

# Years Flourishing

**Meath Travellers Workshop  
1965 - 2015**



# INTRODUCTION

**WELCOME TO 50 YEARS FLOURISHING.**

**THIS YEAR WE ARE CELEBRATING OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY. WE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A WONDERFUL IDEA TO TELL OUR STORY SO FAR THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHS, ARTICLES, POSTERS, INTERVIEWS AND EVERYTHING ELSE WE FOUND WHEN WE CLEANED OUT OUR FILING CABINETS.**

**THE SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS BOOK ARE AS ECLECTIC AS THE MANY CHARACTERS THAT HAVE COME THROUGH OUR DOORS OVER THE YEARS.**

**FROM TRAINING PROGRAMMES TO TIN SMITHING, ACCOMMODATION BATTLES TO HIGH KINGS, MEATH TRAVELLERS WORKSHOPS HAS FOLLOWED A UNIQUE ROAD DURING IT'S 50 YEARS, BUT IT'S ONE WE ALWAYS MADE SURE WAS THE RIGHT PATH FOR TRAVELLERS IN MEATH.**

**AS YOU FOLLOW THE PAGES, YOU WILL SEE THAT AS TRAVELLERS IN MEATH GREW MORE CONFIDENT AND ORGANISED, SO DID MEATH TRAVELLERS WORKSHOPS, LEADING TO MANY GROUND BREAKING EVENTS OVER THE YEARS. THESE INNOVATIVE PROJECTS TOOK PLACE BECAUSE TRAVELLERS IN THE AREA HAD THE VISION AND SUPPORT OF BROAD-MINDED PEOPLE, TO BRING TO LIFE WHAT TO SOME WOULD SEEM A CRAZY IDEA.**

**WE ARE DELIGHTED TO SHARE WITH YOU IMAGES OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH US OVER THE YEARS AND IMAGES OF TRAVELLERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE FAMILIES IN CO. MEATH. LOOKING THROUGH THE PHOTOGRAPHS BOUGHT BACK MANY MEMORIES, AND MADE US FEEL LONESOME FOR THE 'GOOD AULD DAYS' WHEN LIFE WAS HARDER, BUT SIMPLER AND BEFORE THE PRESSURES OF MODERN LIFE GREPT IN.**

**THROUGH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, WE NOW SEE TRAVELLERS IN CO. MEATH PROUD OF THEIR OWN IDENTITY. THEY HAVE THE CONFIDENCE TO TAKE PART IN MAINSTREAM RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND STRIVE FOR THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION. TRAVELLERS TAKE UP NON-TRADITIONAL EMPLOYMENT ROLES AND ALSO PROVE TO BE ACTIVE CITIZENS. TRAVELLERS TODAY ARE MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY THAT WE SHARE.**

**WE BELIEVE THAT TRAVELLERS CAN HAVE A CONSTRUCTIVE AND POSITIVE PLACE IN SOCIETY. IN ORDER FOR THIS TO HAPPEN, THERE IS A NEED FOR PROGRESSIVE INTEGRATION WHILST RETAINING TRAVELLER IDENTITY; AS OPPOSED TO ASSIMILATION AND THE EROSION OF TRAVELLER CULTURE.**

**AS A TRAVELLER LED ORGANISATION, WE ARE PROUD TO ENCOURAGE THE RESPECT, UNDERSTANDING AND RETENTION OF TRADITIONAL TRAVELLER CULTURE, HISTORY AND HERITAGE. WE WORK TOWARDS THE WIDER COMMUNITY HAVING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF TRAVELLER CULTURE AND THE STRUCTURES OF THE EXTENDED FAMILY. WE ALSO STAND WITH YOUNG AND NOT SO YOUNG TRAVELLERS TO EMBRACE THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THEIR CULTURE AND TO STAND UP AND BE PROUD TO BE A TRAVELLER.**

**"NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF YOUR ACTIONS. WITH ONE SMALL GESTURE YOU CAN CHANGE A PERSON'S LIFE. FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE". KEVIN MARTIN – FACEBOOK - 15 JUNE 2013**

**THIS BOOK IS BOUGHT TO YOU WITH THE KIND SUPPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND EQUALITY IN RECOGNITION OF TRAVELLER PRIDE WEEK 2015.**



# TRAVELLERS

## Life in Years Past

Reading the words spoken by the Travellers living and camping around Navan one comes to see there are two themes consistently expressed by these men and women

### TRAVELLERS



when describing the life they remember from their youth. First, those times were more difficult in almost every respect. Work was hard and done over long hours and the reward was usually just enough food to put on the children's plates. Begging was a necessity. A family did not own much in the way of comforts. Mike Quinn remembers that in the winter of 1920 there was just one pair of boots between him and another man; they would do their tasks one at a time, the one waiting shoeless while the other tended to his ponies! Yet, those times are the ones which are held most dear in their memories; there was pride in the knowledge that what a family did have, they had earned. Perhaps more important was the travelling itself and the contact with friends and family that

this brought. It seems to Patsy Joyce that this contact has been lost. "You'd have an auld bike," he says, "or an auld pony and trap, and away you'd go to see one another. They used to call it going for a Kailly, but they don't do that today."



Mikey Quinn



Julia Quinn McDonagh

Both of these themes are eloquently stated in the words of Paddy McDonagh:

*We done the best we could. We were all poor people. We come... and worked in the bogs, working picking spuds, beets, turnips and all. Everyone was sort of poor, then they all got sort of rich again, got good auld ponies and carts, got good tents. We had really bad tents the first time. Some of us might not have a good cover at all; the rain came down in on top of you... We had hard times, very hard times...but we started*

In 1994, as part of the Navan Travellers Workshops heritage project, young local Travellers produced the book "Travellers... their life and times". This book contained interviews and photographs documenting the history of Travellers in Navan. The young people who produced the book were: Joey Hand, Suzanne Power, Jimmy Power Snr, Christy McDonagh, Noeleen Nevin, John Nevin, Mary Lawrence, Davy McDonagh and Joe Duke.





PHOTO COURTESY OF THE LEGION OF MARY MAGAZINE TRAVELLER GROUP  
PICTURE TAKEN AT THE 'RING OF THE ROAD', GIBBSTOWN IN CO. MEATH 1956.  
FAMILIES ARE PICKING POTATOES IN THE LOCAL AREA.



WARDS AND MONGONS IN A SHELTER TENT. THIS PHOTO WAS  
DONATED BY CRANNAC FURNITURE FACTORY WHO HAD THIS  
PICTURE HANGING ON THEIR WALL.



THE GAVIN FAMILY TAKEN BETWEEN  
ATHFOY AND DELVIN,  
PHOTO COURTESY OF MEATH LIBRARY



Paddy and Vera McDonagh

the big fishing the day. In the winter we would put  
and years ago when the raffles were plentiful a  
travelling with would meet the public and collect  
travellers' shops to get a few pounds for Christmas.

Before plastic arrived as an inexpensive and  
uncontested niche in the craft of cars, per-  
other items that people took for granted in its  
was sought by those who needed something in  
an old container that suggested a porch. More  
it was which to travel in England and for  
travellers, but those to sustain it here. He is  
about the beginnings of his career in a time  
"How did I pick up as a bear tucker? I was  
giving up with my father, being then a  
leading time... and through now I got in a tent. It was  
began turned the right way I got in the fashion that I could work some-  
in coming as I was growing up.



Miss Doyle

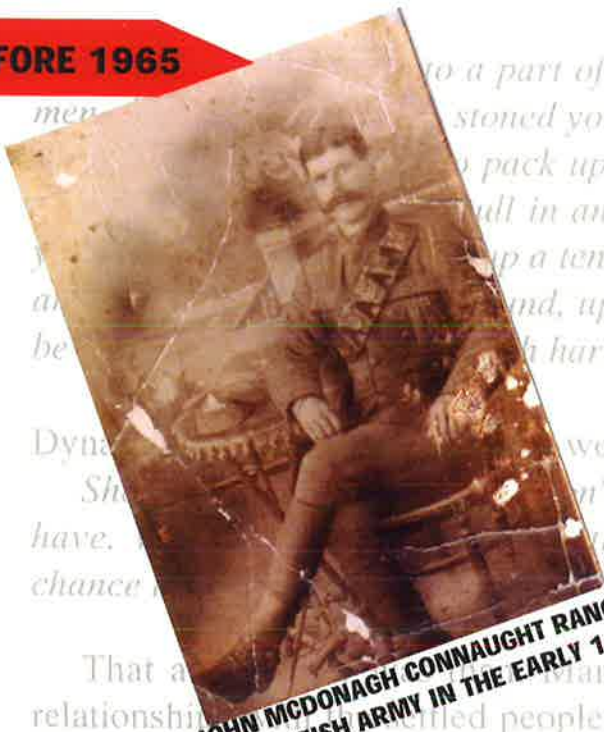
life was not to make a career for the Travellers by the guests. Old Paddy Quinn tells  
the



again, you  
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We came back  
on the road as  
ever we were  
a site in houses  
I want thing to  
me in our life.  
time we were  
ing was at happy  
of a holiday time.  
nal of the  
less who were  
used recalled the many different ways in which people would earn a living in  
days. Old Julia Quinn explains that:  
men used to make auld cows, bulgallions and dippers, shoes,  
big cans, common cans, with no lead, and we would go out in the country  
walking with the pony and cart and we would sell them. They were a bad  
at that time, a shilling maybe and ten pence and four pence for the auld  
and maybe eight pence, six pence and four pence for a half-gallon of your  
right.  
we would start begging off the houses, a grain of flour and anything they  
would give us. A bit of meat, spuds or cabbage, but of course, we are happy to  
if that was the way most Travellers made a  
The old pots and buckets and various wares for  
main the country and you would go around looking  
and jobs.  
work a family would do depended on what was  
to be had and on the season of the year. Nellie  
Quinn tells that  
Paddy was a tinker. He would make the pots and  
McDonagh would sell them in the country in the



**BEFORE 1965**



**JOHN MCDONAGH CONNAUGHT RANGER IN THE BRITISH ARMY IN THE EARLY 1900'S.**



**KATE COLLINS AND HER SON, PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN A STUDIO IN EDENDERRY IN THE 1950'S.**



**THE LEGION OF MARY AT THE 'RING OF THE ROAD' GIBBSTOWN, CO. MEATH WITH THE POWER AND HAND FAMILIES. PHOTOGRAPHER IS DELANEY FROM NAVAN.**



**PHOTO TAKEN BY PADRAIG 'MASTER' GREENE IN BALLINALEE, LONGFORD IN THE EARLY 1930'S. MCDONAGH, WARD AND QUINN FAMILIES.**



**PASSING ON TINSMITH SKILLS, PADDY & ELLEN QUINN MCDONAGH WITH CAMILLUS MCDONAGH**

Patsy Joy  
Hunt  
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won't s  
Mary

to a part of the country that you  
stoned you out of it...It could be  
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ull in and it would be that de  
up a tent to get the children  
nd, upon the snow as well  
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many of the Travellers  
people of Ireland. Prejudi  
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ttled children go to school together, and  
er will take them further along the road to  
nts have travelled. As mentioned earlier,  
years. People remember the friends and  
ow departed, and perhaps the hardships  
e recounts some fond memories he has  
and Leitrim.

country with my mother  
cross fields

My father was a tinsmith and I used to walk out in the country with my mother  
subbed by the passage of time; Josie Joyce, records some fond memories he has  
d ones of their youth, some of whom are now departed, and perhaps the hardships  
s a sort of warm nostalgia for the past years. People remember the friendships  
nce than their parents and grandfathers have travelled. As mentioned earlier,  
problems of staying upon a bathing site will plague the Travellers holiday report  
with the settled people of Ireland. Prejudice and hatred still ex  
on out of it. It could be  
up in the dead of night  
n and it would be  
to a tent to get the  
and, upon the s  
mark him. We must have ski

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When asked if they started married life travelling with a group of people he replied:  
-No, I went out on my own after I got married. We were all on our own in 1948.  
After we went off on our own we were fortunate. The wedding was alright, but there was no drinking  
he recalls the wedding. -The wedding was alright, but there was no drinking  
lunch or nothing like that, or no money. You would just go to the chapel and  
married and that was it.  
After he got married Mike remembers moving to Westmeath

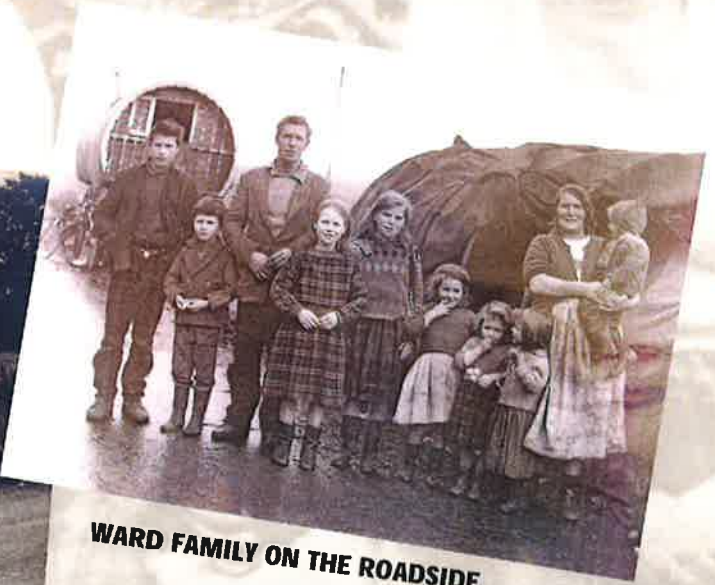




**KEENANS, COLLINS AND QUINN MCDONAGHS  
TAKEN AROUND CARNAROSS KELLS CO. MEATH**



**LAWRENCE AND MCDONAGHS  
TAKEN IN CO. MEATH**



**WARD FAMILY ON THE ROADSIDE**



**TRAVELLER FAMILY ON THE ROADSIDE**



**KEENANS AND QUINN MCDONAGHS HAVING A PORTRAIT  
TAKEN IN THEIR SUNDAY BEST IN KELLS CO. MEATH  
(NOTE THE 'EASY WALKER' BOOTS)**



**TUNA COLLINS,  
BIDDY QUINN MCDONAGH  
AND HER DAUGHTER THERESA  
TAKEN IN KELLS CO. MEATH**



## 1974 -1984

The beginning....

Coming to Navan

Meath Travellers Workshops, longest serving member of staff, Ellen McDonagh remember her time on "The Car park".

"The unofficial camp which became known as "The Car Park" was on the stretch on land on Kennedy Road which now has the Post Office and part of Navan Shopping Centre car park.

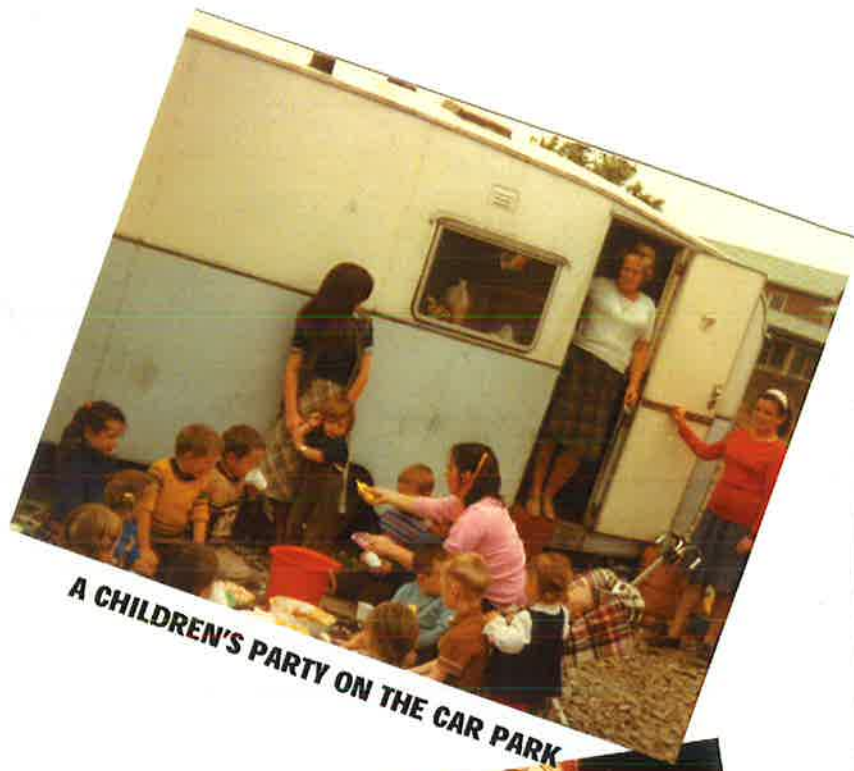
The camp established on that site lasted from 1974 to about 1984. During that time it was the focus of Travellers organising and getting proactive in the town. The families in the camp felt strongly about securing proper housing and education for their families. Their time on the car park signalled the start of proper organising in Navan to begin to secure these.

Families

In the winter of 1974, Chaps Christy came to Navan for potato picking. The Hawk's Mary, Mike Quinn, Julia and Paddy Nevin came too. In May 1975, my father Mikey Quinn came to Navan for 3 weeks to visit on the way to Dundalk and ended up staying.

These were some of the first families on the Car Park. I left school in June 1975 and was married on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1975. Michael and I then moved into the site, although Michael was still away in the Army most of the time.

Before we arrived on the Car park, the main families in the county were the Hands, Gavins, Power and later the Dukes and the Dublin Joyces. These families mainly moved around Meath and were joined at times by families from Westmeath, Roscommon, Longford and Louth who moved here for potato picking. Eventually most families stopped in the car park.



**A CHILDREN'S PARTY ON THE CAR PARK**



**TRAVELLER SOCIAL WORKER AISLING O' LEARY AND ELLEN MC DONAGH**



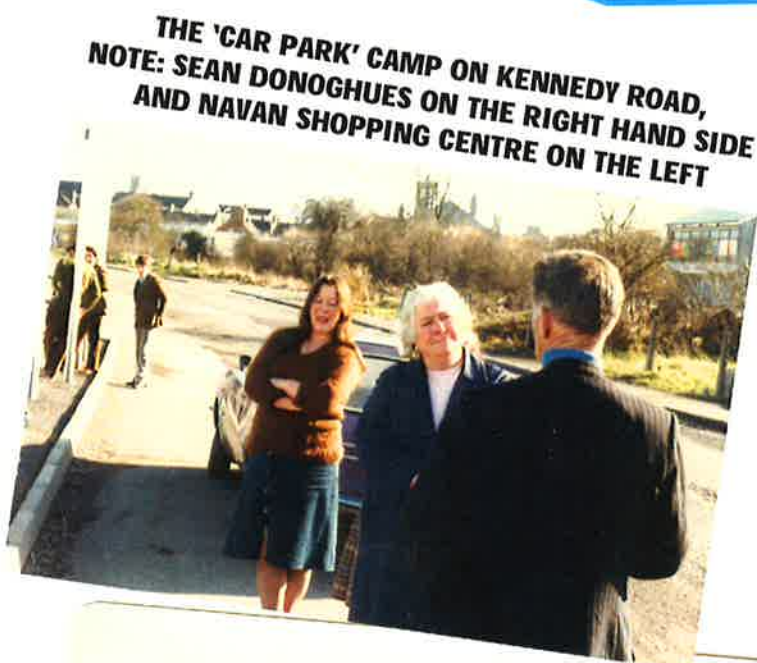
**STEPHEN AND NATANYA MC DONAGH ON THE CAR PARK**

St Judes remembered by Ellen McDonagh

St Judes committee, the Traveller Solidarity Group had been active since 1966 and was chaired by Fr Sinnott for 10 years. The committee worked closely with the St Vincent De Paul working closely to alleviate poverty of Travellers in the county.

As I remember it, in early 1976, Mary Mc Fadden, Ann Duddy, Mary Lawlor and James Hayes had a meeting upstairs in the CYWS hall. They were concerned about the quality of accommodation for Travellers and wanted to help. Myself and Neddy Power (Snr) were seen at the time as “educated Travellers” so we joined them later for meetings in St. Marys Church. Fr Johnny Kerrane, Sr. Peter, Sr. Marie Louise were also there.

In 1976, Dr James Hayes took over as chair and myself and Ned Power became the first Traveller members of the group. I remember Cyril Marron was studying to be a priest in the Holy Ghost Fathers at the time. He contacted Dr Hayes and said he was interested in spending time with the Travellers in Navan. He moved into a caravan on the car park. As I recall he had a great passion for community development and he introduced this approach to the committee. That was the beginning of the change, our work became more organised and more effective. In 1982 the committee employed Brigette Mintern as a youth worker and Meath County Council employed a Traveller Social Worker Ashling O’Leary. The committee was getting more structured and successful. “



**THE 'CAR PARK' CAMP ON KENNEDY ROAD, NOTE: SEAN DONOGHUES ON THE RIGHT HAND SIDE AND NAVAN SHOPPING CENTRE ON THE LEFT**



**FAMILIES RELAX AT THE MOATE BRIDGE**



**FIRST CHAIR OF ST JUDE'S COMMITTEE FR SINNOTT**

**Number of Travellers living in Meath**

	Standard Housing	Chalets on serviced sites	Trailers on authorised sites	Roadside	Total	Transients
1977	10	4	0	72	86	0
1978	19	4	0	49	72	15
1979	21	3	0	45	69	11

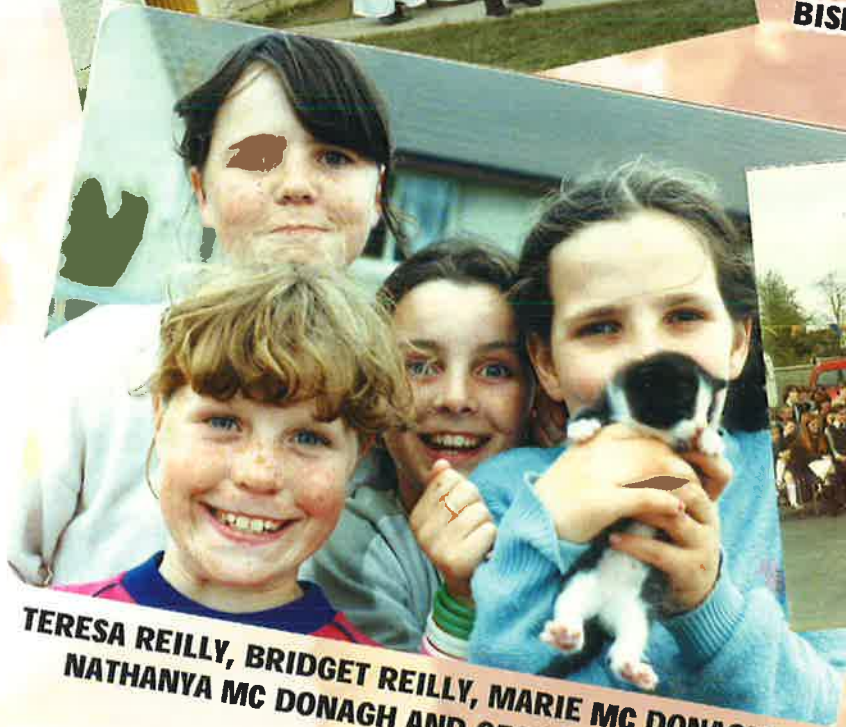


1974 - 1984

# OFFICIAL OPENING OF ST. COLUMBAN'S CRESENT



FIRST BABY BORN IN COLUMBAN'S CRESENT  
LAURA MCDONAGH BEING CHRISTENED BY  
BISHOP JOHN MC CORMACK



TERESA REILLY, BRIDGET REILLY, MARIE MC DONAGH  
NATHANYA MC DONAGH AND GEORGE THE CAT

## Itinerant Dwellings Proposal

A PROPOSAL to incorporate ten itinerant dwellings in a proposed local authority housing scheme at Trim Road, Navan, emerged from a meeting of the itinerant settlement sub-committee on Tuesday.

**BEST SITE**  
The sub-committee concluded that the Trim Road site was the most suitable of the three inspected. The other sites were at the rear of St. Brigid's Villas, Navan, and on the Athboy Road.

A spokesman for the sub-committee said it was proposed to build ten small dwellings which would be...





# Early Summer Project



Fancy dress competition at the first summer project

Saturday, 28th July, 1984

## FIRST SUMMER PROJECT FOR TRAVELLERS

The country's only summer project for the children of travelling people gets underway in Navan next Wednesday (1st August) and the indications are that it will be the most successful to date.

Over 200 children from Navan and the surrounding townlands will spend three weeks learning how to participate in organised sports, visiting places of historic interest, spending an afternoon at the beach and calling in to see how the local fire brigade and Garda stations operate.

It is all being done both to help travellers' children become more aware of the workings of the settled community and to remove the fears, ignorance and prejudice of the latter.

### LOCAL

This year the people who organise the project, the local Navan Travellers' Committee, which was formerly known as St. Jude's are cutting down on the number of volunteers from the group Voluntary Services International (V.S.I.) so that more local people can become involved.

Eight people from V.S.I., comprising two Germans, two

Finns, and a member each from Denmark, Turkey, England and Ireland, will be helping with the project as well as about a dozen local volunteers. One of the volunteers, local schoolteacher, Ms. Ger Murphy, explains: "We hope to cut down on the ignorance and suspicions on both sides."

Navan is unique in that it is the only location in Ireland where travellers have their own summer project. It is run on somewhat similar grounds to the settled community's summer project which recently concluded. The 70 travellers' families pay £5 each to participate. The vast bulk of the money needed to run the project comes in the form of a £2,500 grant from the Department of Education while Meath Co. Council are expected also to contribute about £200.

### GOODWILL

There is little doubt but that there is a lot of goodwill towards the project, and Ger Murphy is full of praise for the contributions made by the business community. "We have had a good response from the business community and they have provided material

By  
RICHARD MOORE

and money," she says. Ultimately, it is hoped that both the children from the settled community and the travellers will be accommodated in one summer project. That is the ideal, but there is a long way to go although the gulf between the two different cultures is diminishing each year.

Ger Murphy says: "In the long-term it is hoped to have just one summer project. What we hope is to have them in with the settled community but they have a very different culture."

### LIFESTYLE

Part of that difference in culture can be seen in the fact that the travellers almost have to be taught how to play in an organised way. Very few travellers are involved in clubs or are used to playing in organised groups. Their lifestyle is different.

Ger Murphy explains: "A lot of travellers don't have a chance to be children, especially girls. When a girl is eight or nine her job is to look after the younger kids and some of them are engaged at 13."

Paul Noonan, a youth and community worker employed by the travellers' committee, has found the same thing. He says: "The boys are treated as adults from the time they make their First Communion."

### FEARS

Paul Noonan is just one of two youth and community workers employed by travellers' committees in the country. He has been working for Navan Travellers' Committee since last September and he sees the project as being a particularly good way of developing travellers' self-confidence and helping remove their fears of the settled community.

"Travellers' children in the town are not involved in the local range of activities that settled kids would be involved in," Paul Noonan reveals.

With about 50% of the 200 travellers' children not attending school, many of them would not be used to school-based activities. "The project will help their self-confidence and creativity and provide them with fun and enjoyment," he adds.

The feedback from last year's project was very good,

with youngsters asking eagerly at Christmas when it would be commencing again. The project caters for children for four to 18 years and runs each day from 11 a.m. to 3.30 p.m.

The provisional timetable includes swimming, storytelling in the library (for four to seven year olds), disco dancing, art, gardening, hairdressing, tennis, art, volleyball, road race, cycling, map reading, crafts, cookery, basketball, a treasure hunt, puppet making, a picnic at Beetive and a visit to Mosney Holiday Centre.

The summer project is seen very much as being part of the process of creating better understanding between the settled community and the travellers. Paul Noonan has seen definite improvements, particularly among school children. "I have given talks in local schools on travellers and the response has been very good," he says.

The Navan Travellers' Committee, comprising both the settled community and travellers, is anxious for volunteers from the locality to help with this year's project. Those who wish to help should contact Paul Noonan at Room 2 (upstairs) in the C.Y.W.S. Hall, Navan.



# th Chronicle

**WESTMEATH HERALD**

ay, 31st August, 1985

PRICE 45p. Tax paid. Founded 1897.

Britain and Overseas  
Express Delivery 45p

Cakes for all occasions  
Fresh cream cakes  
daily.

## SPICERS

Genuine  
Black Forest  
Gateaux delivered  
daily to all  
our shops

Spicers are nicer

NAVAN - THOM - KILLS - GALBEGGAN



### GLORY:

James McGovern (left)  
and Anthony McConnell  
bid for All-Ireland.

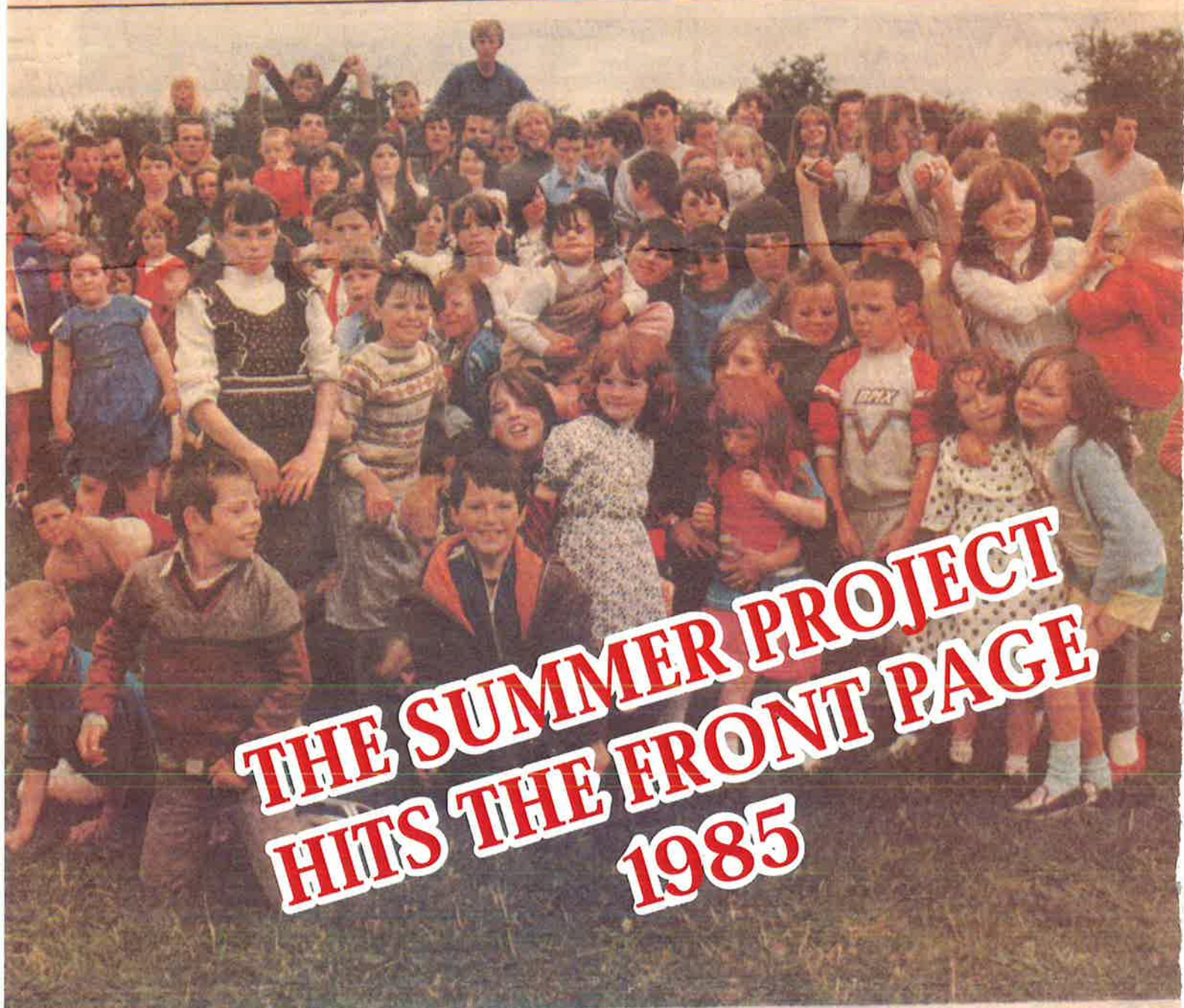
PAGE 12.



### SUCCESS:

Stephen Craine goes  
nap at Navan races.

PAGE 11.



**THE SUMMER PROJECT  
HITS THE FRONT PAGE  
1985**



## FIRST THERE WAS THE FUNDRAISING! BY BERNADETTE MCMAHON

GOING AROUND THE TOWN ASKING PEOPLE TO DONATE OR CONTRIBUTE A LITTLE SOMETHING FOR THE TWO WEEKS OF THE PROJECT. THESE DONATIONS VARIED FROM FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO A PACKET OF CRAYONS. IN ONE PLACE WE CALLED, THE YOUNG MAN WHO WAS SERVING BEHIND THE COUNTER DIDN'T WANT TO CONTRIBUTE ANYTHING TO THE PROJECT. WE PLEADED AND ARGUED, HOLDING OUR OWN TO COMBAT THE OBVIOUS RACISM INHERENT IN HIS COMMENTS. EVENTUALLY WE LEFT EMPTY HANDED, FEELING DEJECTED AND ANGRY. HOWEVER, AS WE WERE WALKING DOWN THE ROAD, A SMALL VOICE BEHIND US CALLED. WE TURNED AROUND TO SEE AN ELDERLY LADY PEERING AROUND THE CORNER OF AN ALLEY ONTO THE STREET. WE WENT BACK TO HER AND SHE PUSHED A LARGE BOX OF BISCUITS TOWARDS US. "HERE TAKE THIS" SHE WHISPERED FEARFULLY, "AND DON'T LET HIM KNOW I GAVE IT TO YOU!". I OFTEN WONDERED WHAT KIND OF LIFE SHE HAD WITH HER CROTCHEY SON. WE WONDERED IF MAYBE HE HAD A CHANCE TO GO ON SUMMER PROJECTS WHEN HE WAS A SMALL BOY, WOULD HE BE SUCH A GRUMP NOW.

## WAITING AT THE GATE BY SUZANNE

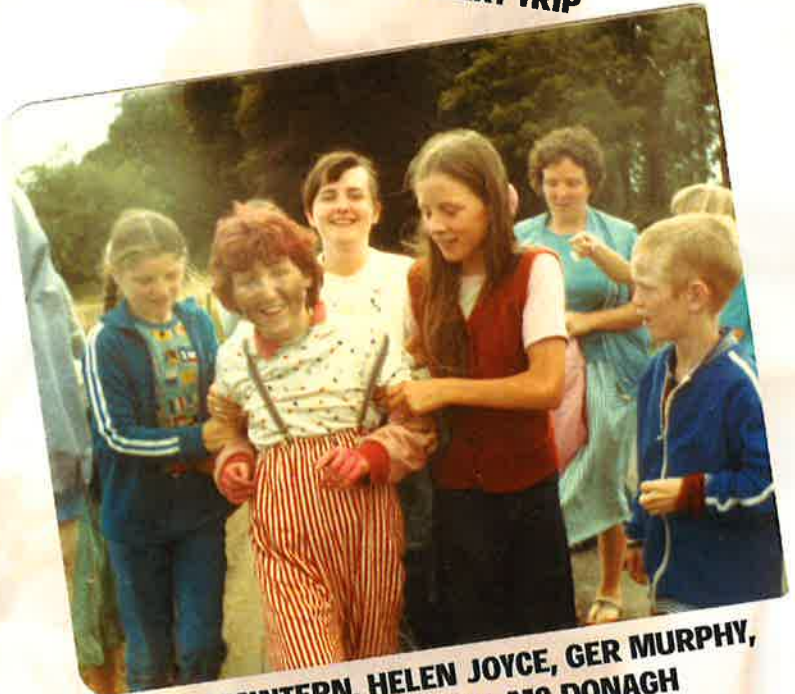
WE USED TO GO TO THE PROJECT, A GOOD FEW OF US, ONE BROTHER AND THREE SISTERS. MICHAEL USED TO COLLECT US AT 9.30, WE'D BE WAITING AT THE GATE FROM 7.30. WE'D GET INTO THE VAN AND SING ALL THE WAY IN. THIS WAS OUR SUMMER HOLIDAY FOR THE YEAR. WHEN SCHOOL FINISHED IT WAS WHAT WE LOOKED FORWARD TO. IT WAS OUR 2 WEEK SUMMER HOLIDAY.

## THE MYSTERY TOUR BADDIES BY MICHAEL JAMES

ON THE MYSTERY TOURS THE PEOPLE DRESSED UP AS "BADDIES" ALWAYS GOT THE WORST OF IT. THE CHILDREN HAD TO FIND THE BADDIE AND SOMETIMES WE HAD GUARDS TO ARREST THEM. I REMEMBER ONE DAY TRIP AT SLANE HILL. THE KIDS SAW THE BADDIE DRESSED UP AS BATMAN. HE WAS WAVING OVER AT THEM, TEASING THEM. THE KIDS LOST THE HEAD, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY SEEN THE SQUAD CAR WAS HAD ARRANGED TO ARREST HIM COMING OVER THE HILL WITH IT'S SIREN ON. ABOUT 120 KIDS TOOK OFF TO CATCH BATMAN THEMSELVES. NONE OF US COULD STOP THE CHARGE AS THEY TOOK OFF AFTER HIM AND PULLED POOR BATMAN TO THE GROUND. I DON'T THINK THE POOR MAN HAS BEEN THE SAME SINCE.



SOME VSI VOLUNTEERS  
GET READY FOR A MYSTERY TRIP



BRIDGET MINTERN, HELEN JOYCE, GER MURPHY,  
MARGARET JOYCE, NELL MC DONAGH  
AND ~CHRISTY JOYCE



NEVIN, COLLINS, DOYLE, REILLY, STOKES, GAVIN,  
MC DONAGH, HAND, AND POWER CHILDREN



1984 -1994



**NO IDEA WHAT WAS IN STORE?  
BY BRIGETTE MINTERN**  
I WAS THERE FOR THE FIRST ONE, WHAT CAN I REMEMBER? PANIC IN THE VERY FIRST MORNING AS EVERYONE GATHERED OUTSIDE THE PREFAB AT O MAHONY'S GAA GROUNDS WITH NO IDEA OF WHAT WAS IN STORE FOR HIM OR HER. MIND YOU, NEITHER DID I! PILING INTO AISLING'S BROWN MINI, MY WHITE RENAULT 4 AND THE BACK OF MICHAEL AND NELL'S VAN WE SET OFF ON DAYS OF MYSTERY TOURS, SWIMMING, TRIPS TO THE BEACH, SINGING, DANCING, PAINTING, FANCY DRESS, WE DID IT ALL. EVERYONE GOT INVOLVED, THE COMMITTEE, VOLUNTEERS, TEACHERS ON SUMMER HOLIDAYS, OUR FRIENDS AND FAMILIES AND MOST OF ALL THE TRAVELLER CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS. FOR ME PERSONALLY, I HAVE NEVER HAD SO MUCH FUN SINCE THAT TIME 21 YEARS AGO!



**THE CHILD THAT DRANK THE PAINT  
BY MARTINA**  
IN NAVAN O MAHONY'S THERE WAS A LITTLE CHILD WHO USED TO DRINK THE PAINT, THE RED PAINT. I USED TO LOOK AT HIM IN DISGUST. SOME OF THE KIDS USED TO GIVE IT TO HIM ON PURPOSE. THERE WAS A BOY WHO USED TO STAND EVERY MORNING AT THE GATE LOOKING FOR CHANGE. MY DADDY USED TO GET CHANGE OFF MY MOMMY TO GIVE IT TO HIM.



**THE KIDS AND THE VSI  
BY PATRICK REILLY**  
I'VE WORKED ON THE SUMMER PROJECT FOR 19 YEARS. THE FONDEST MEMORIES I HAVE ARE BASICALLY DOWN TO THE KIDS. THE REASON I SAY THE KIDS IS BECAUSE THERE WAS A LOT OF THEM WHO WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN BROUGHT AWAY BY THEIR PARENTS. THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT IT FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR, THE LOOK ON THEIR FACES. EVEN THE VSI PEOPLE WERE TALKED ABOUT AND THE CHILDREN WOULD TALK ABOUT THEM IF THE COUNTRY CAME UP IN CLASS.





■ Saturday, 10th March, 1984

# Navan Houses 31 Travelling Families

The number of travelling families housed in Co. Meath has risen from 25 in 1981 to 37, a report from Mr. F. W. Kavanagh, secretary, Meath Co. Council, shows, but 84 families still are living on the roadside. Navan now has 31 travelling families in houses, Dunboyne has three and Bellewstown has one.

The report states that for the first time ever a travelling girl has started secondary school at St. Joseph's Convent of Mercy, Navan. She is from the new group housing scheme at St. Columban's Crescent, Trim Road, Navan.

The increase in families housed is due to the allocation of the group housing scheme for 12 families at St. Columban's Crescent. But the number of travelling families still with no place to live or basic facilities represents 58% of the total in Co. Meath.

The new housing scheme at St. Columban's Crescent accommodates 12 of the travelling families in Navan. Other families have been accommodated as follows: Claremont Estate (5); Townparks (4); Clusker Park (2); Boyne Villas (2); Emmet Terrace (1) and on the outskirts of the town: Windtown Road (3); Alexandereid (3) and Lismullen (1).

The report states that the families at St. Columban's Terrace have settled in well with no major problems arising. Three of the teenagers in this scheme have got work, one of the young mothers helps in the pre-school and another is taking part in an AnCO/L.I.N.C. course.

According to Mr. Kavanagh, there has been no great influx of families into Meath following the provision of facilities for them in the county. Navan obviously still has the biggest accommodation problem, he points out, but he adds that if the problem was tackled immediately on a number of fronts it could be solved in the not-too-distant future. The other areas have fewer families, allowing an opportunity to deal with the

situation before it becomes unmanageable. Mr. Kavanagh states.

"However, if the provision of accommodation for travelling families is not planned for in the immediate future, the numbers on the roadside in all areas will increase rapidly, due to the large families and early marriages," Mr. Kavanagh concludes."



Saturday, 31st August, 1985



Some of the travellers who took part in the motor maintenance course in the workshop for travelling people in the old Navan Vocational school (from left) were: David Joyce, Liam O'Leary, Pat Hand, John Hand (background), Jimmy Power, Tom Reilly, Patrick, Joe and Michael Joyce and Jimmy Duke.

## Young Travellers Helped By Course

Finding their self-confidence in dealing with members of the settled community has been one benefit to young travellers of a programme of training-workshops, which has now reached the half-way stage at the old vocational school, Abbey Road, Navan.

Project director Pat Murphy said: "When faced with a member of the settled community, the young travellers can look them straight in the eye and give a fairly articulate account of themselves as travellers and what they believe in, in a positive manner."

He felt there was a certain degree of ignorance among settled people about travellers. During the project, which started last February, a community youth training programme has been in progress also at the old vocational school, allowing some interaction between the young travellers and settled youngsters.

"They've been playing football and getting to know each other," said Mr. Murphy. "Before there was a wall there separating them."

### NEW SKILLS

Replacing old skills which have become redundant in an increasingly urbanised and industrialised world has been a feature of the programme.

Historic skills, such as tin-smithing, horse and carriage repair, may be replaced by more modern skills.

some "teething problems" had cropped up since the course started but one indication of its success was that none of the participants "dropped out" after the recent holidays.

Another encouraging feature has been that some youngsters, formerly regarded as "difficult" by the organisers of the annual summer project for travellers in Navan, displayed improved attitudes. "This year, they were quite helpful and were taking responsibility for the younger children," he said.

The workshops are organised on a 35-hour week basis. Trainees must attend from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and are paid an allowance through

AnCO (which is administering a Youth Employment Agency scheme).

Part-time teachers are funded by the Dept. of Education through Meath V.E.C. "It was quite a demand on some of the young people who had never spent more than an hour inside a building at a time in the past," commented Mr. Murphy. "But attendance and time-keeping have been excellent."

Local travelling parents and Navan branch of the I.T.G.W.U. are others who have been involved in co-ordinating and setting up the programmes which have 24 young travellers taking part.

"I ARRIVED IN DECEMBER WITH SNOW ON THE GROUND TO TAKE UP THE POSITION AS DIRECTOR OF THE WORKSHOP. MY FIRST TASK WAS LETTING THE SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS KNOW THEY HAD A PLACE ON THE COURSE. IT ALSO GAVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET TO KNOW THE PARENTS AND FAMILIES, OF ALL THE TRAINEES. FROM THE START I ALWAYS SEEN THE WORKSHOP AS BEING PART OF THE TRAVELLERS COMMUNITY AND WAS A MEANS TO ASSIST YOUNG TRAVELLERS TO DEVELOP SKILLS AND ABILITIES THAT WOULD BE USEFUL TO THEM AS INDIVIDUALS AND ALSO BUILD THE CAPACITY FOR TRAVELLERS AS A COMMUNITY. MOST IMPORTANTLY I WANTED EVERYBODY TO HAVE A BIT OF CRAIC!

I ALWAYS REMEMBERED THE WARM WELCOME I RECEIVED FROM THE FAMILIES WHO HAD PLENTY OF IDEAS ON HOW I SHOULD KEEP THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN LINE. THANKFULLY FOR ME AND THE TRAINEES I NEVER IMPLEMENTED ANY OF THE PARENTS' SUGGESTIONS ON DISCIPLINE. ON THE FIRST DAY I SPOKE WITH THE DIRECTOR OF A WORKSHOP IN DUBLIN, HIS ADVICE WAS FOR ME TO PICK ONE OF THE LADS WHO MIGHT CAUSE TROUBLE FOR ME AND SACK HIM. AS HE SPOKE TO ME ON THE PHONE I WAS WATCHING ALL THE LADS CLIMBING ONTO THE ROOF OF THE WORKSHOP, MY THOUGHT AT THAT MOMENT WAS "TAKE YOUR PICK".

THANKFULLY AGAIN I IGNORED THIS ADVICE AND DURING MY TIME AS DIRECTOR NO ONE WAS SACKED, IN FACT DISCIPLINE WAS NEVER A PROBLEM. I LOOK BACK ON MY TIME WITH THE YOUNG TRAVELLERS OF NAVAN AND THEIR FAMILIES WITH GREAT FONDNESS, I MADE GOOD FRIENDS AND HOPEFULLY I MADE SOME SMALL CONTRIBUTION TO IMPROVING THE LIVES OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY."

PATRICK MURPHY WAS THE VERY FIRST DIRECTOR OF WHAT WAS THEN CALLED NAVAN TRAVELLERS WORKSHOPS.

