried to do the miles but the energy and zip were not in the legs and the few preparatory races I did had not

gone well, relatively speaking. Martin and I travelled again and re-enacted our by now usual routine: Drive down early; stop in Midleton for something to eat and a quick stretch; go the back roads to Churchtown and then get into the big field as close to the gate as possible; walk up along to the school; tog out; walk to the start; run to save our lives; I wait for Martin to finish; we go to the School together; have tea; talk to the few we know there; hopefully have a brief audience with the great man himself, John Walshe; see the prize giving; walk back to the now mostly-deserted field and hope we didn't have to be pulled out of the mud; stop off to see a man and his lady wife very close by; drive back to Cork city; stop in McDonalds on the Limerick road to let me have my usual post-race burger, fries & drink, which Martin always steered clear; straight run home from there with mugs safely in our gear bags.

Another mug for the collection.

Another results booklet too, a unique feature of Ballycotton and something I cherish almost as much as the mugs. There is little good to be said about my time this year, so I'll say nothing at all, **78:06**. I did run almost a minute quicker in much worse conditions a week later, but I didn't have a full match in my leg the day before that Craughwell afternoon, whereas I did in Ballycotton. I only let my Garmin record one 5.0 X KM in those 16 in Ballycotton though! I did what I was capable of that afternoon, so much so that I was genuinely worried that I might not finish, which would have been an utter catastrophe for me personally, to have my first DNF attached to a Ballycotton 10.

What no one – not outside Ballycotton Running Promotions anyhow – realised at the time was that it would probably be the last ever Ballycotton 10. Forty and out (1978-2017). Not after the press release issued on 05/10/2017 @ 17.00 anyhow. It started:

It is with regret and no doubt a certain amount of sadness that we wish to announce that the Ballycotton '10', the Summer 5-Mile Series and other events organised by Ballycotton Running Promotions have come to an end.

It went on. John Walshe kept it as short as he could humanly possibly

do. He is not a man who will use ten words when two will do just fine, so every paragraph had to be digested individually and fully, which I did. Ballycotton had become a big part of my life. This was like reading a death notice. I fully understood the sentiments and I know very intimately the demands that are put on race organisers these days, especially with the sorts of numbers that Ballycotton dealt with year after year in latter times, with pretty much the same organisers as 40 years before. One part of the statement, in particular, caught my gimlet eye:

Also, some participants today are more demanding than in the past and it goes without saying that social media now plays a major role in those demands.

That was interesting but I don't know why. All the other areas touched on by the statement made perfect sense to me, except this one. How and ever...

John Walshe and his merry bunch of helpers went out on their own terms, the way they wanted to, the way they needed to: in full control. They must be sincerely thanked for what they have done over the last 40 years for running in East Cork, Munster and Ireland. The enjoyment. The crack. The competition. The high watermark they put on the rest of us to organise events that yearned to be mentioned in the same breath as them. Not forgetting the many referrals to hip, knee, ankle consultants long after the finish line was breasted too. The lot!

I thank you all, John and many helpers, Ballycotton itself too.

What will Martin and I do early next March? Perhaps a very long over-due visit to Ballymaloe House on a day trip to the area. We might not squeeze in a three or four miles afterwards, but may jog a few beforehand, in a semi-silent memorial of one of the best road races that Ireland has ever staged, the Ballycotton 10!

P.S. I once asked John Walshe why they didn't have pacers in their races. I feel I was lucky to even get a reply considering my impertinence. Ballycotton didn't do things that way; they did things their way. We all just followed in their footsteps.

[\*] Legal representatives have been in contact stating that Martin had only two pints that evening.



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## Race Result History

Year	Men's Winner	Time	Women's Winner	Time	Finishers	<40:00	<50:00	<60:00	Top 50
2002	Paul McNamara	31:15	Kathryn Casserly	36:57	69	13	44	59	n/a
2003	Noel Kelly	32:46	Fionnuala Keane	38:18	171	30	92	126	n/a
2004	Paul McNamara	31:11	Lucy Brennan	36:36	253	38	130	179	n/a
2005	Gary Thornton	30:34	Lucy Brennan	37:30	351	51	168	252	n/a
2006	Gary Thornton	30:12	Lucy Brennan	37:03	470	42	211	339	n/a
2007	Gary Thornton	30:02	Orla Ní Mhuircheartaigh	38:52	617	50	253	457	39:59
2008	Gary Thornton	30:40	Catherine Conway	36:53	838	58	359	642	39:29
2009	<b>Gary Thornton</b>	<b>29:57</b>	Teresa McGloin	35:17	517	53	238	406	39:54
2010	Gerry Ryan	31:12	Catherine Conway	35:53	546	49	253	426	40:10
2011	Sean Hehir	31:07	Lizzie Lee	36:27	1042	65	434	794	39:08
2012	Mick Clohisey	30:57	Elish Kelly	35:45	1041	87	426	824	38:15
2013	Mick Clohisey	30:48	Elish Kelly	35:45	1132	71	481	880	39:17
2014	Mick Clohisey	30:18	Norah Pieterse	37:02	1145	85	467	865	39:06
2015	Mick Clohisey	30:03	Marie Hyland	36:36	1045	79	440	834	38:35
2016	Mick Clohisey	30:35	<b>Laura Shaughnessy</b>	<b>35:03</b>	1031	83	455	856	38:54

## 2017 Stalwarts

The following 7 people hold the distinction of competing in all 15 "Fields of Athenry" 10km races to date. We wish them all the best of luck on their 16th outing this year.

Name	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Bernie Kelly	45:48	49:31	52:05	44:20	46:08	47:46	45:46	47:23	45:50	45:43	1:58:12	49:43	48:07	50:50	51:28
Danny Carr	36:15	38:11	36:00	36:41	38:06	38:06	37:29	38:38	38:27	45:54	59:59	39:05	38:25	40:48	45:24
Kevin O'Dea	48:27	50:16	51:25	46:44	53:49	53:35	45:57	42:33	40:35	44:23	40:39	42:55	51:24	56:12	52:05
Martin Keane	51:20	50:02	54:48	51:17	50:44	52:27	53:42	52:49	52:42	52:09	53:15	53:34	55:02	54:14	52:44
Mary Mullins	1:05:50	1:00:37	1:06:27	1:07:22	1:11:31	1:05:23	1:07:36	1:06:30	1:05:32	1:11:20	1:10:18	1:11:51	1:09:56	1:16:12	1:10:14
Tomás Mac Lochlainn	49:57	56:35	50:10	52:23	56:58	FNSED	56:32	59:05	57:06	56:41	1:04:17	58:59	1:00:29	1:02:33	58:39
Tommy Joe Whyte	36:35	36:16	36:29	38:40	36:58	37:15	37:39	37:11	37:20	38:11	37:37	37:56	38:38	38:48	39:42

## 2016 Prize Winners

Category	Pos	Name	Category	Pos	Name
Women Senior	1st	Laura Shaughnessy	Men Senior	1st	Mick Clohisey
	2nd	Jane-Ann Meehan		2nd	Matthew Bidwell
	3rd	Grainne Ní Uallacháin		3rd	Brian Furey
	4th	Sinead Brody		4th	Peter Mooney
	5th	Siobhan Egan		5th	Sean McLaughlin
	6th	Clare Rowe		6th	Dariusz Monkiewicz
Women Junior	1st	Shannen Lee	Men Junior	1st	Jack Miskella
	2nd	Ruth Keogh	2nd	Rory Owens	
Women V40	1st	Neasa De Burca	Men V40	1st	Sean Burke
	2nd	Judith Campbell	2nd	Jim Phelan	
Women V45	1st	Margaret Brennan	Men V45	1st	Sean Hanley
	2nd	Kay Tuohy	2nd	Niall Murphy	
Women V50	1st	Carmel Brannigan	Men V50	1st	Eddie Newman
	2nd	Mary Connolly	2nd	Peter Payton	
Women V55	1st	Bernie Mulryan	Men V55	1st	Tommy Joe Whyte
	2nd	Anne Burke	2nd	Michael O'Malley	
Women V60	1st	Judith Roche	Men V60	1st	Martin Kearney
	2nd	Marie Killilea	2nd	Vinny Clohisey	
Women V65	1st	Margaret Glavey	Men V65	1st	Andrew Talbot
	2nd	Angela McCluskey	2nd	Frank Kitt	
Women Team	1st	Galway City Harriers (2:37:22)	Men V70	1st	Philip Cribbin
	2nd	Galway City Harriers (2:57:51)	2nd	Martin Hynes	
	3rd	Athenry AC (2:58:29)	Men Wheel	1st	Cillian Dunne
			2nd	Jerry Forde	
			Men Team	1st	Galway City Harriers (2:21:55)
				2nd	Tuam AC (2:30:05)
				3rd	Galway City Harriers (2:34:14)



**Fields of Athenry**  
10km Road Race  
2016





## Life Lessons Learnt by an Elder Lemon

Brian Geraghty GCH



Many of the best friends I have been lucky enough to have made in my life have come through my involvement with athletics. Even to this day when we meet up, maybe after a long interval of time, invariably the first thing we ask each other is, "Are you still getting in a few miles?"

I have been very lucky, as at this stage I have over 55 years on the clock, competing in events both at home and abroad. During this time I have run in many races and discovered our beautiful Irish countryside with its numerous picturesque towns and villages.

I have been extremely fortunate to have had the comradery of true friends whilst we ate the generous helpings of always delicious ham sandwiches and currant-y cake,

washed down by copious cups of sweetened tea in draughty village halls, while we earnestly discussed our performance during the race at the inevitable post mortem.

The following are a few gems I picked up along the way and feel they have had a profound effect on my life:

\* **Discipline** is the cornerstone of success in life and an absolute requirement to success in athletics. Toggling out on wet, cold, dreary, dark days instead of being tucked up in a warm bed – or beside a roasting fire – is often the life of the disciplined runner. I must admit than I even did a

few miles on my wedding morning but, of course, neglected to tell the bride.

\* **Hard work** often leads to success but unfortunately we do not always reap the rewards for our toil, leading to deep disappointments. Being able to restart and continue to put down our toe again to the line and reset our goals takes courage and resolve, so 'feel the fear and do it anyhow!'

\* **Carpe Diem** or 'Seize the Day' and continue to exercise and run as this will help to bring about an Inner Peace. We will become more mindful of our own physical and mental health by cutting down stress and anxiety in this crazy world. Let us always remember we only have one body and it is up to each of us to care and look after it like a prized car as we will not be getting a new one any day soon.



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Top: At the start of the 1977 junior Loughrea AC road race, being led out by Brian O'Keefe and Paul Dunne (both Donore Harriers) with Conrad Conneely (Pearse AC) just behind. Jimmy Fallon (Pearse AC) was already out of sight and went onto win the race.

Centre: Ray McBride (Pearse AC) in Madrid during August 1971 having just won the 1500M steeplechase at the European Catholic Games where he set a new European record for this event in 4:15.3. The record lasted for ten years before being broken by future Irish Olympic runner Brendan Quinn of Waterford. Paddy Dempsey from Turloughmore is on the right.

Bottom: Robert Costello (Limerick AC) leading Brian Geraghty (GCH) with Jimmy Fallon (Pearse AC) and Noel Farrell (Roscommon Harriers) in pursuit at Claremorris Track in the 1977 Connacht T&F championships. **Who is the man with the glasses on the left?**

# First in Connemara on 23 April 2017

Lyall Guiney



My friend Joe sat beside me on the bus in Oughterard as we waited to depart for Lough Inagh. He was really nervous, but for once I was quite relaxed. Not only did I feel physically recovered from running Rome (2:51:37) three weeks before, but I also felt mentally ready to run another hard marathon. In addition, there was no pressure to achieve anything here. I definitely wasn't going to run a new personal best (2:45:51, set in Connemara '14). Furthermore, I had marked out Cork and Dublin as the year's primary targets. This race was just going to be an enjoyable run on familiar roads in near perfect conditions – 12°C under light cloud with a light breeze.

There are a few folk that need to be introduced:

Joe – as mentioned, friend, also running the marathon.

White-cap – a guy running the race, wearing a white baseball cap backwards.

Pro – a guy running the race, who looked like a good runner.

Surger – a guy running the race, who liked to 'surge'.

Sorcha – Kearney, a lady from St. Finbarr's club in Cork with whom I exchanged a few words at the start. She has one of those high-pitched, lilting, musical Cork accents.

Donal – Byrne, a guy running the race, who also looked like a proper runner!

Jerome – Debize, of GCH, running the ultra. Also ran the ultra three years ago when I ran my 2:45 marathon (and when Ruthann won the ladies ultra in 5:05). He finished third behind Lezan Kimutai and Raivis Zakis with a sub-4:30, in the awful conditions that enveloped that day.

Cyclists – two cyclist spectators who

cheered me on in the second half.

Four ultras went through before our start at 10:30am, including Jerome in second place. The marathon started at a comfortable tick and I settled into an effort level that I thought I could maintain throughout. I led the first mile with White-cap on my shoulder. Surger came pounding through at the mile marker. He was a big guy and had some gels or something in a bum-pouch that bounced all over the place. I honestly don't understand why people attach things to their bodies in a marathon. I carried my four gels in my hands.

A little further on Surger faded back behind us and White-cap edged into the lead. He looked like a decent runner but my natural "club runner" prejudices told me he didn't have the experience to manage a race like Connemara – based on the backwards cap, and his preference of a t-shirt over a singlet. Nevertheless he pulled out a steady gap of somewhere between 50-100m and looked comfortable. Surger went ahead of me again for a brief spell, but duly fell back. I was second when passing Anne Lyng, who was taking photos around the 6 mile marker, just before the turn onto the N59.

**Splits: 6:08, 6:03, 6:23, 6:19, 6:32, 6:27.**

Donal was on my shoulder at this point. His breathing was, maybe, a tad more strained than mine, which was reassuring, because I was working pretty hard up the incline in the seventh mile. We passed Jerome and exchanged a few words of encouragement. After this, I threw together some really solid miles and felt like I earned a gap between me and third place. However, I could hear someone closing from behind as we started the descent into Leenane. I ran a 5:52 eleventh mile but despite this

Pro flew past me. Clean lifting bai! He all but caught White-cap and they were close together going through the half-way point in the village. My effort level stayed steady the whole way and I prepared for the hills to come. Half-marathon split in 1:21:27. Comfortably 2:43 pace!

**Splits: 6:10, 6:04, 6:17, 6:09, 5:52, 6:12, 6:16.**

Up the hill. Near the top, Cyclists gave me a shout of encouragement. At the 16 mile marker Pro and White-cap were running together and remained a couple of hundred metres ahead. They definitely weren't extending the gap though. I had stayed steady after the hill (shared between miles 14 and 15) and recovered with a 6:00 split in the sixteenth mile, my second-fastest of the race.

At the 17 mile marker things had changed. They were closer, much closer. Cyclists appeared again and assured me I was closing the gap. I was locked in to my pace and effort, not pushing, not holding back – just patiently letting events unfold. We wound around the bends and up and down the little inclines. By the 18 mile marker I had reeled them in. Moments later we were a group of three, running abreast.

They say you should always go clean past. Control your breath, kick a little, open a gap and don't look back. Crush their resistance. I know this; I do this, normally...like if it's the last kilometre of a 10k. But this is the Connemara marathon and there were eight miles left! I didn't want to give these guys a target. I didn't know if they were actually fading or merely going through a bad patch. I had worked hard up to this point, expending a steady effort and managing the pace. Now I wanted to see if these guys could race. They were both foreigners whereas I knew the course like the back of my hand. I wanted to bring this advantage to bear.

So I slowed my pace. We remained a group. I was off the shoulder of Pro, and White-cap was just behind. But it didn't last. Employing tactics is all well and good but at this point in the race these two were not at my pace. It was obvious that if we remained a group it would be me taking point and doing the work.

So I resumed my pace. Surprisingly, it was White-cap who tried to stay with



me, not Pro. In the first half of mile 19 there is an uphill drag. At the top there is a building on the left, a yard on the right, and a downhill section ahead. I kicked at the top. Neither of them came with me on the downhill and a gap opened. No sound from behind and only the lead motorbike ahead.

**Splits: 6:49, 6:44, 6:00, 6:10, 6:18, 6:17.**

At this point my mind was racing. I was visualising the text messages I was going to send to friends and family. Use CAPS and exclamation points? Stick with correct punctuation and make it appear matter-of-fact? Lots of options:

“I just WON the Connemara marathon!”

“Won Connemara marathon, no big deal, just letting you know.”

“LYALL 1, CONNEMARA 0”

Hmmmm, what? Oh. Yes. Still got seven miles and the ‘Hell of the West’ to go.

The mind remained a bit jumbled but I stayed true to the pace and arrived in Maam village in good order. Cyclists were there at the corner and shouted their approval. I gave them a thumbs-up in acknowledgement and crossed the bridge.

The near two mile incline of the Hell of the West is tough going, no doubt

about it. Ultimately though it is all just work. If the body is feeling alright and you go into it with good awareness and judgement of the difficulty of the task, then it is just a matter of work-work-work your way to the top. It’s not pretty and it’s not fast but I always reckon you owe it to yourself to fight your way up as stubbornly and efficiently as possible.

The Bravo’s and the Alle!’s outnumbered the Well Done!’s going up the hill, such is the spread of nationalities in the Connemara race. It was all welcome. The lead motorbike had to stop and wait for me several times on the way because he simply couldn’t drive the motorbike any slower! Relief from the incline finally came as I passed the 24 mile marker and the cross marking Frank Haines’ participation and death in the ‘06 race.

**Splits: 6:24, 6:25, 6:14, 7:16, 7:37.**

I fully recovered the pace in the twenty-fifth mile, just like in the sixteenth after the Leenane climb. Back on it and pounding down the hill. Maam Cross was off in the distance. I was fairly certain nobody had gained on me in the previous couple of miles and this split – bang on 2:40 pace – put any concerns to bed. I just had to get to the finish.

The last mile is into the wind, and although it was just a light breeze, any obstacle was by now significant. I was

getting really tired. I blanked the mind and focused on kicking the elbows back, keeping the cadence steady and driving for home.

**Splits: 6:06, 6:35, 1:22.**

I sneaked a glance over the shoulder as I went by the 26 mile marker. No need, nobody there. Brian Bruton shouted congratulations as I entered the finish chute. Fist in the air, I won the race.

Two Hours, Forty Seven Minutes and a Dozen Ticks.

Pro came in over 2 minutes and 30 seconds back. I was chatting to him a bit afterwards, a very nice chap from France. Named Thomas. Of all people, Surger came third. Another Thomas. I kinda want to think he surged and faded, surged and faded, annoying anyone around him for the entire race. Donal was fourth. I had a pleasant conversation with him afterwards outside Peacocks hotel. White-cap faded badly to fifth.

Sorcha came fourth in the ladies, running a questionably paced 3:24. ;-) We spoke after the race: Cork accents abounded (she brought it out in me I think). On an unrelated note, I noticed that she came an excellent second in the rescheduled Clonakilty marathon in Feb ’16, on the same day I crawled home to place third in one of my worst ever marathon experiences.

On that theme, Joe had his worst ever marathon experience in this Connemara race, struggling home a little under the four hour mark. There'll be another day Joe :-). Jerome finished in second place in the ultra. He asked me afterwards if he'd see me at the 5k series on Tuesday. Funny guy!

This was obviously a brilliant day. I've never won a race before. Connemara is not a particularly competitive marathon, but you can only race against whoever shows up on the day, and I still had to run a time close to my personal best to win. It's strange though – if I compare it to 2014, it's not clear which is better. I finished fifth then, but fought through gale-force wind and driving rain to run a 2:45. Many of the Athenry "old guard" were there to greet me at the finish. It was a truly special day that ages in my memory like a fine red wine. This

time around the personnel were different, the conditions relatively benign, the time a little less, the result a little more. Perhaps it's an apples/oranges thing, or maybe more like a chocolate brownie/glorious summer day kind of thing. Both very good – just different.

What looms now is a sense of expectation. In the years 2012-2015 I had reached a level where I peppered the 2:45 – 2:55 range. After a year in the wilderness in 2016 I now feel that I'm back at that level, but my personal best remains stagnant. Since 2014 I've only made one serious attempt at bettering it – New York in 2015. It was an overly ambitious and ultimately flawed effort that ended in failure.

Next: the 2017 Cork marathon.

**Addendum (December):**

I ran Limerick the week after Connemara and managed to sneak

under 2:50 again, but it hurt like hell. Cork arrived just a month later and although I felt good and confident on the start line, and held a steady 2:43 pace for 18 miles, the wheels came off and I faded to another 2:47. The increasing effects of plantar fasciitis were mounting during the month of May and the pain in my heel after any training run was becoming unbearable. Instead of being an explosive start to the year, it turned out that the month of April was the sole highlight. Looking at a two year time-span, spring '17 has been the anomalous success story in an otherwise steady trough. Getting older I guess. Jane-Ann suggested, "Come back slow this time!" She's probably right.

Goals for 2018: Run, consistently.

P.S. The text I did send was, "I just WON the Connemara marathon!"

The image is a promotional poster for the Allianz Resolution Run 5K Race. At the top, the Allianz logo is displayed in blue. Below it, the words "RESOLUTION RUN" are written in a large, stylized, blue font, with a silhouette of three runners to the right. The background features a dark blue silhouette of a city skyline. In the center, the text "5K RACE" is written in bold white capital letters, followed by "New Years Day" in a white cursive font, and "GALWAY CITY" in bold white capital letters. Below that, "11.30 AM START" is written in bold white capital letters. At the bottom, a white rounded rectangle contains the text "Enter on www.active.com" in blue, with a white mouse cursor icon pointing at the bottom right corner of the box.

# What if You Decided to Run One Hundred Miles?

Ray after five days in the Marathon Des Sables, Peru.



The Connemara 100 (CMN100) is best described as a monumental journey through some of Ireland's most spectacular landscapes.

Taking place in August each year, the event, created by Ultra Runner Ray O'Connor, requires participants to cover one hundred miles in a single effort within a 30-hour cut-off time. The requirement for crew support adds to the overall drama and also introduces a full team aspect as both participant and crew create a unique bond that is seldom replicated at any other event.

**Just what does it take to complete one hundred miles in a single stage?**

We ask the event creator Ray O'Connor who is an avid ultra runner himself.

"It takes a certain mindset to complete this race, which is strange really. Initially, you'd expect me to talk about the miles and miles of training required for such a distance, but being mentally prepared when the going gets tough – and it will – is the single thing that makes the difference between success and failure. Sure,

you have to put the miles in and prepare as you would any long distance event, but one hundred miles has an altogether different way to emphasise the word 'hurt'. One hundred miles is not easy, not by a long way, but the distance coupled with the awe-inspiring landscape, seem to add a mystical power to the whole affair. Many past participants recall tales of hallucinations, fatigue so intense that they fall asleep running, out of body experiences, laughs and tears, but most of all they talk about the spirituality that this race delivers year in, year out."

**Why do they put themselves through this?**

"Well", explains Ray, "I think everything ultra is just extreme, and any extreme depends on a desire to bring the mind and body further than normal. In my world, it is ultra running, and we are looking for something that is very hard to pinpoint. Recently, while competing in the Marathon Des Sables Peru, I tried to explain my feelings to a journalist

as we completed the last 5K of one of the stages together. The best I could come up with was, When I deprive myself of all the usual daily comforts, I desire them all the more. And the further I go beyond what is normal all senses seem to become more alert and it all becomes other-worldly (if that's a word)."

**But can anyone complete 100 miles on foot?**

"Probably, yes, but within the 30-hour cut-off? Probably not just anyone. I really believe everyone should give it a go though. But without at least a couple of years of training and regular marathon running, I wouldn't advise it. But no matter what the approach, that bubbling feeling at the finish line lasts longer than most running highs and at the end, it is well worth the effort."

The Connemara 100 takes place in August 2018. As this is the 10th year of the event the organisers are expecting a bigger number of participants than usual, and to add to the experience, Ray has decided to participate himself and will be joined by many of his ultra-running buddies from across the globe. Places are limited so if you are thinking about it drop Ray an email, have a chat and start that story that begins with "What if..." ray@proactive.ie

**Description of the course**

The Connemara 100 on the West Coast of Ireland is run over a measured and certified course.

The course is simply fabulous, taking participants from Clifden through Letterfrack, Lettergesh, the Inagh Valley, Maam Cross, Leenane, Inagh Valley again, then on to Roundstone, Ballyconneely and back to Clifden to complete 100 miles.

# Fields of Athery Results 2016

1	Mick Clohisey	30.35	102	Liam Curran	40.58	203	AJ Walsh	44.55	304	Sean Finn	47.13	405	John Mannion	49.06
2	Matthew Bidwell	32.48	103	Fintan Donnellan	41.04	204	Sean Folan	44.58	305	Wojciech Musial	47.16	406	Oliver Nunn	49.07
3	Brian Furey	33.12	104	Martin Keane	41.06	205	Martin Glynn	44.59	306	Oliver Dolan	47.17	407	Paul Stapleton	49.07
4	Peter Mooney	33.59	105	Brendan Monaghan	41.07	206	David Dolan	45.01	307	Michael Morris	47.18	408	Stephen Noone	49.09
5	Sean McLoughlin	34.52	106	John O'Brien	41.08	207	Alan Gibbons	45.34	308	Craig O'Donnell	47.18	409	Noel Donnellan	49.11
6	Dariusz Monkiewicz	34.52	107	Pawel Ziemicki	41.14	208	Geza Kun	45.05	309	Aine Kelly	47.18	410	Brian O'Shaughnessy	49.12
7	Timmie Glavey	35.03	108	Barry Conneely	41.15	209	Noel Maher	45.06	310	Pat Burke	47.19	411	Stephen Braoderick	49.12
8	Adrian Smith	35.03	109	Diarmuid Hennessy	41.15	210	David Kenny	45.08	311	Ruth McGuinn	47.20	412	Bob T. Builder	49.13
9	Laura Shaughnessy	35.03	110	Mike Ward	41.17	211	Claire McNamara	45.08	312	Aidan Cleary	47.20	413	Michael O'Dwyer	49.13
10	Donal Egan	35.13	111	Paul Kilkelly	41.20	212	Emmett Kerrigan	45.10	313	Paul Doyle	47.21	414	Trevor Jennings	49.16
11	Eddie Newman	35.43	112	Barry Gatenby	41.24	213	Kenneth Duane	45.10	314	Mike McCartin	47.24	415	Barry Smith	49.19
12	Vincent McGuinness	35.53	113	John Rushe	41.24	214	Ronan Dooley	45.11	315	Coia Grimes	47.27	416	Ann Marie Clarke	49.21
13	Michael Flanagan	35.53	114	Michael Carrick	41.24	215	David Quinn	45.13	316	Michelle Robinson	47.30	417	Keith O'Donnell	49.21
14	Colm Daly	36.00	115	Gearoid Duff	41.26	216	Kilian Dooley	45.13	317	Andy Smith	47.32	418	Tadhg Naughtan	49.22
15	Sean Hanley	36.13	116	Tom Breen	41.29	217	Eugene Sharkey	45.14	318	Hilda Robinson	47.31	419	Shane Conway	49.23
16	David Meehan	36.17	117	John Norris	41.39	218	Paul McDaid	45.16	319	Arnie Healy	47.32	420	Gavin Daly	49.23
17	Sean Burke	36.22	118	John Conneely	41.42	219	Jarlath Fitzgerald	45.17	320	Fran Keenan	47.32	421	Patrick Mealey	49.25
18	Jim Phean	36.25	119	Stephen Donnellan	41.45	220	Deirdre Heverin	45.17	321	Steven Lally	47.32	422	Brendan McGrath	49.27
19	Brendan Gill	36.27	120	Gerry Flaherty	41.47	221	Victoria Nicholson	45.19	322	Yvonne Croly	47.33	423	Declan Snowden	49.27
20	Niall Murphy	36.29	121	Michael McCormack	41.54	222	Rynal Browne	45.20	323	Aidan Doyle	47.34	424	Paul McDonagh	49.28
21	Ollian Dunne	36.32	122	John Connelly	42.00	223	Alan Hayes	45.22	324	Clara Beuster	47.37	425	Daniel McKinnage	49.29
22	John Whirskey	36.48	123	Adrian Bushell	42.01	224	Mark Flannery	45.23	325	Anita Burke	47.37	426	Coia Molloy	49.29
23	Tom Gill	37.09	124	Daiva McPhillips	42.03	225	Andrew Talbot	45.26	326	Johna Murphy	47.38	427	Paul Greaney	49.29
24	Ollie Moore	37.27	125	John Touhy	42.11	226	Mark Rabbittie	45.27	327	Amit Mohan	47.38	428	Kevin Treacy	49.30
25	Tom Prendergast	37.28	126	Elaine O'Connor	42.19	227	Danny Carr	45.28	328	Claran Finnerty	47.42	429	Peadar Foley	49.30
26	Padraig Kelly	37.30	127	Jarlath Monaghan	42.19	228	Bob Quinn	45.31	329	Sinead Flannery	47.41	430	Cian Burke	49.31
27	Gerry Carly	37.41	128	Kieran Moran	42.20	229	Conor Owens	45.32	330	Aidan Collins	47.41	431	Padraig Gibbons	49.33
28	Jane-An Meehan	37.43	129	Paul Fahy	42.21	230	Alan Bailey	45.33	331	Jason Kelly	47.41	432	Mick Duggan	49.33
29	Brian Heavey	37.51	130	Greg Osborne	42.22	231	David Quinn	45.34	332	Michelle Connelly	47.42	433	Paul Moran	49.34
30	Cathal O'Reilly	38.03	131	Vincent McManus	42.26	232	Bernice Mulvaney	45.34	333	Yvonne Byrne	47.44	434	Pat O'Donnell	49.36
31	Mark Healy	38.05	132	Hugh Burke	42.34	233	Crona Barry	45.35	334	Liam Rabbitt	47.45	435	Siobhan Grealish	49.36
32	Aidan MacCarthaigh	38.10	133	John Callanan	42.34	234	Diarmuid Quill	45.37	335	John Giles	47.47	436	Gillian Heavey	49.37
33	Tony Scanlan	38.10	134	Ruth Dervan	42.35	235	Declan Derrane	45.39	336	David Ross	47.48	437	Michael Cooper	49.38
34	Michael Costello	38.13	135	Krzysztof Straszewski	42.38	236	Eoin Larkin	45.42	337	Shane Finn	47.50	438	Wendy Hickey	49.40
35	Willie Burke	38.18	136	Kevin Kitt	42.40	237	John Davoren	45.43	338	Padraig Varley	47.53	439	Paddy Lennon	49.40
36	Jonathan Cunningham	38.18	137	Cathal Ruane	42.44	238	Malcolm Hennigan	45.45	339	John Marlyn	47.54	440	Brendan Ryan	49.41
37	Johnny Lane	38.22	138	Fergal Meala	42.45	239	David Fitzgerald	45.46	340	David Byrne	47.56	441	John O'Connell	49.42
38	Niall Hardiman	38.26	139	Michael Murphy	42.47	240	Mark Gill	45.47	341	Paddy O'Monell	47.57	442	Lorraine Craven	49.44
39	Conor Cuddy	38.26	140	John Kelly	42.47	241	Damien Caulfield	45.47	342	Richard Coloney	47.57	443	David Rohan	49.45
40	Paul Keane	38.39	141	Kieran Whyte	42.48	242	Shane O'Meara	45.48	343	Diarmuid Keane	48.01	444	Al Callanan	49.45
41	Kevin McKeever	38.45	142	John Dolan	42.49	243	Eleanor Whyte	45.49	344	Margaret Brennan	48.02	445	Sean Flannery	49.46
42	Aidan Connaughtan	38.45	143	Aine Kenny	42.51	244	David Ehrenrecht	45.49	345	Tim Holian	48.03	446	Noelle Rooney	49.51
43	Oliver Love	38.46	144	T.J. Hynes	42.57	245	Aiden De Paor	45.51	346	Enda Keahan	48.03	447	Gerry Rohan	49.53
44	Peter Lyon	38.51	145	Stephen Bushell	42.59	246	Cathal Daly	45.51	347	Cathal Kennedy	48.03	448	Maureen Boyle	49.54
45	Graine Ni Gallachain	38.52	146	Cathal Lynch	43.03	247	Brendan Neill	45.51	348	Robert O'Connor	48.04	449	Seamus McCaffrey	49.54
46	John Kelly	38.52	147	Noel Igoe	43.10	248	Ross Scully	45.52	349	John Connelly	48.04	450	Eamonn Delaney	49.54
47	Ollie Canning	38.52	148	Barry Smith	43.14	249	Eoin Rafferty	45.52	350	Pamela Mahony	48.06	451	David Fitzpatrick	49.55
48	Culan O'Meara	38.53	149	Patrick Connaught	43.15	250	Colin O'Rourke	45.53	351	Louise Loughman	48.06	452	Karla Hanon	49.55
49	Vincent McCormack	38.54	150	Francis Holian	43.16	251	Soracha O'Rourke	45.57	352	Des Casey	48.10	453	Joe Kerrins	49.55
50	Gary Wilmont	38.54	151	Martin Mulherrins	43.19	252	Damien Donohue	45.57	353	Martin Ryan	48.16	454	Padraig Moran	49.56
51	Paul Reynolds	38.55	152	John Murphy	43.22	253	Gerard Glynn	46.00	354	John Cassels	48.17	455	James Duffin	49.59
52	Fergus Kelly	38.56	153	Stephen Carly	43.24	254	Liam Dolan	46.01	355	Connor Madden	48.17	456	Michael Ludden	50.01
53	Tommy Grealy	38.56	154	Conor Ludden	43.25	255	Thelma McMahon	46.02	356	Linda Kilkelly	48.20	457	Mary Kealy	50.02
54	Conor Devaney	38.58	155	David Varley	43.29	256	Nicola Rafferty	46.08	357	Catherine Burke	48.21	458	Noel Conneely	50.08
55	Francis Higgins	39.07	156	Thomas Conneely	43.29	257	Jim Vaughan	46.11	358	Kay Tuohy	48.11	459	Tim Donnellan	50.08
56	Paraic Rafferty	39.11	157	Eoin Ward	43.32	258	Kevin Flanagan	46.14	359	Keith Joyce	48.22	460	Stephen Hanrahan	50.08
57	Paraic Shortall	39.13	158	Adrian McKiernan	43.33	259	Colm Scully	46.17	360	Maurice Dempsey	48.23	461	Kevin Burke	50.09
58	Frank Murphy	39.16	159	Jean O'Connor	43.33	260	Emmet Dormer	46.20	361	Brendan Sarry	48.25	462	Donal Leahy	50.12
59	Sinead Brady	39.18	160	Patrick Byrne	43.33	261	Nawaz Dinath	46.21	362	Tom Travers	48.25	463	Kenneth Macken	50.12
60	Aidan Spellman	39.20	161	Ammarie Smith	43.37	262	Les Saville	46.21	363	Patrick Dwyer	48.26	464	Aidric Cormican	50.15
61	Jimmy Ward	39.23	162	Jason Connelly	43.37	263	Thomas Connaire	46.24	364	Tommy Neill	48.26	465	Brian Murphy	50.16
62	Siobhan Egan	39.23	163	Connor Connelly	43.40	264	Peter T.	46.24	365	Tommy Davilly	48.26	466	Ryan Wilbur	50.19
63	Ollie Fagan	39.24	164	Citona Hurst	43.43	265	Deirdre Kelly	46.25	366	Benny Niland	48.31	467	Tom O'Rourke	50.22
64	Tim Killeen	39.26	165	Frank Clancy	43.46	266	Mirko Warnke	46.27	367	Aidan Kelly	48.32	468	Rena Deely	50.23
65	Gerard Kenny	39.26	166	Rory Owens	43.48	267	Michael Lee	46.28	368	Laura Rourke	48.32	469	Seamus Keane	50.25
66	Patrick Fleming	39.27	167	Hubie Conway	43.49	268	Sinead Joyce	46.29	369	Connor Lawless	48.34	470	Patrick Wolniuk	50.27
67	Sean Whelan	39.31	168	John Duffy	43.52	269	Connor O'Grady	46.29	370	Thomas Geraghty	48.35	471	Fiona Hobler	50.28
68	Daraugh Garaghty	39.38	169	Daniel Conneely	43.52	270	Tony Ward	46.30	371	Nicky Curran	48.35	472	Keith Mackenzie	50.29
69	Declan McCaffrey	39.39	170	Declan Gorman	43.53	271	Seanor Bray	46.32	372	Fiona Walsh	48.38	473	Rachael King	50.29
70	Eoin Ryan	39.41	171	Thomas McDonagh	43.54	272	Richard Comer	46.33	373	Claire Cellarius	48.41	474	Shane Tighe	50.33
71	Tommy Joe Whyte	39.43	172	John Whirskey	43.55	273	Robert McDonagh	46.34	374	Colette Kelly	48.42	475	Mary Kate Dilger	50.33
72	Martin Kearney	39.44	173	Kevin Hastings	43.57	274	Paul Monaghan	46.36	375	Francis Curran	48.42	476	Bridget Murray	50.34
73	Mark Wragg	39.46	174	Kevin Sheridan	43.58	275	Ivan Morrin	46.37	376	Gabriel Gardiner	48.43	477	Martin O'Donnell	50.35
74	Brian Bruton	39.46	175	Ian O'Connor	43.59	276	Michael Bartley	46.37	377	Patrick Daly	48.43	478	Jean Mackey	50.35
75	Clare Rowe	39.49	176	Claran Coye	44.02	277	Jeremy Thomas	46.40	378	Ryan Dunn	48.44	479	John Gill	50.37
76	Jack Mitchell	39.49	177	James Loughman	44.03	278	Ronan O'Reilly	46.40	379	Greg Keegan	48.50	480	Gary Cutley	50.40
77	Catherine Thornton	39.51	178	Kieran Sharkey	44.03	279	James Dooley	46.41	380	Vanessa Sumner	48.46	481	Liam McLachlan	50.40
78	Morgan McHugh	39.59	179	Padraig Connaught	44.07	280	Gerard Conway	46.41	381	Evan Quirke	48.46	482	Maedhbh Scanlon	50.40
79	Brian Mooney	39.54	180	Tony Nevin	44.08	281	Tony Butler	46.41	382	Tricia Kelly	48.46	483	Keith Daly	50.41
80	Chris Deakin	39.55	181	Antony Ryan	44.08	282	Chris Hughes	46.42	383	Connor McAuliffe	48.46	484	Mary Dooley	50.43
81	Seamus Coyle	39.57	182	Mark Dunne	44.11	283	Mark Dinkin	46.42	384	Julie Maguire	48.49	485	Paolo Corrado	50.43
82	Nessa De Burma	39.58	183	Derek Hannon	44.13	284	Don Nyhan	46.44	385	Aoife Kerans	48.49	486	Wojciech Derlaga	50.45
83	Christopher Magee	39.58	184	Ashley Ryan	44.14	285	John Hunt	46.46	386	Andrew McChes	48.50	487	Frank Hurley	50.47
84	Donal Devaney	39.58	185	James O'Reilly	44.14	286	John O'Leary	46.46	387	Gary Keegan	48.50	488	Brian Murphy	50.47
85	Sean O'Boyle	40.04	186	Riana Walsh	44.22	287	Conor Durack	46.51	388	Mark Moran	48.51	489	Stefan King	50.50
86	Proinsias Glynn	40.16	187	Kieran Lane	44.21	288	Shannon Lee	46.51	389	Shane Donohue	48.52	490	Gerard Burke	50.51
87	Kevin Whelan	40.17	188	Alan Howard	44.24	289	John Fahy	46.52	390	David Donohue	48.53	491	Sinead Bourke	50.51
88	Sean Cahillane	40.19	189	Kevin Glynn	44.24	290	Fiona Hession	46.53	391	Gerry Treacy	48.53	492	Mike Ryan	50.53
89	Kevin Lynch	40.19	190	Gareth Smith	44.24	291	Anne Burke	46.54	392	Lisa Ward	48.53	493	Aiden Allen	50.53
90	Conor Foy	40.21	191	Tammie Corrigan	44.25	292	Margaret Flaherty	46.54	393	Richard Kelly	48.57	494	Niall Daly	50.56
91	Tomas Madden	40.23	192	Paschal Silke	44.33	293	Michael McDonagh	46.55	394	John Burke	4			

506	Clair Morrisonsey	51:19	613	Lia Fahy	53:47	720	Abigail Colleran	56:49	827	Tomás Mac Lochlainn	59:26	934	Mandy Guinmane	1:05:55
507	Padraig Conne	51:20	614	Michael O'Regan	53:48	721	Anna McEneaney	56:51	828	Tavia Heavin	59:26	935	Mandy Beames	1:06:18
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515	Jason Conroy	51:32	622	Michael Huntington	53:57	729	Adam Conroy	57:00	836	Siobhan Keating	59:32	943	Zoya McInerney	1:08:11
516	Paul Ryan	51:32	623	Garry Hurley	53:57	730	John Keogh	57:01	837	Gabriel Gralish	59:32	944	Julia Carr	1:08:14
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533	John Quinlivan	51:59	640	Eddie Fitzsimons	54:31	747	Sharon Ni Ghabhann	57:32	854	Bernie Rafferty	59:54	961	Mary Burke	1:10:05
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536	Kenneth Greaney	52:06	643	Andy Gavin	54:33	750	Mark Sampson	57:35	857	Aoife Kelly	1:00:02	964	Mary Mullins	1:10:17
537	Kevin O'Dea	52:07	644	Maria Cronnelly	54:34	751	Beatriz Carrasco	57:38	858	Martin O'Hara	1:00:10	965	Bernadette McCormack	1:10:36
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539	Maura Rafferty	52:13	646	Cain MacLellan	54:38	753	Aine Mitchell	57:40	860	Siobhan Keating	1:00:23	967	Deirdre Coen	1:11:37
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552	Aoife Doyle	52:31	659	Rossane Heavey	54:57	766	Saorla Ni Fhatharta	58:01	873	Fergus Connolly	1:01:13	980	Sheila Ni Chlhair	1:12:50
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554	Patricia Foley	52:32	661	Deborah Coffey	54:58	768	Jill Gill	58:05	875	Una Holland	1:01:22	982	Gillian Morrison	1:12:58
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560	Aine-Marie Walsh	52:40	667	Katie Barrett	55:04	774	Michelle King	58:11	881	Paul Denby	1:01:31	988	John Smith	1:13:40
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593	Emmett Ryan	53:22												

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# Being a Runner

Philip Magnier

For many of us — with hindsight — it's like sleepwalking, making the decision to start running. You have no idea what you're getting into. You might bump into someone, on the street maybe or in a pub, the person might say: - I'm doing some running now, not too serious, just a couple of times a week.

You're surprised, you just hadn't thought of this person...like that, out there, making a show of themselves, wet with rain or sweat, white legs, new running shoes, glancing at their running watch! (As if the person was going fast enough to bother!)

Then you remember, somewhere at the back of your mind—the aspiration you had, from years back — someday, you might give a marathon a try, only with proper training mind you...when the time was right. But of course it wasn't right, not yet, but what harm was there in maybe jogging around a bit...it couldn't kill ya, right?

It couldn't, right?

Then just to feel safe, to...not embarrass yourself, well not too much anyway, you go out and give it a try, on your own (where no one can see you and laugh at the spectacle) and you literally can't believe how unfit you are. How could I be this unfit? I played football until a few years ago, swam in the Summer, ran to bus stops sometimes.

There and then, you take the bait, set your goal. I am going to get fit.

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A few jogs on your own are followed by a few more, and oh my god, I'm going slowly but...at least, I'm doing it. The lunchtime lap is turning into several laps, and the strangers who pass you nod at you without jeering. Then it happens...you pass someone else and you know the time has come: to join your friend, to participate in a real training run.

No matter how much you've prepared, the first time joining a group is nerve wracking. Is it really a social run?, how far do they really go?, and how frigging



fast? The friend you met is there at the meeting place as promised and his smile seems genuine, delighted even. — You finally made it, brilliant.

Others emerge and chat in the circle, in their running gear, jogging on the spot — many of them super fit looking and thin, so thin — and after a minute, a few mutter decisively to each other and move out of the car park, break into a trot.

And it's okay, you can keep up, we're running as a group, stringing out along the road. You're surprised at how many talk as they run, you smile when someone asks whether the pace is okay. A couple of kilometres and you are drifting towards the rear, you pray that no one talks to you anymore. You notice your breath coming as a huge rasping sound and that no one else seems to be breathing at all. In fact they're still talking...and laughing. They're so relaxed, so enjoying themselves. You pass along stretches you've travelled in cars and had no idea they were so steep, frigging hills practically, but there's a real hill up there at a right turn, it must be a hundred metres long and practically vertical, surely we're not going there, on a long run like this?

But they go left and maybe you're warmed up now but it feels close to comfortable; your friend glances back and slows to speak after looking at this GPS watch. — 3.5k done he says, don't worry, we don't leave people behind, not on a social run.

You don't know whether you feel relieved or annoyed, you'd love to drop behind, go slower, but look, you're out here, on a cool morning, the cows look as you pass, cars stop on narrow roads to let you by, the driver smiling, a couple of miles more and you can say you made it, your first real training run. You're falling further behind, your mate stays loyally at your shoulder, you wonder whether we'll ever reach the Raheen Woods, one more push, you must be 50 metres behind now but no bother, a left turn and a flat stretch where your feet go thud, thud, you can hardly lift them, you don't give a shit who can hear you gasping for air, why aren't we there?, you turn right, force one leg after the other...and you arrive, where you started from.

8k, and you couldn't give a toss how long it took.

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Pretty soon you're doing it every Saturday and over the weeks you get comfortable with the whole shebang: keeping up, training faster, longer runs. And it's time for a new challenge...a race. Why is a race different from training? You wear much the same gear, you're on a road, the distances are similar. Why is a wedding different from a date?

You target a 5k and it's done, you now have a PB at that distance and you go on to run all the classic road runner distances, 10k, 8k, 10 miles. You graduate to a half marathon.

After that, you can repeat endlessly, breaking PBs, having disappointments, being injured for a while, coming back to fitness; downtimes, uptimes, spectating times. But always there at the back of your mind, a spectre...just over the horizon, you know it's coming, it's unavoidable. Dublin.

A marathon is a scary thing. You can overtrain, you can undertrain, you can get it right...but no matter how spot on you get it, you are always shagged at mile 20 and, in effort expended, you're still only half way there. Finally one year, you know it's time has come. You sign up, maybe you wait a while to tell people that this October is the October, you've made the commitment, you've even booked the hotel, hah!

And it all starts: 20-mile runs, totally wasted for the weekend. Feeling injured, should I go on a run, will I be worse off? So many decisions, so much planning. How many gels to take?, how much carbohydrates? The training stretches on — cold morning runs, rainy runs, sunglasses runs — and then the time has arrived. You're up at the RDS, the buzz, the track-suited French, the Americans laughing, the exhibits for stuff you never dreamed of, the nervous tension that fills the space. You love every second and you are also sick to the inner lining of your stomach. Tomorrow is show time.

A final carb-load of a meal that night, you're distracted...you blink, and you wake next morning in the hotel: your gear laid out, the number attached, your gels, your nerves.

You could go to Heuston and take the train home, pretend you have a bad cold. You feel like you're in the Garden of Gethsemane, oh lord, if it be in your power to release me from this burden. You laugh at yourself and move out for the club photograph onto streets that are a magnificent confluence of runners, their anxious partners, "ordinary" people gawking, and marathon organisers.

Somehow it gets done. The training, the gels, the time put in, all that effort has worked. You cover the distance. Afterwards, knackered, you meet the others in some hotel bar, smiling, consuming liquids and food, explaining what went wrong and right, some bitterly disappointed and others triumphantly ecstatic.

And you talk pure shite for three and a half hours.

---\*---

Time passes. You continue, understanding that mostly — mostly — being a runner is training.

Weekend mornings with an easy run in your times recovering from a tough race. Or hours put side on a Sunday for a long, testing stint. Speed sessions at night with a big group along the bypass road when cold winds push you back and you stain to justify the description speed (it's all relative) with Jane Ann never letting up on that frigging whistle. Tempo, where it starts easy but cuts into you in the latter half.

And Ryehill.

Somehow welded with memories of freezing winds on those hills, night-time and the ancillary gear: head lights, reflective jackets, gloves, woolly hats. And a small dog called Buddy dressed better than anyone with a tailor-made yellow jacket and a necklace of flashing lights. He is considerably more eager than we are to get going.

But after checking who's here, we are off, down a small hill and a right turn onto the first of several rises that stretch to the heavens. The breaths gets stronger during this but it's early days and we negotiate it easily, then over the crest and a long descent to gather our strength for the next trial: the sheerest hill of the course where we can practically touch the ground with our hands as we strain to cover it.

Then some respite as we negotiate a downhill and a gentle rise and someone edges ahead, forcing the pace out — it's not a social run — and this is where the lactate builds but it's good because

we're fit, eager to push ourselves, and enjoying being with a band of nutters scouring the countryside of East Galway on a Winter evening.

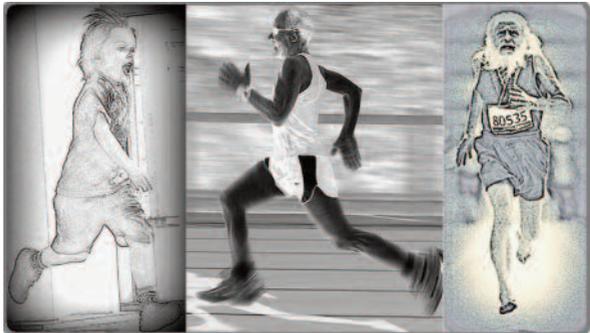
This continues for some miles, on down though a side road that would barely fit a tractor, back onto a road that continues on to a main road where we take another turn to start back for home.

What to say of our next hill: Abbeyknockmoy? That it occurs 6.5 miles into a tough 10.5 run? That it begins at a church and a prayer and ends two miles later at a nursing home?

Now our group is extending out along the way, some refusing to drop their pace, others struggling and falling back. It's a hill to endure. Two thirds or so up, the front runners turn and come back for the stragglers and we continue on, heading for home. We have a gentle fall to regain our breath and try to maintain the pace. It's colder now and we're aware of our mist breaths swelling out before us.

Down through a scooped-out piece of landscape, then up to the last real hill, even Buddy the dog is struggling now, and we can see the final left turn at the top, and on to our finishing straight.

We can't make it out in the dark but the church steeple is there a mile away, waiting for us, our cars parked underneath, and an archway of tall trees leading into it. The exhilaration of knowing we're almost there competes with an in-bone tiredness and we push out one last time maybe a little competitive now. But we're full with the promise of rest, the satisfaction of a job accomplished, and a mile to go before we sleep. A mile to go before we sleep.





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# My 'Fields' Journey, 2002 to 2017

Bernie Kelly GCH



As I take on my 16th FoA, I think back over the last 15 incarnations of this race with many emotions. Way back in 2002 when I heard that the newly-formed Athenry AC were hosting a race on St. Stephen's Day I thought 'Are they mad? Who will want to run on St. Stephen's Day', but of course (I did) and as I left my three sleeping teenagers tucked up in their beds, 68 other hardy runners from Galway, Mayo, Clare and other counties were doing just that and all roads were leading to Athenry.

Athenry AC are a classy outfit and anything they do, they do with great professionalism and attention to detail. That first race was superbly organised (as they all have been since) and donning my maroon race T-shirt, I headed back home to the still sleeping teenagers, and was hooked on running on St. Stephen's Day forever more.

It has not always been easy leaving my cosy bed at 9AM and heading on often icy or flooded roads from Connemara to Athenry. In 2012 while vacuuming on Christmas Eve, I pulled a muscle in my lower back and could only shuffle around on Christmas Day. You can imagine my family's surprise when they saw me getting running gear together that evening. "Mam, you can barely walk. How are you going to do 10K? Are you mad?" was all I heard. But undeterred I got up extra early (it took me longer to get ready) and headed to Athenry. I could hardly get out of the car as the longish journey hadn't done my back any good. It was also raining really hard and the news was that the race route was flooded. Great!

That same year Danny Carr, a fellow club mate was also injured so we decided to start together at the back. After three or four minutes I said to Danny to go as I could only shuffle slowly and had to take short-ish strides and keep my feet low to the road in order to avoid jolting my poor back any more. I was determined to keep going even though when I reached the 1K marker it was just being removed such was how slow I was going.

The medical personnel kept me company for a lot of the way but I reassured them that I was an experienced (Ed. Note: really?) runner and was grand and they eventually headed for the finish. line.

With about a mile to go, who arrived upon me only Maeve Noone. "Jaysus, t'is yourself Bernie, are you alright?" "Grand!" says I, "I pulled a muscle in my back and t'is a bit sore but I'm fine." "Someone said that there was some woman still out on the course and I came out to check as Frank wants to take down the finish gantry," says Maeve. "I better tell him to leave it there," she said. "You better!" says I.

It took me 1:58:12 that year but I did it.

My PB for a 10K was FOA in 2005 when I ran 44.20. I can still remember how good it felt to have kept Michelle Lynch (GCH) in my sights for most of the race! In those days one of my staple group training runs was on a Monday night with the great Seamus O'Donnell (GCH). We did a steady 8 mile run at an even 8 minutes per mile. Regularly 25-30 took part in this session. This was about the time that I really got hooked on running. It was great to be part of an athletic club and to be training with experienced runners. One was always picking up tips and learning how to train smartly, safely and at a pace appropriate for one's ability and goals. When Athletics Ireland introduced Fit4Life in 2007, I embraced it totally, as I really understood how a support structure could make running a really enjoyable, safe way of improving one's physical health, making friends

and increasing one's social circle. This year Fit4Life has celebrated 10 years, and many of the people who joined Fit4Life never having run before, will today be running a 10KM with improved physical, mental and emotional health. Great credit to all who have kept Fit4Life going in their clubs and who continue to introduce, encourage, support, motivate and organise session in their clubs. Maith sibh!

2018 is going to be a milestone year for me as I will be celebrating 60 (SIXTY) happy years on this wonderful earth in March. I attribute my continued good health to regular exercise in the company of lovely people. Events like FOA give us a goal to work towards, a PB to improve on, or just a distance to conquer. Huge thanks to all in Athenry AC who continue to organise this event at a time of the year when the rest of us are on our yearly 'downtime'.

PS: All my running friends are invited to help me blow out all those candles on Friday 2nd March, 2018 in the Claddagh Hall, Galway (race HQ for Streets of Galway) where a marathon of another kind will take place with three hours of dancing from 9.30AM to 12.30AM! It promises to be epic so put that date in your diary.

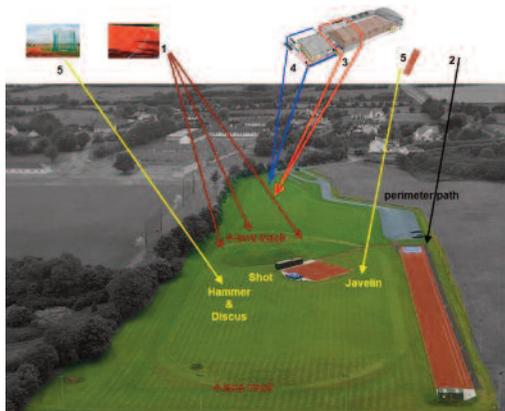


**14th Tuam Athletic Club 8KM Road Race  
Sunday 21st January 2018 at 2:30pm**

# Craughwell AC's Labour of Love

Another year on and it is now just over three since Craughwell AC purchased its 8 acre site adjacent to the local primary school in Craughwell. Those years have seen remarkable progress in the development of the facility, with a 140m long 8-lane tartan sprint track bordered by a double-width long jump pit which can also be used for pole vault drills. A separate 20m x 20m high jump area, grass running routes and 42 floodlights on 15 poles around the boundaries of the site have also been constructed.

The club is very pleased with the results to date, which are the fruits of the tireless efforts of its committee and coaches and the incredible financial support received from its members and both the local community and the running community. To date the club has spent almost €472,000 on the capital costs of the project together with €20,000 in professional fees and maintenance costs – very close to a total spend of a half a million euro.



At the outset of the project, the club had €44,000 in savings so to have raised/spent half a million euro is breathtaking! The work was also achieved with significant grants from the Sports Capital Program and the club are very grateful to Junior Ministers Ciaran Cannon, Seán Canney and Seán Kyne for their advice when preparing the grant applications. With outstanding debt reduced to €174,000 at the end of 2017, the club is now looking ahead to the next phase of development and embarking on a 6-year plan to deliver a 400m track, throwing areas and a substantial building.

It is an ambitious plan but the higher you aim the higher you achieve!

Mike Tobin  
Facility Development Officer.

## Development in Bushfield

With the 50th anniversary of our club just around the corner, it is an opportune time to quickly review the past and plan for the future.

I'm sure the small group who met in Sgt. Ryle's house in 1968 had little notion what a momentous occasions it would be forming Loughrea AC that evening.

At that time, the world of cross-country was very active, road races were scarce and only the very few got access to track, coaching and national success, unlike our own Olive Loughnane in more recent times.



The international road races of the 1970s projected our club's name onto a very high plateau with Brendan Foster, Seb Coe and Eamonn Coghlan, amongst others, racing through the streets of our town. We always put on a good show. Thousands more lined the streets watching these Olympic winning athletes go through their paces.

The purchase of 27 acres of land in 1985 at Bushfield outside Bullaun proved a different challenge. It is still the venue for club training and the MANNING SCHOOLS SPORTS is one of the highlights of the club's year.

Present developments are focused on a playing pitch which can be used for athletic training also. The perimeter of this pitch will also have a running track, to augment the one surrounding the soccer pitch.

Because of the current developments, the use of the cross-country is restricted at the moment but as soon as possible it will be open again to facilitate county and Connacht championships.

Coaches, parents and all involved in Loughrea Athletic Club welcome new members, and with the 50th anniversary around the corner, I'm sure there are many memories to be made.

Watch this space!

Loughrea AC.



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# An Idea But Who Will Run With It

Lindie Naughton (Flickr: [lindie](#))



Recent weeks have seen the launch of the Kia Road Racing League which, though limited to races with links to race promoters Popup Races, is a brave attempt to put some order on the Irish road running scene.

The Kia League includes the well-established Dunshaughlin 10km. But because of its nature, it does not – this year at least – include well-established races such as the Raheny 5 Mile, John Treacy Dungarvan 10 Mile, Armagh International, Dublin St Patrick's Festival 5km, Dunboyne 4 Mile, Omagh Half Marathon, Terenure 5 Mile, Irish Runner 5 Mile, Fingal 10KM, Streets of Galway 8KM, Dun Laoghaire Bay 10KM, Frank Duffy 10 Mile, Rathfarnham 5KM, Tinryland 4 Mile, Dublin Half Marathon, Jingle Bells 5km and, of course, the Fields of Athenry 10KM.

These are all races that club runners look forward to from year to year. Missing of course is the late and much lamented Ballycotton '10' Mile, the king of them all for 40 years.

Others worth paying attention to include the Trim 10 Mile, Enniscorthy 10km, Adare 10km, Meath Spring Half Marathon, Larne Half Marathon, Sonny Murphy Kilnaboy 10 Mile, Battle of Clontarf 10 Mile, Derry Waterside Half Marathon, Tallaght 5km, Boyne 5km, Clonliffe 2 Mile (oldest road race in Ireland and perhaps the world), Little South Run 4 Mile Kilmacow, Patrick Bell 5km Bohermeen, Enniskillen 10km, Braveheart Trail 5km, St Brigid's Oldcastle 6km, Tullamore Half Marathon, Longford Half Marathon and Laganside 10km.

All those races are organised by athletics clubs, who take pride in putting on great events that offer value for money. Plus any money they raise goes back into the local community.

Not included are commercial races, including the Great Ireland Run and the Rock and Roll Half Marathon, which rock in and out of the country and don't need any help from us.

BHAA races aren't included either, although their leagues play a vital role in

grassroots athletics, especially in the Cork area. Other well organised local leagues take place in Dungarvan, Waterford and Meath, to say nothing of multi-race series in many other counties.

On the "maybe" list are the VHI Women's Mini Marathon and both Dublin and Belfast Marathons, which have their roots in grassroots athletics, but have grown much larger than that. Other races from the SSE Airtricity Series are included in the A list.

Apart from offering recognition to the best races in the country and competition at all levels, a league ordered around club races offers all sorts of possibilities – annual awards for the best races in a number of categories for instance.

Initially, all this needs is a website and a small core of people who are clever with statistics. If it takes off, the funding will follow.

So come on – who's going to register [www.irishroadracingleague.ie](http://www.irishroadracingleague.ie) and get it started?



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# Eight Go to Frankfurt

Orla Mc Cluskey

Travelling to Frankfurt this year, with a marathon to run, felt very different to arriving in the city twelve months before as a spectator. My last attempt at a marathon was several years ago, and the experience left me so traumatised that I switched to triathlons, and hadn't revisited the distance since. Fast forward to 2017, time had passed, and I was ready to have another go. Although the training was done, in the week leading up to the race, anticipation and nervous excitement made way to just plain old nerves. When, why and how had this seemed like a good idea?

The morning of the race was subdued, with our band of runners unusually quiet in advance of the "off", contemplating what was ahead. Focused, freaked out, or maybe both. I expected to find it tough, and it was. In no way due to the course, which is flat, but rather just because marathons are tough. A constant conversation between mind and body for 42.2km – cajoling, admonishing, and everything in-between, not letting up until the finish line was in sight. And what a finish – pure theatre, and a fitting finish to a day where I felt grateful to be able, grateful to be there, and grateful to be in such good company.

Thank you, Mary, Jane Ann, Esther, Donal, Dave, Gearoid, and Chris.

And speaking of company, our band of runners, how did they fare?

## In their own words:

### Jane Ann Meehan:

I've always loved Germany. Having spent time there while in school I've always had an attraction to it. Having ran Frankfurt in 2016 I decided to head back in 2017. I drew up a training plan and in July we started out with October PBs in mind.

There is a lot to be said for being anonymous in a big city marathon. The standard in Frankfurt is also a big attraction. With my time, I would have been third Irish home in Dublin but in

Frankfurt maybe the top 30! You never have that chance to switch off...there is a constant push and unlike here where sometimes the men will protect you and shelter you...in Germany they don't like getting "chicked".

My race went well really. Apart from an unprecedented loo stop at 22km! I won't bore anybody with a mile by mile report suffice to say: marathon running hurts. No training prepares you for those last three miles. Visualisation is a big part of those last few miles. Step by step. Catching person by person. Running into the Festhalle to scantily-clad cheerleaders is a sight to behold. Frankfurt has been good to me.

Most importantly the friends you make along the way whilst training and racing are really what matters. Each of us have a personal goal but we all need to remember we are lucky we can do what we love and when the dust settles on the marathon season nobody cares what time you did...you do it for yourself.

### Donal Leahy:

I travelled to Frankfurt more in hope than anticipation. A very old injury I thought I had forever parted company with flared up two weeks beforehand. My taper could be more accurately described as a flatline, driven by one chance – get to the start line, give it a go and hope things held up. Unfortunately, it wasn't to be. That's life. And running! There will be other days and, while the end result wasn't there for me I still enjoyed the training and, apart from the last two weeks, wouldn't change one day of it. Next year!

### Chris Deakin:

The lead up to Frankfurt had gone pretty well after a couple of months of missed training earlier in the year, so I was hopeful of having another crack at a sub-three marathon. My last marathon was also in Frankfurt last year when I ran 3:05 so it was a



realistic target. Sometimes though it just doesn't go right on the day. My plan was to run as slow as possible in the first half while staying close to target pace and I managed that part alright, crossing the mat at 1:30:15. The second half was a different story and Plans B and C came and went. When the guy wearing the suit passed me I knew it wasn't going to be a good day. It was a good night though, thanks to Orla, Mary, Jane Ann, Esther, Donal, Dave, Gearoid and Mojito. Looking forward to the next one already!

### Esther Leahy:

My taking part in this took me a little by surprise as I thought my marathon days were well behind me. After a break of three years from any type of distance running the hunger was starting to take hold again. I had a good summer of cross training behind me with some short distance triathlon and before I realised it my running was coming good again and I seemed to be able to cope with some longer miles. I dithered with the idea of Frankfurt for some time and eventually Donal took the decision out of my hands and signed my up – OK, no choice now! With my time short I tried to stay calm and just enjoy being able to run pain free.

On race day the usual nerves were around and with that self-doubt – did I do enough? How much is this going to hurt etc. etc? Frankfurt's start is nothing short of confusing there seemed to be no apparent entry

points so it was a case of spotting a gap in the barriers and forcing our way in. This led to being very far up with the very fast runners and hoping they didn't spot the imposter. The first few miles are looped around the city and support was strong along with the wind on the day! At about 6/7 miles you head away from the city and are taken on a few dual carriageways (nothing pretty ever to see on a dual carriageway but miles are miles). This is one lovely section through a leafy boulevard, some might even call it a forest. By mile 20 or so you are back in the city and scenery is the least of your troubles and it's dig-in time and get the job done.

I stood at the start line with no real plan other than to run as far as I could as quick as I could and see what happens. Well what happened is I had a great race and the pain didn't kick in until 23 miles and then it was 'dig dig dig' but I got there. The finish is really rock star stuff, the last 200 metres are in the "Festhalle" with red carpet, flashing lights, confetti pouring from the sky and of course cheer leaders. No matter how tired you are this is the lift to take you home.

Job done you'd think all you'd have to do is collapse and enjoy the euphoria but no!! Frankfurt Marathon comes with a sting in the tail – for some bizarre reason (money gain no doubt) you hire the timing chip and if this is not returned you are charged €25. In order to return this, you have to remove the chip from your lace, climb two flights of stairs and deliver said chip to the stewards, then there is the issue of coming back down those stairs. This utter nonsense certainly dimmed the cheer a little.

However good cheer was restored again as one by one Athenry AC met at our pre-assigned meeting spot. Within minutes of us all meeting it was laughs and good cheer all around as we each had our own tale of adventure and misadventure to tell. That good cheer lasted well into the night and getting up to face a flight home was almost as testing as the 26.2 miles the day before.



Back: Dave, Chris, Donal. Front: Esther, Jane Ann, Orla, Gearoid.

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# Athletic Technology

Iain Shaw (IAAF Level 1 Technical Official)



Saturday, 29th April 2017, 6AM, and my alarm wakes me from my slumbers. Today is the first day of the County Galway Track and Field Championships, with a start time of 10AM, but I know that I need to get a move on as there is work to do. The car is already loaded and ready to go. Last night I loaded over a mile of cable, a fully working electronic timing system, five laptops, two printers and a whole host of other equipment that may or may not be required today. Something I have learned over the past five years of being an 'athletics technologist' is that if you think you might need it – take it, and if you don't think you will need it – take it. I am onsite by 8AM, all equipment dropped at the track finish line and the assembly starts.

On average it takes an hour to assemble all the equipment, plug it all in and make sure it all works. Another 30 minutes or so of testing is required followed by baseline recordings of all equipment which are necessary to verify any records that may be set today. Following the competition it is time to take it all in again, today, however, we have been hit by a torrential downpour and everything is being just thrown into the car to be sorted at a later date. As usual as I drive out I am one of the last to leave, on average 60-90 minutes after competition finishes. Today has been a good day, all times in the bag and the technology helped sort out appeals in an efficient manner. But why do we bother with all of the technology, is it really necessary, what are the current movements in technology and what are the plans for County Galway?

## Electronic Timing

Electronic timing is probably one of the most visible components of the technology set up at any track and field event and is one of the most welcome advances we have made in recent times. There was an excellent technical description of the workings of electronic timing and photofinish last year in the Fields of Athery race booklet so I will not go into them. The advent of electronic timing at almost all events you go to in the country now means that race times and performances are directly

comparable, and the errors of manual timekeeping have now been eliminated. In looking back over the county championship records it is very plain to see performances that are obviously timed wrongly and there is one particular year where a lot of the current best performances were recorded which would raise doubts about their validity.

Photofinish has been around for many years, but the advent of digital technology has taken it to a whole new level of accuracy. The new cameras being used, such as the ones in Athlone International Arena can give resolution of 1/5000s, with even higher resolution on cameras used at international meets. The new cameras also allow us to operate in lower light conditions yet still produce high quality images, which is often one of the major challenges for photofinish in Ireland. Photofinish images are now of such quality that it is possible to identify athletes very easily which had not previously been possible.

## Athletics Manager

Now that there has been almost universal adoption of electronic timing at track and field events around the country we can now start to roll out and train operators in an add on technology, which is electronic meet management software, and in Ireland we have adopted the Timetronics Athletics Manager software. This software allows for competitions to be run smoothly, efficiently and pretty much eliminate transcription errors that have always plagued results' generation. Competitor information is loaded onto the Athletics Manager software, and at the start of each heat of a track race, which competitor is in which lane is entered. Once the race has finished, the photofinish picture is saved, and then links to the Athletics Manager software to retrieve the lane order of the athletes. Once the photofinish operator has assigned times to the competitors the times are sent back to Athletics Manager where all heats are assembled and can be used either for the generation of the next round of heats or assemble a final result.

All of this takes place in the blink of an eye, and nothing has been written down.

It is also possible that as soon as Athletics Manager has received the results from photofinish to publish them live on the web. No longer will there be a need to wait for results to be printed and pinned to a board, anyone with a smart phone and internet access can see results within seconds of a race finishing, and often with the attached photofinish picture. It is hoped that from 2018 onwards, all County Galway T&F events will utilise Athletics Manager, and live results to the web. Also, from 2018 onwards, all results from T&F events will be passed to Athletics Ireland to allow them to assemble a database of performances at local, regional and national which can be used for seeding, verification of qualification standards, and general progression monitoring of athletes. Using Athletics Manager it will allow us to provide Athletics Ireland with the data in exactly the required format for their database.

## Electronic Distance Measuring

The use of technology for track events has received a lot of attention, but the measurement of performances in field events has also had the technology overhaul. At local and regional events, one of the most contentious events is long jump. The contention arises out of the time it takes to measure a long jump and the accuracy of that measurement. Measurement can be time consuming given that the spike has to be put in, the tape has to be pulled to the correct point, the measurement has to be read by an official on their hands and knees and then the pit has to be raked. However, all of this can be overcome and a highly accurate and fast reading can be achieved. At national events, tapes are no longer used, and they have been replaced by Electronic Distance Measuring (EDM).

This relies on the use of a laser based measurement device, a theodolite (same as surveyors use) to shine a laser onto a prism which is attached to the standard spike used to mark the performance. The

EDM is calibrated with a set of reference distance and angles and gives a highly accurate measurement of distance of performance. The performance can then be read directly from the theodolite and the athlete informed. The EDM can also interface with the Athletics Manager software for instantaneous updating of results on the web. The use of EDM is not just restricted to long jump, and it is often to be seen in all horizontal jump and throws events, and can even be used in high jump and pole vault. At the moment Galway (and Connacht) do not have EDM equipment, although this is an area that should be investigated for future events.

### Video Distance Measuring

Whereas the use of EDM started to eliminate the need for the tape measure, and the subjective measurement of distance, it has now been replaced at major international championships by Video Distance Measuring (VDM). This technology was first introduced at the Doha Indoor Championships in 2010. The system operates in a similar way to photofinish in that calibrated cameras are positioned outside the competition area and focus on the take off point and also the landing pit of the long and triple jump. Once an athlete has jumped, and an impression made in the sand, a VCM operator can place a cursor over the video image and the impression mark and a highly accurate measurement taken.

This eliminates the need for a spike to be inserted into the stand which has been known to displace sand and accuracy lost. Another significant disadvantage of tape-based measurement, and also in EDM measurement is that once the pit is raked, or an implement removed from the field, the performance is lost to view and appeals over measurement are hard to uphold. With VDM, all trials, valid or not are saved in the image database and can be scrutinised later upon appeal, if required. This technology can be used for all horizontal events that an EDM would also be able to measure. In Ireland, VDM has not yet been implemented, although some of our technical officials have received training on its operation. Whilst not in the immediate plans for Athletics Ireland to roll out this technology, there is ever chance we will see this in the near future at international events we host.

### Cross Country

It is hard to imagine where we may be able to introduce technology into cross country along the same lines as that seen for track and field, but there are changes afoot, particularly in the generation of an accurate result. At the moment, cross country still relies on manual recording of results onto record sheets, and these are then manually entered into a results spreadsheet. Any time where hand writing and transcription are involved, errors go hand in hand. The more competitors you have, the more pressure is put on finish line recorders, and mistakes can be made. At the county cross country championships this year, we used finish line video to record all races and any appeals raised and misreporting of results were quickly dealt with. In 2018 a further advance will be made with the introduction of barcodes onto competitor numbers.



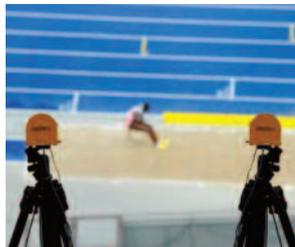
This will allow finish line judges to simply scan the barcode on finishers bib numbers which can either be read 'live' into the results spreadsheet or the data uploaded to a laptop at the end of the race. This will allow an instantaneous result to be generated upon race completion. Finish line video will also be taken as a backup but the need to handwrite results or manually enter onto a spreadsheet will become a thing of the past. Athletes backing up in a finish chute should be eliminated as athletes simply need to pass a scanning point and once scanned can leave the finish area (scanning takes less than a second). Those athletes who finish without a number as sometimes happens in cross country can be taken aside to find out their details without holding up the finish line procession and a place marker entered into the results until details are known. At the children's race today here in Athenry we will be trialling the new

barcode system to show it working in a 'live' situation ahead of it being fully implemented.

### Do we need the technology?

This is a very good question, and one to which the answer really is, well, no, we don't as without the technology we would still be able to run an event and award medals. The major advantage of using technology, and updating the technology where available is that when we award those medals we ensure that they are going to the right person. We also do this in a completely objective manner, backed up with hard evidence in the form of a picture or video that is available to be examined on appeal. Technology helps us achieve one of athletics guiding principles, that of fairness, as we can remove all bias away from results and let the machines & software work it out for us. In the past two years, Community Games have introduced photofinish into the athletics finals and at some regional events to remove the human factor from deciding races. This was a significant step for the organisation, both in terms of adopting technology but also in its very fabric of removing a volunteer from making these crucial decisions, all in the name of fairness. During the summer festival in Abbotstown this year, there was not a single challenge to how medals were awarded, probably the first time in the Community Games existence.

Technology allows for a high level of accuracy, and again uniformity of results such that an athlete really can chart their own progression and know that if a standard is achieved, or a PB set, then there is a piece of supporting evidence, and this really is where the advances in technology have made a difference and why they should continue to be adopted and supported within our sport.





# Best of luck to all the participants in the Fields of Athenry 10K

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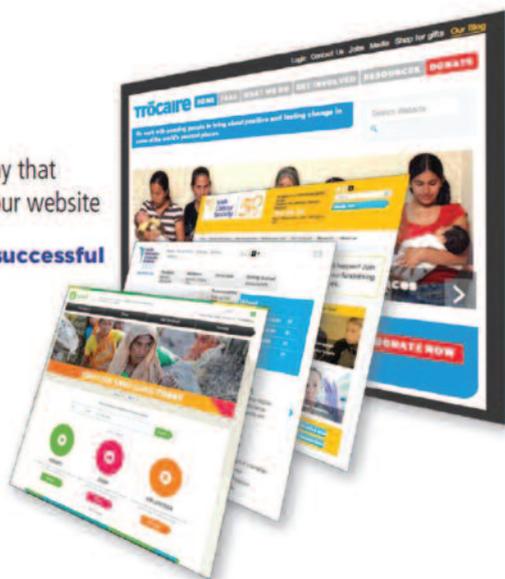
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# 2017 Athenry AC Juvenile Report

Iain Shaw (Chairman, Athenry AC Juvenile)

I always enjoy recounting the exploits of our juvenile athletes in the year preceding the Fields of Athenry road race, but this year my report starts on a much sadder note. In July 2017, for the first time in a very long time we awoke to the tragic news of the death of one of our athletes, Callum Holly. Callum was a talented athlete, he trained with Predator Triathlon Club but also with ourselves, and was a very popular and loved member of our local athletic community. He will be greatly missed by all, and I know a lot of our juveniles competed this year with him very much on their minds.

## Indoor Track and Field Championships

The 2017 Galway Indoor Championships ended up being a very lucrative championships for our juveniles in terms of medals, with the club walking away with 8 Gold, 14 Silver and 13 Bronze.

These medals were gained across all of the events, and across the entire age range. Three Championship Best Performances (CBPs) were also set by Athenry athletes: Callum Healy in the U14 60m recording a time of 8.23s, Brandon Lee in the U16/U17 60m Hurdles with a time of 9.17s and Liam Shaw in the Shot Put throwing a massive 11.88m, which was 5m further than the nearest rival. Many of our athletes took home multiple medals on the day. Some of our older juveniles stepped up to senior level in these championships for the first time as U18s and above compete as seniors, and gave a very good account of themselves.

Shannen Lee took silver in the senior women's 3000m, but in the same race there was heartache for Aine O'Farrell with confusion over how many laps she had run and she ended up a lap short and picking up an official DNF. Aine bounced back though to take silver in the senior women's 800m. The hurdles duo of Ryan McNelis and Patryk Woleniuk continued their own personal battle with Ryan taking silver and Patryk bronze in the senior men's hurdles, with Ryan adding a bronze in the senior men's shot put against some very established names and a silver in the high jump. Perhaps the highlight of the games though from the club point of view was the fielding of a

senior men's and senior women's relay team, probably the first time ever, and both teams came away with bronze. Alongside the medal winning performances there were as an all-round great set of results and many PBs set across the board. For a relatively small club, that trains almost exclusively on borrowed grass pitches, these were stellar performances.

Qualification for the national championships were up for grabs at the Connacht Indoor Championships, and yet again a large haul of medals returned back to Athenry with four Gold, 11 Silver and 13 Bronze. Just like with the Galway Championships, there were multiple medals for some of our athletes with the three McNelis brothers taking home 7 medals between them.

At the national championships, there were great performances all round from the small team that travelled, with the club bringing home a silver medal in the U13 boys shot put through Liam Shaw as he reignited his long standing battle with Dunleer's Karlis Kaugars. In other national indoor championships, Patryk Woleniuk competed in the National Junior Championships in the 60mH. Ryan McNelis and Patryk Woleniuk also competed in the National Combined Event Championships. In the CE championships there was absolute heartbreak for Ryan following a slightly below par high jump where he had gone

into the final event, the 1000m, with a chance of a medal but needing a lifetime's best performance. Ryan led from the front, giving his rival a scare in the process as he pulled away from the pack. As Ryan took the bell, he really was running on fumes, but fumes were all that was required to get him round and he crossed the line clocking 2:57.52 for the 1000m. Following what must have seemed like an eternity for Ryan, the final result put him in 4th place, with an analysis of results showing he needed to have put a further five seconds between himself and third place finisher.

## Outdoor Track and Field Championships

The 2017 Galway T&F Championships were soon upon us in the now familiar two-day format with the U8-U12 ages on one day and the U13-senior on another. The younger ages also incorporate the team pairs championships.

For the older age juveniles, a smaller team than normal competed due to the usual scheduling problems with communions, exams, and schools events, coupled with this not being a qualifying event for nationals. The haul was 7 Gold, 8 Silver and four Bronze, with Ryan McNelis setting a 400mH CBP in the senior category. Agony for Liam Shaw in just missing out on the indoor and outdoor CBPs in the SP, falling short by just 20cm (just two shot lengths). In the younger ages we had moderate success, with four Golds and two Silver.





Aoife O'Farrell and Liam Shaw

Of the Gold medals awarded, three of them were also accompanied with CBPs, with Daniel O'Halloran setting CBPs in the U8 60m and 300m and Cian McNelis in the U12 600m. In the team championships, which serve as a qualifier for Connachts we had two pairings advance. In the older age Connachts, again serving as the qualifiers for the National Outdoor Championships, the club picked up 6 Gold, 6 Silver and 6 Bronze which was a fantastic performance.

In the national championships the club put up strong performances against an increasingly competitive field and all should be proud of their performances. Two medals came back to the town, with Liam Shaw repeating his indoor performance and taking Silver in the shot put with a giant throw of 13.47m. The eventual winner, arch-rival Karlis Kaugars, was forced to throw the third longest throw of all time in this age group to finally see of Liam in a competition that saw three people throw over 13 metres for the first time ever and five of the top 11 longest throws of all time in the U13 category thrown here. The second medal went to Ryan McNelis, who ran a spirited 400mH in 56.81s to finish second. This performance was sufficient to get Ryan selected for the Irish Development team for the Celtic Games held this year in Dublin. Irish selection went some way to ease Ryan's woes after he clipped the 8th hurdle in the Schools National 400mH final and went to ground. Ryan had been leading the field by a significant margin at the time and was set for a sub-56s finish time. At the Celtic games, Ryan got a good lane draw and had the main rivals to the outside of him. His race was a conservative start which gave me a momentary panic when I thought he was going to pull out but he came back into it,

coming off the final bend in third, as he reached the 9th hurdle he was set to land ahead of third place man only for the athlete to the side of him to misjudge his hurdle and go crashing to the ground. Ryan put the foot down, not giving his opponent any chance to recover and crossed the line in second place and taking his first international medal.

In other outdoor T&F competitions, the ever present Patryk Woleniuk and Ryan McNelis represented the club in both the junior championships and the national league (as part of a Galway men's team). Both boys took medals in the Junior 400mH with Ryan the silver and Patryk the bronze and both played an important role in the Galway Men's team at both days of the championship.

The Community Games finals had club representation from Aoibhe Deely and Cian McNelis. Competition was tough for Aoibhe who competed in the 200m against such athletes as National Champion Niamh Foley, and although she made the final, a poor lane draw on a badly designed and marked track cost her any chance of a medal. There was no such holding back Cian McNelis though, who stormed through on the second lap of his 600m to take home the Gold and become 2017 Community Games champion. However, Cian does not know how lucky he is to have won the medal as he hadn't arrived at the designated start time – due to some very 'officious' officials. The start was delayed slightly as there was suddenly a technical error with the photofinish system that miraculously resolved itself once Cian had made it to the start line.

#### Cross Country

With the late summer sun getting lower in the sky and the fields getting muddier, it can only mean that the cross country

season is upon us. The County Championships this year were held in Tuam on the excellent Palace Grounds (Day One) and the Brothers of Charity site in Kilcornan outside Clarinbridge (Day Two). With the significant increase in juvenile numbers in the county, all medals are hard fought for, and the cross country definitely showed that. In the even ages division, a lot of our athletes were competing out of age. The U12 boys team took silver with the girls team taking bronze, the U14 girls team took bronze. In the U18 girls division there was a straight 1-2-3 for our girls, taking the team gold. Aisling Keane took silver in the Junior women's category, finishing third in the overall adult women's standings. In the uneven ages, Kyle Fitzgerald took an individual silver in the U11s, with Conor Curran agonisingly close in 4th place in the same race, the U13 Girls took a hard earned bronze which was the clubs only team medal of the day. There were individual medals for Laura Kenny (U15 - bronze), Ralf Bodamer (U15 - Gold), Sarah Gilhoolley (U17 - Silver), Aine O'Farrell (U19 - Silver) and Aishling Keane (U19 - Bronze).

In the Connacht Championships, Sarah Gilhoolley took bronze in the U18 competition and a silver in the U17 competition to secure herself a place in both of the national finals. Conor Curran finished 13th in the U11 Boys race to secure a place representing Galway in the National Finals. Kayla Madden also secured a Galway team spot by finishing 12th in the U13 race. Aishling Keane finished off a good run of cross country form by taking an individual Bronze in the U19 race.

At the National Uneven Championships, Conor Curran gave a good account of himself finishing 60th out of a field of 138 scoring valuable points for County Galway. Sarah Gilhoolley put a fantastic full stop on her 2017 season by finishing 45th, with a new PB over the distance in the U18 competition (a year out of age to boot) and followed up a few weeks later with a 26th place finish out of 108 competitors in the U17 final.

#### Looking forward to 2018

The juvenile club has grown significantly this year, with triple the numbers compared to the same time last year. We are now in a great position that we have a lot of older juvenile/junior athletes and we are starting to field teams at all ages and become competitive in older age relays and cross country. It is also encouraging to see that some of our older athletes are taking coaching courses and starting to

help out with our sessions and impart back the knowledge they have learned over the past few years. This year, for the first time in long time, one of our athletes donned a national singlet, and took a medal in the process. Looking at the talent now coming through the ranks I don't think we will have to wait so long before we get out next athlete wearing

Irish colours, and there are many more with the potential to achieve that honour. Hopefully with the next phase of our own facility development we can start to give a home to our athletes and use that as a further springboard for future success.

Finally I want to give thanks to the excellent coaches and volunteers we have

in Athenry AC. They are small in number, but massive in terms of commitment and knowledge to our younger athletes, and it is their hard work that is now allowing the success we are starting to see. I thank you all for your passion and hard work you have put in over the past 12 months and look forward to working with you as we push on forwards into 2018.

## A Running Year of an Elite

Laura Shaughnessy

It is with great regret that I am missing this year's edition of The Fields of Athenry 10KM. For the past two years, my race results were the best Christmas present I could wish for. I was very happy with my 2015 and 2016 Fields of Athenry results for very different reasons.

In 2015 I was only back training one week after a lengthy hip injury when I decided to hop in the race and, to my surprise, I finished third in 38:00. Returning a year later, I knew I had more training behind me. However, December hadn't been a great month with a heavy work load and a heavy head cold! Again, I was pleasantly surprised to win the race in a new female course record of 35:03. The record was a nice confidence booster for me as I knew from the names on the back of the coveted Top 50 long sleeve T-shirt that some pretty prestigious athletes have graced the Fields of Athenry in the past. It was a nice finish to 2016 and set me up very well for a busy 2017.

The year started with a win at The Great Edinburgh 5K. Although it is not a PB course – a hilly loop around Arthur's Seat – I would highly recommend this race to any aficionados as afterwards you can witness world class athletes participating in The Great Edinburgh Cross Country. The atmosphere is truly electric!

The following week I raced in the Antrim International Cross Country and was pleased to finish one second behind the 2016 and 2017 National Cross Country Champion, Shona Heaslip. My 2016 cross country season lasted longer than my 2017 one (which didn't start at all due to injury).

February began with the European Clubs Cross Country Championships in Albufeira, Portugal. Although I was disappointed with my race – I went out too fast and faded – it was international experience that I hope will stand to me going forward.

The highlight of March was outright victory in my first ever 10M road race, in Craughwell where I ran 58 minutes. I really hope to frequent this race for years to come as it is a really nice course and superbly organised. I always like racing near home to catch up with familiar faces from Galway athletics. Thanks to the guys who encouraged me to push on and, based on how comfortable I felt, I was excited about my next ten mile race. Saying that, I haven't raced 10 miles since but I did run a 55:08 10M segment, en route to my finishing my first half marathon in September. Six days after Craughwell, I won the K Club 10K on tired legs in 34:28. Although I was happy with the time, I felt there was more in me if I was fresher.

I hadn't long to wait for another 10K race! However, the Spar Great Ireland Run in the Phoenix Park in April is a challenging-enough course, so I was content enough with 35 minutes and a bronze in the National 10K Championships, behind Kerry O'Flaherty and Claire McCarthy.

I rounded April off with a win in the West of Ireland Women's Mini Marathon in Castlebar and found out after that I was only 12 seconds off the course record set by Sinéad Diver in 2015. This is another race that I would definitely recommend for atmosphere and support, at least around the town.

The summer season then started in earnest. I finished first lady and third overall in the RTE 5M race, running 27:11. I was told that this was historic as no lady had ever finished in the top three in the race, and 2017 was the final edition of the race due to RTE selling some land for development on their Montrose campus.

Some Athenry athletes will know of the Wicklow Way Relay (WWR) and that was a major race for my training group (TT racers) in May. WWR is an eight-leg



mountain relay along the length of the Wicklow Way (if any explanation is necessary!). We had won the title in 2016 and were keen to defend it. However, racing on the mountains is never straightforward, especially if pacing and navigation are not fine tuned so, nothing is guaranteed until the final runner is safely over the line. This year I was given the task of racing the final leg and thankfully we retained our title. I managed to run a ladies record for Leg 8 and the fastest time for this leg that day. I also have the ladies records for Leg 1 (2012 - my first venture into the WWR with UCD) and Leg 4 (2016 - TT Racers).

June was a busy month and every weekend brought a race. The month started with another well-known race – The Women's Mini Marathon. Finishing second was bittersweet: I felt great in the first half of the race but struggled with a stitch during the second, so I was lucky to survive for 2nd and equal my PB of 34:28.

Five days later I captained our TT Racers team to victory in 'The Relay' – different to the WWR in that there are only five legs, only one woman on the team and the course runs in more of a loop than a point-to-point. Despite falling and getting temporarily lost due to poor visibility in the foggy mountains, I ran the fastest time for my leg that day.

The following weekend, the weather was altogether different for the Irish Runner 5M in the Phoenix Park. The race was due to start at 10AM, when the temperature was already 28.5 degrees Celsius. The start was delayed by twenty minutes due to a Garda escort bringing visitors into Áras an Uachtaráin. We were sweating before we even started so I was as happy getting water after as I was to have won the first of the Dublin Race Series.

Racing every weekend was starting to take its toll at this stage especially as I was preparing to lead a group of 16 students on a healthcare volunteer project in a Ugandan hospital in July. Every race I went to, I was talked into doing another – what could I do?

I had been so impressed by the Dunshaughlin 10K in 2016, that there was no way I was missing it this year and I was delighted that I didn't when I ended up running a further PB of 34:02. With less than a week to go until heading to Uganda for a month, there was little to gain from another week of training and little to lose from a 5K two days before I

flew, or so we thought! I was exhausted for the Docklands 5k but was happy to equal my time from 2016, running 16:28.

I spent until August 5th in Uganda, where I did some steady runs but no sessions or races. On returning home, I had one day off before being thrown back in the deep end at work (radiographer in Crumlin Children's Hospital) with 24 hour shifts, training and races. I felt good in training, almost picking up where I left off and the Blessington 10K in early September confirmed that I hadn't lost much fitness because on a windy day and a hilly course, I ran 34:34, bettering my course record from last year.

It was a good sign going into my first half marathon in Charleville 6 days later. However, I was still nervous as 21k is much longer than the 10K distance I had become accustomed to and I am my own worst enemy for going out too hard, something which could have been fatal over longer distances. I therefore decided to race conservatively, even when feeling comfortable passing 10M. The last 3.1 miles were uncharted territory and I was fearful of blowing up.

Thankfully I didn't and I was thrilled with my time of 73:56, the second fastest half marathon by an Irish woman in 2017 and the fastest raced in Ireland – the fastest half was by Fionnuala Britton-McCormack in Seville. It was not an aim of mine at the time but this time is also a qualifying time for the World Half Marathon Championships in Valencia in March 2018.

I was delighted to discover this but bitterly disappointed when a week later, I tore my hamstring tendon and I have been out of competitive action since. Although injury is very frustrating, especially at the start of cross country season, I am grateful for the great year I had up to that and it is a reminder that you can't be too greedy with racing too often for faster times.

I hope not to be sidelined for too much longer and I certainly want to be on the start line for The Fields of Athenry 2018.

Wishing all participants, organisers, volunteers, supporters and sponsors a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Ciaran Cannon TD



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# Ag Dul in Aois

Peadar Nugent



MTB, PN and VG

When requested to write an article for the 2017 Fields of Athenry 10km Booklet, the editor (JAL) told me I could pick any theme I liked and could pen it in Irish, English or Latin. For my theme I have chosen *Ag dul in aois* (Growing old). As you can see, I have headed it as *gaeilge* but have penned it mainly in English since most of our readers would not read it if written in our first official language. The Latin phrase *tempus fugit* (time flies) struck me as I thought about content for the article. It so happens, as I now realise, that all three languages are included, even before the first paragraph ends

I was diagnosed with osteoarthritis nearly four years ago and was told by my GP that I couldn't do worse than run; it would be OK to walk and the faster the better. It was a bit of a struggle extricating myself psychologically from a pastime which I had enjoyed so much for more than half a century. However, the pain which had battered my knees every time I had run during the previous two years helped my adjustment. Having been a competitor all my life I was now determined to push myself to the limit in walking quickly. It is dubious if the Irish proverb *Tagann ciall le h-aois* meant anything to me. With a lot of help from my wife Helen and my clubmate Máire Treasa Beatty during the last four years, and a little input from another clubmate

Valerie Glavin this year, I have satisfactorily achieved my aims. Driving oneself to the maximum while walking is every bit as strenuous and demanding as running can be

My first race, many years ago, was over 100 yards for boys U-9 at the Killimer (West Clare) Parish Sports in summer 1951. There were no races for girls back then. Boys races were generally for U-9s, U-14s and Youths (as U-18s were then called) only. There were no underage field events. The senior events – 100 yds, 220 yds, 440 yds, 880 yds, one mile, three miles, long, high and triple jumps, and weights, including over the bar, sometimes with a sheaf of oats – were a huge attraction and were extremely competitive, with the best senior athletes from within the county and beyond taking part, mostly barefoot. Bear in mind that road races were non-existent at that time. Additionally, the Sports also normally included three cycle races which, like the running events, were on a grass "track". Sometimes a novelty event such as a one-mile cycle race for ladies or a slow bicycle race was put on. Plaques were not the order of the day back then and items such as a canteen of cutlery or even a suit length could be the prize for the winner of an event. Athletics and cycling were under the same umbrella – the NACAI

Anyhow, getting back to the 1951 Killimer Sports – the last year they were held – I finished 2nd to my cousin Seán Cooper who was a year older than me. My next competitive outing was a 300 yards race for boys U-14, some six years later, at the 1957 Cross (west of Kilkee) Sports. I cycled 20 miles each way to get there. I won my race but couldn't bring home the prize – a firescreen – and cycle at the same time. How the prize got home is another story for another day. For various reasons, which I'm not going into here, I never competed at Youths level and didn't get involved again until 1965 when, at the age of 22 years, I resumed my athletic pursuits and participated in sprinting and jumping events. I have competed regularly since then at county, provincial and national level, but switched to longer distance in or about 1980 when my legs would no longer move as fast or propel my body as far as they needed to for senior battles

I will be aged 75 years next summer and intend, with God's help, giving the hard slog just one more year. My walking will be at a more leisurely pace after 2018 but I hope to continue participating for as long as the good Lord leaves me my health, particularly in the Galway 5km Series and the Dublin Marathon. In conclusion I revert to Latin for my motto which is "*sic transit nemini parco gloria mundi*" (always do your best in life).

# Wise Words From Dick Hooper

John Walshe

Forty years ago this coming June, the BLE national marathon took place at Tullamore. On what turned out to be the warmest day of the summer, from a field of around 100 – a big number at the time – just 51 finished. The winner, in his debut over the distance, was Dick Hooper in a time of 2:23:19. The Raheny man would go to be a treble Olympian (1980, 1984, 1988) and of course also win the Dublin Marathon on three occasions.

Now maybe better known as a coach to the likes of five-time Fields of Athenry winner Mick Clohisey and Sean Hehir (Irish representatives at this year's World Championships), Hooper was recently the guest speaker at the St Finbarr's AC autumn gathering which took place at the Celtic Ross Hotel in West Cork and his general advice – especially how he prepared for that first marathon – was well worth listening to.

Detailing his early career, he said he drifted into running, making up a team in the U16 age-group who won a Dublin championship. In those pre-internet days, advice was hard to come by and he used to go down to Raheny Library and read the limited books then available on running. He also said he listened to people and from all of that formed his own views on the sport and started to develop.

Hooper ran his first 100 mile-week at the age of 16, but admitted he was injured the following week. Although not scoring, he was a member of the Irish junior squad that finished second in the 1975 World Cross-Country, where John Treacy took bronze. He then started doing long runs with Jim McNamara and his older brother Pat and found he was well able to stay with them.

He hatched a plan for himself, saying he was going to get to the Olympics in 1980 and planned to run his first marathon in 1978. Although only 21 at the time, his preparations were certainly meticulous. He had trained 130 to 140 miles a week, had done two 32-mile runs and two 30-mile runs and had been to Tullamore about



four times to run over the course in the weeks preceding the race.

His fluid intake that scorching day was certainly unusual, and even laughable today. He decided he would drink tea during the race, the theory being what do you do at 11 o'clock in the morning or 4 o'clock in the afternoon when you're low in energy – you have a cup of tea. Back then you didn't have the bottles with spouts so he bought eight cartons of mustard, got rid of the mustard, steeped them to get rid of the smell and he had his eight bottles all organised which his club-mates handed out at the various stations.

That race was also the selection race for the European Championships and Hooper's victory guaranteed him a place in what would turn out to be the first of four European marathon championship appearances.

He ran that first marathon at 21 and ran his last aged 41 in 1998 (the BLE championship, which he also won). There were a lot of marathons in between, 41 in total, and he can boast more sub-2:30s than any other Irishman. His biggest disappointment was the Olympics in Los Angeles in 1984 where he performed badly but four years later in Seoul he finished 24th, the first Irishman home and knew he ran well and that he got the most out of himself on the day.

His marathon philosophy was never to drop out and used to write on one

hand 'finish' and then on the other hand the names of his loved ones (his kids and wife) and every time he was struggling he would look at the palms of his hands. On training, he said his biggest philosophy is the work ethic, and then to be smart about it. Also it was important to have a goal, whether it's a personal best or to win some race, you have to put that bit of pressure on yourself. Keeping a diary is essential; a diary should be your best friend as it covers a multitude.

The long run is the most important thing when training for a marathon. You must know that you can cover the distance, you should do it at a strong pace to educate the body to deal with fatigue, and it also educates your mind to be out there for a long time. As regards stretching, he said he used to stretch whatever was hurting. He did a bit of token stretching to get himself going, and it was then out the door. And he stated that the best training for running is running – a sentiment echoed by fellow Irish legend and now successful coach Donie Walsh who once famously posed the question 'Did you ever see a horse in a gym?'

Picture: Dick Hooper pictured with 83-year-old St Finbarr's athlete Flor O'Leary: Irish M80 record holder for 400m, 800m and 1500m and who ran 2:31:47 at the 1977 BLE Marathon in Loughrea.

# Twenty Questions for Mick Clohisey (Raheny Shamrock)



1. What shoes do you train in?  
Nike Vomero.

2. How many miles did you run last week?  
Not very many as recovering from injury.

3. What's your favourite racing distance?  
Marathon.

4. Where's your favourite place to train?  
Always like to add variety to my training locations but in my local area: St. Anne's Park or Dollymount Strand.

5. What's your favourite race or event each year?  
The Fields is up there anyway!

6. What annoys you most at races?  
Not a whole lot.

7. What race, that you haven't yet run, would you most like to take part in?  
The Dublin Marathon!

8. What was your best-ever running performance?  
World Championships marathon in London this year is most recent anyway.

9. What was your worst-ever running performance?

Do not want to mention them but it's part of running to have the bad days to make the good ones even better!

10. What's the strangest thing that you've ever seen on a training run?  
Strange people.

11. What is your favourite piece of running gear?

My racing flats.

12. Who would you most enjoy beating in a sprint for the line?  
Whoever is there at that particular time.

13. What was the best bit of training advice you were ever given?

Develop a work ethic that becomes second nature.

14. In ten years time will you still be running?

Please God.

15. If for some reason you were told you could never run again, how do you think you'd react?

I'd be upset no doubt I but would have to find something else to do like get better playing the guitar!

16. Have you ever been bitten by a dog while running?

No but my Dad has.

17. Have you ever had to stop for an emergency 'Paula' during a race?

No.

18. Your Favourite post-race food?

Pizza.

19. Your most embarrassing ever running-related moment?

Spikes shoe falling a part in a cross country race.

20. In your opinion, who is/was the greatest Irish athlete of all time?

Dick Hooper my coach!



A woman is running on a paved road that winds through a lush, green forest. She is seen from the back, wearing a white tank top, black leggings, and a watch on her left wrist. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the runner in the foreground.

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