

Ballyfermot De La Salle National School 1952



Ballyfermot : Building a Community

1948 - 2006



Acknowledgements and Notes.

This Book is how Ballyfermot started out as a massive housing estate with very little amenities and how the people of Ballyfermot helped to form a great community.

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Ken Larkin

Chapter 1

Ballyfermot from the Beginning

Ballyfermot is approximately five miles from Dublin City centre overlooking the river Liffey on the south side of Chapelizod. Other surrounding suburbs are Inchicore, Palmerstown, Clondalkin, Neilstown, and Bluebell. The name Baile Diarmuid, ‘the town of Dermot’, is said to have derived its name from Dermot MacGillamochoilmo who was a grandson of Dermot McMorrough the king of Leinster and owned a large part of the lands in Dublin along with Ballyfermot. There was a castle, church, and graveyard in Ballyfermot dedicated to St Laurence. John Dalton wrote in 1838. ‘The church contains no tombstones worthy of notice’ he mentions the Castle and the Graveyard.¹ Francis Elrington Ball wrote in 1906.

That there were no trace of the castle to be found, and the only remains of old buildings in the vicinity of the church are a curious brick wall built with alcoves for the protection of fruit trees, and an artificial fish pond partly faced with cut stone.²

The ruins of the graveyard were there till the early 1970s. Dublin Corporation then demolished what was left, because it was a danger to public health and safety.

Johnstown House on Le Fanu Road, which is now St Johns De La Salle Monastery, is the oldest remaining house left in Ballyfermot. Rafters Farm House, which was the oldest farmhouse in the area, became the Presbytery to our Lady of the Assumption Church in the 1950s. Rafters House was demolished in 2005 and Senior Citizens Apartments are now built on the site.

¹ John Dalton, *History of County Dublin* (Dublin, 1838), pp 638 - 641

² Francis Elrington Ball, *History of County Dublin IV* (Dublin,1906), pp101 - 106

History of Kathleen Behan

Kathleen Behan was born in 1910 in Peamount, County Dublin but came to live in Ballyfermot with her family. They rented the orange coloured house beside the railway bridge on Le Fanu Road. The family left the house in early 1960s and the house later became a Video Shop. The main road in Ballyfermot then was Blackditch Road and at that time, it was essentially a lane with land league Cottages back to back along the lane. The Inchicore Road began from Grange Cross. This was a country road with very high hedges. The only big house along the road was Rafters Farm House. Rafters owned most of the local land and used it for cattle grazing. Their land spread from opposite Kathleen's House at the railway bridge right down to Inchicore. Small Cottages were also dotted along the Inchicore Road. People then shopped in Inchicore or Chapelizod. An old Ballyfermot family called Connolly's had a small shop beside Kathleen's House where 'Seven Days' shop was. The remains of an old church wall and graveyard were not far away from Kathleen's House. Kathleen never recalls the *'The Tiled House'*³, beside the railway bridge that Sheridan Le Fanu wrote about. Dances were held in the fine weather at Grange Cross every Sunday where Fowlers pub or the old County Bar is today. Accordion and fiddler players would supply the music while the dancers step-danced the old style. This attracted boys and girls as far away as Clondalkin and Inchicore. The Dances continued till 1935. Dublin Corporation purchased some of the land from the Rafter Family. They started to clear the land to plan out the new scheme. The Second World War began and all the planning was stopped. After the war, the work resumed. Many of the old locals did not like to see Ballyfermot change, from a green belt into a concrete landscape, Kathleen married a man from Ballyfermot, and got a house on Gurteen Avenue. Both Kathleen and her sister Pidge were struck by some of the poverty they encountered with the new people from the city. They admired the new people's courage and the good spirit. However, they did miss picking the blackberries and mushrooms in the open fields of Ballyfermot.

³ Website, <http://www.chapters.eiretek.org/books/General/lefanuhouse.htm>

Figure 1



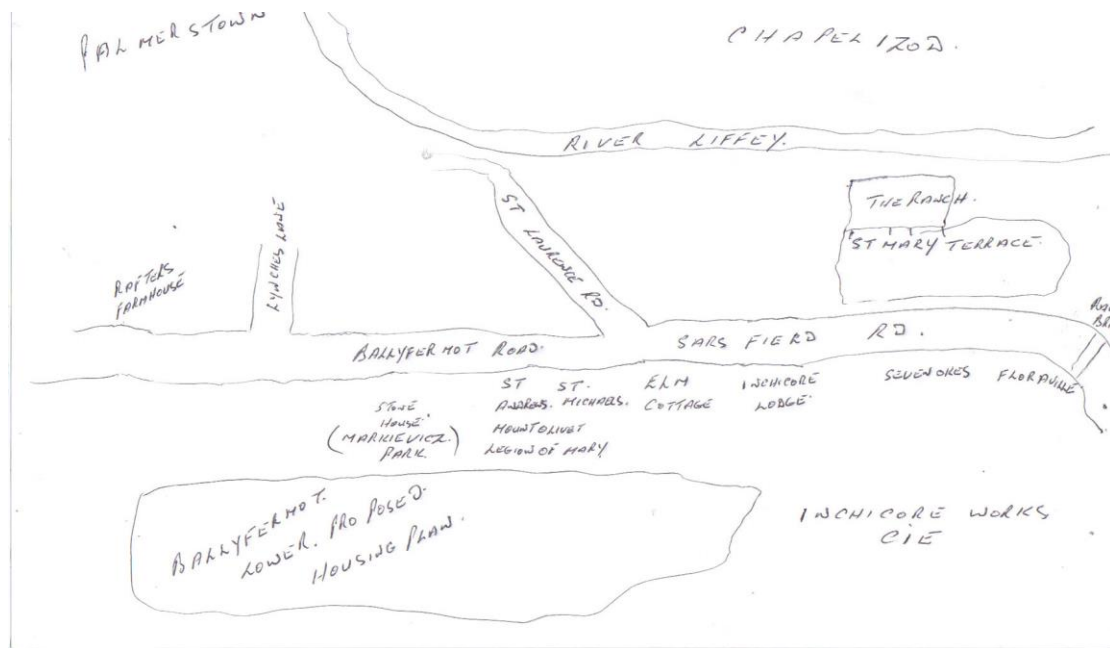
The castle, church, and graveyard site beside where Kathleen grew up.

Figure 2



Rafter's Farm House the land was purchased by Dublin Corporation in 1947 for to build
Sarsfield /Ballyfermot Housing Development

Figure 3



Hand drawn map by Ken Larkin showing Ballyfermot Lower 1946
In the 1946 street directory Ballyfermot Road, were described as running from Sarsfield Road, to the Seventh Lock.

Thom's directory lists for 1948-9 the residents of Ballyfermot Road as follows.

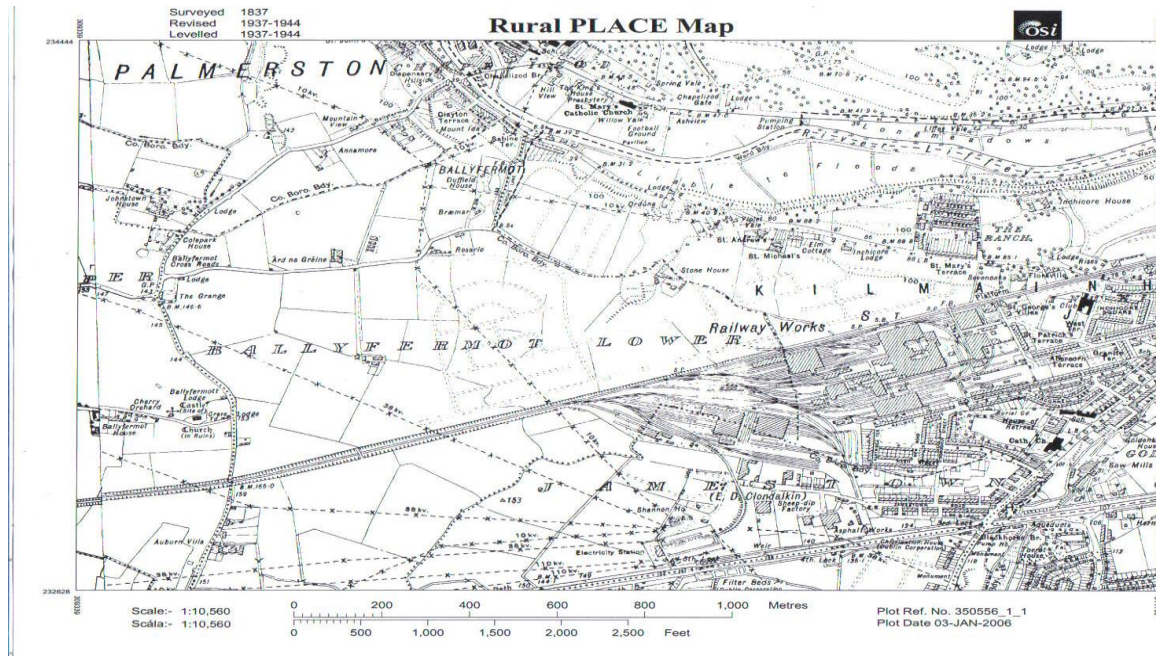
- Beamish H, Arranmore
- Lawlor P, Old Ballyfermot House
- Dowling P, Gallanstown House
- Elliot Mrs, Stone House
- Geraghty Patrick, Ballyfermot Cottage
- Gregan Patrick, Ballyfermot House
- Horan C.
- Murray James, Wine & Spirit Merchants 7th Lock.

The address Stone House as mentioned in the map above was featured in Le Fanu's book 'The House by the Churchyard'⁴ and was situated in what is now Markievicz Park. The house is now long gone and its last residents were the

⁴ Website, <http://www.chapters.eiretek.org/books/General/lefanuhouse.htm>

Merriman family. The roundabout that was at Grange Cross, which was there since the Ballyfermot Estate began in 1950, is now replaced by traffic lights.

Figure 4



Ordnance Survey Map 1837, revised in 1937.

Dublin Corporation purchased the farmland from Patrick Rafter in 1947, for lower Ballyfermot housing development. But on Maps in the Valuation Office it showed that Dublin Corporation had planned the housing development as far back as 1937. The Second World War started in 1939 and ran to 1945. The Corporation then started to build the Sarsfield Road / Ballyfermot housing estate in 1948 and finished in 1951. Sarsfield Road was the main road and it ran from the Model school in Inchicore, under the railway bridge and right up to where Ballyfermot roundabout and Our Lady of the Assumption Church are now. The road structure changed in 1950 and Sarsfield Road ran as far as the junction of St Laurence Road. Ballyfermot Road starts from St Laurence Road, to Cherry Orchard Hospital. Dublin Corporation had used different themes in the naming of roads in other housing estates. They named the roads after mountains in Drimnagh after monasteries in Crumlin. So in keeping with this idea the roads in Sarsfield estate (lower Ballyfermot) were named after people and places connected with the life and times of Patrick Sarsfield, the siege of Limerick and the Wild Geese. Sarsfield Road lower, Ballyfermot Road, Decies, Thomond, Muskerry, Ramillies Cremona, Lally, Landen, Garryowen, O Hogan, O

Moore, and Ballyneety were the houses built in all there were 1,594 houses built. By 1964 there were 5,619 houses in Ballyfermot.

1951-53 Sarsfield Estate Ballyfermot Lower and Colepark Estate

1953-54 Blackditch Estate

1954-59 Drumfinn Estate

1975-76 Cloverhill Estate

1983- 86 Cherry Orchard Estate

Dublin Corporation decided to use the theme of the West of Ireland when naming roads in Ballyfermot upper.

Moving into the new Scheme

Now that Sarsfield Houses, and lower Ballyfermot Houses, were ready for habitation lots of families were leaving the slums and tenements of the inner city. The slums and the tenements were smelly rundown buildings some with only one bedroom and a divide in the room for the kitchen area and families were sharing one toilet and a bath with up to six or more families in the one house. The people selected for these new houses were on the Dublin Corporation housing list and were judged on a points table. To achieve the points the following was the criteria. How many in the family, and their living arrangements. The income going into the household was also taking into consideration. So began the move to their new homes, which they knew as going out into the country. As unemployment was rampant in Dublin throughout the 1940s-50s many fathers were away working in England and further a field. It was not unusual for the mothers and their children to move to their new home and when the fathers arrived back in Ireland on holidays he would be met at the boat and be brought out to their new home for the first time. Bill Cullen author of *'It's a long way from Penny Apples'* tells of his father and mothers experience when they got word they got a house in Ballyfermot. They were living in the tenements of Summerhill. Bill and his mother walked the five miles from Dublin city to Ballyfermot to see number 245 Ballyfermot Road opposite Our Lady of the Assumption Church. Of course, they saw everything that they did not have in their flat in the inner city. Three bedrooms one with a built in wardrobe, two taps, with hot and cold water a bath, and a toilet, that they would not have to share with other families. Bill fell in love with the house straight away. However, on their way back into the city on the bus his mother was

doing her sums. Because she had a stall in Moore Street, where she sold fruit and vegetables, this would mean that she would have to travel into the city twice each day. The added cost of 12s. 0d. per week bus fare, along with another 6s. 0d for Bill and his sisters to go into the school in the city, and another 3s.0p. for her daughters who helped on the stalls this cost would have bought an extra box of apples. After much deliberation Bills mother and father decided not to take the house. They eventually received a house in Portland Row not far from Summerhill tenements.⁵

People first impressions when they saw Ballyfermot were ‘Loads of muck and dirt and half built houses’, they were wondering did they make a mistake in their decision by moving but first impressions are not always lasting impressions as they grew to love the area and their community.

Poem Growing up in Ballyer

I remember waiting that day for the Lorry to pull up.

We had our furniture ready just to load up.

We were moving to a housing estate the year were ’55.

My Mother, Sister and myself our whole lives were to come alive.

We loaded our furniture the bit that we had and we pulled away from Buckingham Street indeed I was not sad.

The new adventure were starting we did not know it yet.

As the lorry roared towards Ballyer and the night were very wet.

The lorry turned off Ballyfermot Road and on to the Drive.

I was guessing as to what house that we would all reside.

Then we stopped outside this house with two rooms up and down

Number 33 was on the door and it seemed miles from Dublin town.

We started in the local school and the games we began to play

Were Conkers, Marbles, Skipping and Piggy these games are replaced with Computer today.

Our Communion and Confirmation came along and our parents did us proud and we were dressed in our Sunday best as we went out on the town.

So we moved on to Mount La Salle this were the school to be in

⁵ Bill Cullen, *it's a long way from penny apples* (Dublin, 2003), pp.114, - 118.

The Brothers and the teachers taught us all how to win.
They taught us Gaelic and hurling and we played it after school.
They did not let us play soccer because they did not know the rules.
Then we did our primary cert, as we had to leave that school
and so we had to move on to the college or tech to start another renewal.
We moved into St John's and had to buckle down.
As our teachers told us this was the best college in town.
We had to go in on a Saturday morning to Focus for our Inter.
We worked hard that September but lost heart by the winter.
I remember the Stew House where the Nuns gave out the meals.
Sometimes we would go there to buy the penny deals.
I remember the youth Clubs in Ballyer and Mount Olivet too where I have many
happy memories of all that passed through.
I remember the Ballad sessions we had on a Saturday night.
When all the young people carrying guitars, would assemble through the night.
Ballads would be sung Poems would be recited and all the members remained
very united.
Mount Olivet football club is where we played the soccer.
We met and trained and played the game and we were there for each other.
Hardy's were the venue where tactics were discussed.
Plans and dreams were made there.
But often we fouled up.
Saturday was the Gala day where we spent our turf money.
We would head to dirty Aggie to buy our cleaves and goodies
And when we would get to the Gala door big Harry would greet us with a roar.
Saying, "If you mess I will be here and you will get in no more"
As I drive through Ballyer and the memories come flooding back
I think of all the bygone days the lads and all the craic.
I try to tell my kids of the days that have gone past
So they can pass it on to make the memories last.⁶

⁶ Ken Larkin, *Growing up in Ballyer in the 50s 60s 70s* (Dublin, 2004), pp 26-27

The Ranch

The Ranch is a small housing estate just before you enter lower Ballyfermot under the railway bridge from Inchicore. The postal address is Sarsfield Road, Inchicore, Dublin 10. The houses were built because the people were coming from all over the world to work in the Great Southern and Western Railway, (G, S, & W, R.) which is now known as the Inchicore Works. Saint Mary's Terrace were the first houses to be opened for habitation in 1880.

Figure 5



Another view of St Mary's Terrace, The Ranch, Inchicore. 1930's

Inchicore Road ran from Kilmainham Court House to the top of Chapelizod Hill known as St Laurence Road. Sarsfield Road was the main road coming in from the west, and this is where the cattlemen and farmers drove their herds down along Sarsfield Road and past the small housing estate and on into the markets in town.

Seamus Fleming, local historian, explained how the area known as the Ranch got its name.

Around 1890 a former resident from Inchicore Road had returned for a visit to his old homestead from the United States and he was brought out to Inchicore north, which is where the Ranch is now to see the new housing development of red brick houses. He saw so many cattle on the road at the housing estate as they were being herded into cattle market in town he remarked that it was just like 'A Ranch back in Texas' and so the people adopted the name.

Three ladies from the Ranch remember their childhood when they would travel back and forth from school and playing in Cant's field at the back of the Ranch and everything was open and green. They saw their playing area taken away from them slowly as they watched the new scheme being built up. They remembered seeing the new people of Ballyfermot getting off the bus at the bottom of Sarsfield Road which was the terminus then, watching them as they struggled with their children and shopping through the muck of the building sites as they were walking to their new homes in the scheme. Their fathers and mothers referred to the new housing Sarsfield / Ballyfermot estate as the 'scheme' and to the people who were going into the new houses as the 'schemers'. A lot of the boys and girls from the Ranch married the schemers when they got older and went to live within the scheme.

Figure 6



St Mary's Ave, the Ranch, with Cant's wall on left 1960's

Figure 7



The games that the Schemers and the Ranchers played together. Sketched in 1930s, by Syl Quigley from the Ranch.

Figure 8



Irish Times January 1953 the report on the new 78 bus service to Ballyfermot upper no longer had the people to get off the Bus at the end of the Sarsfield Road and walk through the housing scheme to their homes.

Little Sisters of the Assumption Sevenoaks

A family that came from Sevenoaks, Kent, in England, originally owned the Sevenoaks House on Sarsfield Road. Then C.I.E. Inchicore Works purchased the property. June 1951 The Little Sisters of the Assumption purchased the property from C.I.E. The people of the Ranch and Ballyfermot have very fond memories of the Little Sisters of the Assumption. They were the first community of Sisters to move into the area and take up residents. The parish of Ballyfermot was not yet established, as the people were slowly moving into the area. Unemployment was a big problem. Many fathers were in England working. Therefore the mothers were left on their own to raise the family. The Sisters main apostolates were births, they also carried out night duties caring for the sick and dying of the parish. In the convent they carried out pre marriage courses and sewing classes for the young mothers which were sponsored by the Catholic Social Service Conference. The Sisters also saw at first hand the community working for each other by sharing their allowances with neighbour and the neighbours in turn would also share with them. Many altar boys served mass in the Sevenoaks Convent down the years one of these boys who lived in the area was Diarmuid Martin who is now the Archbishop of Dublin.

Figure 9



Evening Herald 19 Oct 1965 Ballyfermot Library

Sadly tragedy hit the community of the Little Sisters of the Assumption in October 1965 when Sister Brendan Mary, on her parish calls, was involved in a collision with a car and van while riding her motor scooter at the junction of Kylemore Road and Landen Road and she died shortly after admission to the hospital.

Figure 10



View of Sevenoaks Convent before the apartments showing the spires of the Oblates Church, Inchicore in the background



View of Sevenoaks October 2005. Apartments are now erected at the rear of the house

Khyber Pass.

The Great Southern and Western Railway (G, S, & W. R.) Which dates back to 1846 was just across from the Ranch and many of the men that lived in the Ranch worked for the Railway. They entered into the Inchicore Railway works from what is known as the 'Khyber Pass'. Marie Duff (Devine) who wrote her family history told how she came to live in the Ranch. Marie's mother died when she was three months old and she lived with her grandparents in number three Saint Mary's Terrace. Marie's grandmother told her that she remembered the Ranch being built and how she use to play amongst the scaffolding as a young girl. Marie's grandfather served in the Royal Enniskillen Fusiliers and was stationed in the Khyber Pass in India. When he retired from the British Army, he came back to Dublin. He then got a job in the Works. His boss at the Works happened to be his Commanding Officer when he served in India. The boss told him that he had ordered seedlings trees from the Khyber Pass and that he wanted him to plant them down along the slipway into the works. It took three months for them to be delivered and he then planted them all along the slipway. This is how it got its nickname Khyber Pass and the name stuck to this day. Some of the trees are still there to be seen.

Figure 11



Photo by Ken Larkin shows the Khyber Pass leading to the Works 2005

Chapter 2

Building the Community

Figure 12



Very Reverend Canon Michael Charles Troy MA. BD. B.C.L.

Canon Michael Charles Troy was born in Listowel Co Kerry in 1895. He was ordained to the priesthood at Maynooth College by Archbishop Byrne on the 19 June 1921. His first parish were Dunboyne in Co Meath and he served there as a curate from 1921-23. On the 30 January 1923, he was appointed to the Little Sisters of the Poor in Kilmainham, which included chaplain to the prisoners in Kilmainham Jail where he would have met many of the Free State prisoners. The other parishes he served, as a curate were Greenane, county Wicklow 1925-28. St Michans, Dublin 1928-33 and Terenure, Dublin 1933-51. On the 28 July 1951 he was then appointed to St Michaels Church Inchicore with part of his duties in what was to be the new parish of Ballyfermot.

On the 5 February 1953 he was appointed the first parish priest of Ballyfermot and went about preparing the way for the De La Salle Brothers and the Dominican Sisters to set up schools in lower Ballyfermot and later, The Sisters of Charity who ran St Louise school in upper Ballyfermot. There was no doubt of his love for Ballyfermot and its people as when he would be talking to anyone outside the area he would always say that 'Dublin was a suburb of Ballyfermot', and he would always boast that Ballyfermot had the largest schools in Europe which it had. He also helped to set up the Vincent De Paul in the area.

Brother Donal a De La Salle Brother who taught in Ballyfermot and is now retired and living in Ballyfermot knew Canon Troy very well, he recalls that the Canon's passion was for the GAA and his beloved Kerry Team. In the early days the Canon presented a set of Jerseys to the Ballyfermot GAA team the colour of the Jersey's were green and gold which happened to be the same colours of the Kerry Team. Ballyfermot GAA team still play in these colours today. The Canon had played for Kerry as a young man but never won an all Ireland medal. Soccer was a foreign sport to him.

Canon Brady served in Ballyfermot as a young curate. Canon Troy was his parish priest he recalls that Canon Troy was a big man in stature as he stood over six feet but he also had a big heart. His devotion was to the Gaelic games, which he combined with his fundraising skills. He would organise the American Armed Forces, football team to play in Croke Park each year and the money collected would be given over to the Catholic Social Service, which is now known as Crosscare, and they looked after the poor of Dublin. Canon Troy died on the 11 November 1972 and was buried in the Little Sisters of the Poor Cemetery Kilmainham. His body were exhumed when the Convent closed and he now rests in Palmerstown Cemetery.⁷

Parish Priest's of Our Lady of the Assumption Church since 1953

Rev Canon Michael Charles Troy 1953-72

Rev Father Michael V Rodgers 1972-81

Rev Father Peter Lemass 1981-84

Rev Father Donal O Doherty 1984-93

Rev Father Joe Kitt 1993 to date.

Jack Roche was Sacristan in Our Lady of the Assumption Church for thirty four years from 1959 - 93

⁷ Brother Donal Ballyfermot Library File RB6-0
Notes taken from Canon Brady 21 April 2005.

Painters Hut - Scheme first church

The Painters hut situated on O Hogan Road within the grounds of Markievicz Park played many a role in Ballyfermot. It was used as storage shed for the Dublin Corporation workers when the first housing phase began. Fr Donal O Scannail purchased the paint store for £200 from Dublin Corporation and it became the first church in modern Ballyfermot. It was used from 1950 until Our Lady of the Assumption Church opened in 1953. This shed was also used as a soup kitchen, nick named in the locality as the 'Stew House' where the Daughters of Charity of the St Vincent De Paul served soup to the needy of the area. Our Lady's of Victories youth club started there also.

Our Lady of the Assumption Church

Eamonn Mac Thomais the Dublin historian and author who died in 2002 wrote in the *Irish Press* on 2 June 1986 about his input in helping Ballyfermot get its new church. His parish church was St Michaels in Inchicore and one Sunday at mass Father Donal O Scannail who was one of the curate's in St Michaels and was also assigned to help start up the new parish of Ballyfermot appealed over the alter for door to door collectors to help build a church in Ballyfermot. Eamonn gave in his name as one of the volunteers. He received his collector's book and he was off the next Sunday to collect on what were known as the newly wed houses on Muskerry Road.

Figure 13



Irish Press, Monday 2 June 1986 article about the newly wed houses in Ballyfermot 1951.

There were many other events organised by Father Donal and the community to raise funds for the new church. Such as social evenings which included, dances, 'Take your Pick' called after a popular television show at that time, this was a game where the person playing had the choice to take money that was offered or open a box, and may win nothing. The biggest fundraiser was the 'Buy a block' for the building of Our Lady of the Assumption Church. Each block cost £1 and they sold 3,300. Some people paid 6d. a week until the block was paid for, and when they had paid in full, they received a souvenir receipt to say, they that they owned one cement block in Our Lady of the Assumption Church.

Figure 14



The Ballyfermot Carnival Held in a Marquee in Markievicz Park to raise funds included in the photo is Father O Scanail and Father Boland.

Figure 15



Father Donal wrote in an article for the twenty fifth anniversary of Our Lady Assumption Church.

‘The Joy of brining the Blessed Sacrament in a solemn procession from the Painters hut to our lovely new church will abide with me forever’.

Figure 16



The first Mass said in Our Lady of the Assumption Church on 15 March 1953. The church was not finished, missing were the seats, and the pulpit.

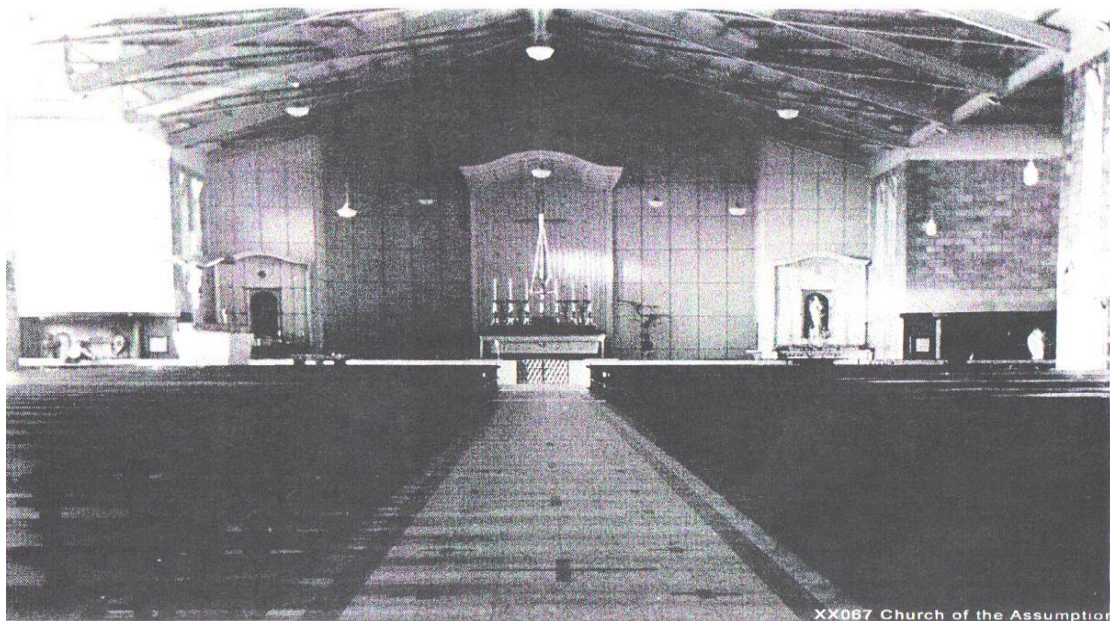
Figure 17

Our Lady of the Assumption Church 1953.jpg



Robinson, Keefe and Devine designed Our Lady of the Assumption Church. Built by John Hughes & Son. Work started in May 1951. The church cost £68,000 to build. The Mahogany seats cost £10,000. Seating Capacity in 1952 was for 1,980 people.

Figure 18



Our lady of the Assumption Church complete with Seating and the Pulpit.

Inchicore and Ballyfermot Co-Operative Society Ltd

Inchicore Co-Operative Society Ltd began in the Workman's Club in Inchicore in 1946 and traded in the Inchicore area successfully. They applied to the housing department of Dublin Corporation in 1949 for permission to open Sarsfield Co-Operative Society within Ballyfermot and to operate a grocery retailers. A petition of over 1,100 signatures to grant the Co-Op the tenancy on Decies Road was sent to Dublin Corporation along with the application. The people that signed the petition were all residents of Ballyfermot and clearly wanted the society opened. It read as follows.

We the undersigned Residents of Ballyfermot Housing area petition Dublin Corporation to grant Inchicore Co-Operative Society Ltd, the tenancy of one of the Corporation-owned shops on Decies Road in Ballyfermot housing scheme for the purpose of Co-Operative grocery retailing in the interest of the residents in Ballyfermot

As there were a small number of shops for such a large population in Ballyfermot the people felt that these shops were charging exorbitant prices. In 1949 permission was granted by Dublin Corporation, for the Ballyfermot Co- Operative Society to open at 41 Decies Road Ballyfermot. A shop manager and staff were employed and they began to recruit people to become members of the Society. As a member, they had to commit to paying one shilling per week. Unemployment was high so this was a big commitment to some people that had very little. There was a good response and approx 500 members joined and most of these were resident in Ballyfermot. It ran very successfully for three years. September 1952 the committee were holding an outdoor meeting near the Co-Op on Decies Road. The reason behind the meeting was to stress to the people how important it was to have a Co-Op in a working class area and to recruit new members. On the committee that was running the Co-Op, there were some non-political people; also, there were four people that were attached to the Irish Worker's League, which had affiliation to Communism. The word Communist was a taboo subject in 1950s-60s not only in Ireland but also around the world. The four people involved in the Irish Workers Party were Joe Deasy, who was chairman of Ballyfermot Co-Op Jeffery Palmer, Maisy McElroy, and Sean McGee. During the meeting, there were interruptions, and barracking, by some of the public and the speakers were not allowed to speak.

Questions were asked from some of the people gathered for the meeting. One of the questions that were asked 'Was it true that there were Communists on the Co-Op Committee'.

Joe Deasy answered 'He did not intend to discuss any member of the Co-Op or their politics as they were irrelevant to the existence and promotion of the Co-Op movement'.

The Co-Op movement was non-sectarian and non-political in the sense that anybody could become a member of the society or a member of the committee irrespective of their politics. One person from the crowd shouted if he could get up on the platform to address a few questions to Joe Deasy. So he emerged from the crowd and had prepared questions written out. He asked was the chairman a Communist and were there Communists on the committee. He said that he was representing the local clergy. Joe Deasy repeated what he said before and then the person was asked to leave the platform. The following day he got a phone call from a Mr McGowan who was on the Co-Op Committee but was not a member of the Irish Worker's League and he wanted to clear the air from the night before. He asked Joe if he was a member of the Irish Worker's League and Joe said that he was and so were three other people on the committee. McGowan was shocked by this information and he said to Joe that the clergy were behind the unrest and that he had experience of the clergy being opposed to something in the past for various reasons and that they will be determined to see this through to the end. Joe said that they would have no objection to any of the priest's joining the Co-Op Committee but they would have been treated the same as everyone else on the committee and they felt that the priest's did not want it on that basis.

The following Sunday in the three churches that served Ballyfermot and Inchicore the priest's spoke from the pulpit about the previous outdoor meeting and how the chairman of the Co-Op was asked questions which he refused to answer. Therefore, as a result of this they decided that there were communist issues involved and the faithful were asked not to be members of the Co-Op or to patronise the shop in question. This had affected Joe personally arising out of being called off the altar not by his name but chairperson of the society and it was well known whom the priest's were referring to. Joe's parents who attended the church locally and who did good work in the area got an inclination of what was going to be said from the pulpit

and decided that they would get mass in an outside parish of James Street. This episode was very painful for Joe, and caused great anxiety in their family.

Sean McGee's parents who lived in Kilkenny were approached by the Garda and told what was happening in Ballyfermot and this meant a break in his relationship with his family for two years.

Sunday, the 2 November 1952, the *Sunday Press* wrote an article condemning the Co-Op Committee and their communist activities and calling for the Co-Op to be shut down. A letter followed this from the newly formed Sarsfield Tenants Association to the Alderman, Councillors, and T.D.s of the area condemning the exposure of communist activities within the Co-Op.

Letters Concerning the Ballyfermot Co-Operative Society Ltd

Figure 19

SARSFIELD TENANTS ASSOCIATION OF BALLYFERMOT

133 Thomond Rd.,
Ballyfermot,
Co. Dublin.

5th November, 1952.

To: Each Alderman
and Councillor..

At a Meeting of the tenants of the above Organisation held in Kylemore Road on Saturday November 1st 1952 the following resolution was unanimously passed.

"We voice the indignation of the vast majority of the people of Ballyfermot at the recent exposure of Communist activities in the Inchicore, Ballyfermot Co-Operative Society brought to a head by the resignation of a number of members of the Irish Workers League, a Communist Society condemned by the Church.

The effective Boycott of the recent alleged election for a new Committee following amongst other things the undemocratic action in refusing members to exercise their constitutional right to inspect the Register made it quite clear that less than 1% of the people resident in the Parish give any support to this new Committee or its predecessor.

We call on Dublin Corporation to terminate immediately the tenancy of the shop situated in Decies Road, Ballyfermot controlled as it is by a most unpopular and unrepresentative Committee".

Trusting this will receive your attention and consideration and thanking you for a reply at your convenience.

Yours faithfully,

Joseph Daly
(JOSEPH DALY)

(ACTING HON. SEC.)

Everybody who knows the slightest thing about communist technique knows that its first objective is contact. What better contact than the unsuspecting members of a Co-Op. Here let us state that the other Co-Ops and the producer Co-Ops in the country escaped that evil influence. It was Ballyfermot's misfortune to be selected for infiltration. How appropriate are the names of Ballyfermot, Sarsfield, Decies, and Cremona, they might have been changed to Lenin, Stalin, and perhaps Deasy Road.⁸

Therefore, public opinion changed against them and a picket was put on the shop. To save the Co-Op the four people admitted that they were members of the Communist Party and offered to resign from the committee but they would not resign from the Association as they to do so they felt that it would go against their Civil Liberties. Tim Graham one of the committee members met with the Irish Civil Liberties Association and explained what was happening. They decided that there was not a Civil Liberty involved in this case. The Co-Op Association was very disappointed with their decision. They could not understand how the Pulpit was being used to destroy a Society or a Co-Op movement that was set up to help the people especially working class people. The Co-Op survived for a few months after this. April 1953 the Co-Op had to close as it was not getting enough custom to be commercially viable.

⁸ *The Standard*, 14 Nov.1952.

Figure 20

SARSFIELD CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY LTD., BALLYFERMOT.

Handwritten:
Hamp
P.O.

133 Thomond Rd.,
Ballyfermot,
Co. Dublin.

Office of the Oifis an Áiríochtaí
26 MAR 1953
No. <i>27/3/53</i>

25th March, 1953.

City Manager,
City Hall,
Dublin.

Application for Shop



Dear Sir,

I have been instructed by the Management of the above Society to refer to the reply of the Principal Officer d/9/3/'53 in which reference was made to the Shop Premises at Decies Rd., Ballyfermot.

The letter goes on to state that the tenancy of this premises was being brought to the notice of the Housing Committee at its meeting on Friday, March 13th.

Perhaps you will be kind enough to let me know the outcome of the decision, if any, which took place at this Meeting.

It is a well known fact that the Inchicore Co-Operative Society Ltd is "Communist" controlled and ably assisted by "fellow travellers", and anybody who would give support directly or indirectly by way of purchasing the good will of the premises in their possession, or giving them any monies whatsoever which might be used by them to further their insidious campaign against Democracy and Christianity - the people of this Parish will not look very favourably upon any person or persons who have any dealings with the Inchicore Co-Operative Society Ltd.

I am to suggest that it is your bounding duty to make those facts known to any persons who might be interested in this transaction.

Awaiting the favour of your reply in the matter.

Oifis an Áiríochtaí
26 MAR 1953
No. 3273 FILE

am,

Yours faithfully,

Handwritten signature: Joseph Daly
 HON. SEC.
 (JOSEPH DALY)

Gilbert Library. Pearse St. File 153/01Be

The City Manager writing back to Sarsfield Residents Association about the Ballyfermot Co-Operative Society Ltd.

Figure 21

Phone 76583 Housing 26/3/53
 P.O. St. Mary's Ballyfermot Dublin.
 Confidential -
 Re application for shop at Dew's Rd. 23rd 53.
 27 MAR 1953 26 MAR 1953 3259 FILE
 Dear Dr. Hannon,
 May I take the liberty of strongly recommending to you the application of the Sanfield Co-operative Society of Ballyfermot. The Executive of this Co-operative Society is excellent - drawn from representative people amongst whom are the Chairman of the local Labour party, Fine Gael & Free State. This Society was most helpful in fighting the menace of Communism in this parish - and was started to give the people here a truly Christian Co-operative Society. They will have the support of the people. Such a Society has first claim.
 Yours truly,
 Michael C. Troy P.P.

Gilbert Library. Pearse St. File 153/01B
 Letter from Canon Troy, 23 March 1953 to Dublin Corporation Housing department in connection with the Ballyfermot Co-Operative Society Ltd.

Figure 22

23rd MARCH 1953

28th March, 3.
Very Reverend Michael C. Troy, B.P.,
S. Mary's,
Ballyfermot,
Dublin.

re: shop at Decies Road.

Very Reverend and Dear Father Troy,

I am directed by the Assistant City Manager to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 23rd inst. concerning the tenancy of a shop at Decies Road for The Sarsfield Co-Operative Society of Ballyfermot. I have to inform you that this matter was under consideration by the Housing Committee at its meeting on the 13th inst. and it was decided that the Inchicore Co-Operative Society could be granted permission to transfer the tenancy of the shop No. 41 to Mr. Gerard Carty. The Committee took into consideration the fact that Mr. Carty was prepared to take over the business as a going concern and to discharge all the liabilities of the Inchicore Co-Operative Society. I might add that at the same meeting an application from the Sarsfield Tenants Association of Ballyfermot was also considered by the Committee

Yours faithfully,

Letter from the Assistant city Manager to Canon Troy in connection with the shop on Decies Road 28 March 1953.

Building the community in the early years.

As the people were moving from the tenements of Dublin inner city to the new housing scheme. A group of the community started up what was then known as the Newlyweds Association. This helped people to meet their new neighbours and make a start in forming a community, as the parish progressed it had many problems. The houses were excellent, but it lacked many other amenities such as Garda Station, shops, dancehall, youth clubs, and football clubs. The new Our Lady of the Assumption Church, and the schools helped greatly in building the community as everything revolved around them. The church sodalities, May processions, church retreats and the Pioneer Association, The Legion of Mary and the Vincent De Paul, which helped the new poor of the area. The new population of adults were starting to see the lack of amenities in the area for a vast number of young people. Some adults were volunteering to start up and run youth clubs, others were taking young people for football practice. Then the street soccer leagues started up and football teams were formed and began to play in the Dublin football leagues. Ballyfermot GAA Club began in 1953. Cherry Orchard Football Club started in 1957. Rosmore Boys Football Club started in 1958/59.⁹ Many more youth, GAA, and football clubs, started as the years went by with the help of the adult volunteers.

⁹ *Ballyfermot People*, Ballyfermot Library. File RB2B-000000T.

Figure 23



The Gala Cinema was built by G & T Crampton and was officially opened by Canon Troy on the 23 May 1955. The first Cinemascope musical film shown was ‘Lucky Me’ starring Doris Day and Phil Silvers. There was seating for 1,850 people, which included the balcony. The owners claimed that it was the largest cinema in Ireland at that time. At weekends you could see large queues and you would not be guaranteed to get in. There was one usherette and two ushers. Matt was one of the ushers and the other usher became a character never to be forgotten by any boy or girl from Ballyfermot at that time. He was affectionately known as ‘Harry the Hippo’. He would meet you at the door as you went into the Gala for the Saturday afternoon matinee and he would tell you in no uncertain terms what would happen if you were caught messing.¹⁰ There are many nice stories to be told about Harry by the Ballyfermot people. As with other suburban cinemas, numbers declined with the arrival of television. The Gala closed around April 1973. It opened up again in 1981 as a roller rink. This was short lived, and since 1983, it has been operating as a leisure centre.¹¹ In December 2004 planning permission was sought by Swampton Holdings to partly demolish the Gala Cinema and construct five blocks of five storeys, and one block of eleven storey Apartments. In January 2005 permission was granted with conditions set out by Dublin City Council.

¹⁰ Ken Larkin, *Growing up in Ballyfermot in the 50s 60s 70s* (Dublin, 2004), p. 10

¹¹ Jim Keenan, *Dublin Cinemas*, (Dublin, 2005), p. 121.

Oral Interviews with People involved in the building of the community in the early year

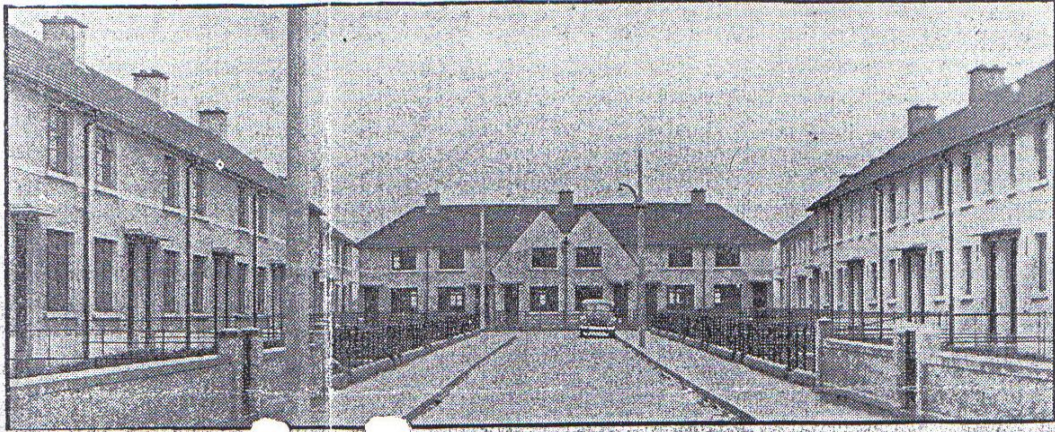
John Sweeney

John and Lily Sweeney were married in 1951 and were living in Sandymount. They got the news that they had won a house in the Newlywed draw. To qualify for the draw you had to be married five years and living in Dublin. John and Lily moved into 19 Colepark Green around 1953-54. It was then discovered after four years that the houses that they were living in as indeed all the newlywed houses were special houses. These houses were developed by Doctor Noel Brown to relieve the terrible stress on people that had T.B. so they built these special Corporation Houses that were specially subsidised by the then Government. These houses were at the end of each block or in some cases like Colepark Green, Ballyneety, and Thomond Road, the Corporation had built the houses all together. When the health board came to grips with the T.B. problem, they had this surplus of houses left over. Alfie Byrne who was then the Lord Mayor of Dublin came up with this idea to issue houses to people that were newlywed. The Government would no longer subsidise people that were living in these houses permanently. Some of the people that lived in these houses were there longer than the four years, some may have lived in these houses for up to eight years and had children going to the schools and were working in Ballyfermot, so they were settled in the area. John and a group of the residents decided to do something about this so they formed the Ballyfermot Newlywed Association. They then approached Dublin Corporation about the problem. Dublin Corporation would not relent. The people that were in these houses could have been moved to Finglas, Crumlin, Drimnagh, even Ballyfermot but it would have to be a different house that they lived in. The Newlywed Association disagreed and after a lot of negotiations and deliberations with Dublin Corporation, it was agreed to build one hundred and thirty houses within Ballyfermot. The people had the option of taking these houses or going to other parts of the city. Most of the people stayed and it was the first time that Dublin Corporation built houses and allowed the people to select their new houses from a drawing board. John and Lily went to live in one of these new houses on Clifton Road.

APRIL 1952
 The Irish Press, Wed., April

19 1952

Better your own Floor any day



Reserved for newly-weds: Thirty-four of the families whose names came out of the drum yesterday will soon be moving in here. It is O'Hogan Road, Ballyfermot, Inchicore.

UNDER two damp flags, celebrating a special day in the lives of two great democracies, U.S.A. and this country, a large crowd of damp young women began to congregate outside the Dublin Mansion House as early as eight o'clock yesterday morning.

Democracy, if the crowd were asked for its definition, would be the freedom of its own kitchen floor.

This they haven't got. They are that small section of houseless Dublin whose names have been down for the Corporation draw for the 200 new houses specially allocated to newly-weds. In themselves much less than ten per cent of the whole haggard army of house-hunters.

I doubt if the Round Room, which has heard the roll of many drums in its time, seldom got such a shake-up as it did when thousands of young women, babies, and a sprinkling of men, filled the floor and gallery or, later on, compressed the gardai against the closed gates and it raining all the time.

YOUNG GIRLS

SOME of them were very young girls, little women wedded, smart in perms and berets and beanies, with ankle-strap shoes over twelve-and-elevenpennies. Good types, fresh and vital, still unbroken in spirit.

Before some sourpuss remarks about extravagant hussies—there were plenty who hadn't any smart clothes, plenty without stockings because they're



A close-up of one of the Corporation houses on Hogan Road. Downstairs it is a bright living room with boiler, grate and cupboard. Behind there is a kitchenette with sink and bath, and a lot of both. Two built-in cupboards and a deep cloakroom cupboard under the stairs. There are two bedrooms upstairs with a built-in wardrobe in one.

paying out everything they have for rent. Two guineas for a couple of rooms furnished in name only; 25/- and 30/- for one room; slum landlords wanting key money of £20 for miserable shacks.

LIFE WITH FATHER

THE rest are in with mother. They'll tell you about life with father. This girl is in with her mother for three years, and he's in with his people, and she has the child, and they're keeping two homes going on one week's wages. And there's 15 more on mother's floor.

Here, another who is in on mother with her two kids. A third is living the new-style divorce; she out in Drimnagh and himself beyond in Hardwicke Street.

Better your own floor any day. You know how it is with relations. Merry as a marriage bell at the wedding when outlaws become in-laws. But after a dose of in-laws they become outlaws again, for there are few feminine friendships that can survive a share of the same gas stove.

Cooking in the kitchen can become a horrible aftermath to courting in the kitchen. Except they adopt the latest way of popping the question: "How about putting our names down for a Corporation house. Ducky?"

One of yesterday's winners did this two years ago, and didn't get married until last week.

VETERANS

NEWLY-WEDS, according to Corporation standards, can be almost veterans. Anyone living in Dublin for five years and who has been married as far back as January, 1945, is eligible.

Which means there are plenty of young families, walkers, toddlers and fresh babies sporting their white christening shawls.

(A gent of 70, married last year to a lady of 49, was among the applicants.)

A TRAGEDY

THE young wives sat tense while the names came out

of the drum and fate threw pegs which caught on rings in Cork Street, Rathmines and Grafton Street, Bride Street, Old and New, Britain Street, big and little, and Mary's Abbey and married quarters in barracks, and bus conductors, and James's Street, and everywhere else, and Birmingham, too.

A gusty sign swept the room after each name. The young woman beside me kept whispering "O Mother Mary, send me a house"—for this is their tragedy. And not only theirs, but a subject which now should be made a national issue. This is youth, these are the future generations, demanding breathing space.

All they're wanting now is the house, the bother of the rent will come later.

THE BABIES

THE children held their fire at first, but broke into a chorus of wails as the thing went on and the little mothers tried to hush them in their arms and listen to the milk at the same time.

"Mind that child or he'll catch his fingers in the reserved seats and the Lord Mayor will smack him."

When it was over, the disappointed house hunters gathered their weary babies and went back to mother's floor.

When these babies grow up, and in their turn have sat out a few sessions at the drum, they can boast, "Well, I never succeeded in getting a house out of the Corporation, but once I had my nappie changed in the Round Room of the Mansion House." **ANNA KELLY.**

When the people settled in their new houses they discovered that there were other problems within Ballyfermot. Unemployment was a major problem. Many people came from all parts of Ireland to live in Ballyfermot and had no association or feeling of living in Ballyfermot so John and a group set up the Ballyfermot Tenant's Association in a hut on Rossmore Road in 1964-65. Before the Tenant's Association was set up, the voice of the Ballyfermot people was Canon Troy and the local Councillors. The Tenant's Association were made up of men and women who were ordinary working people there were not trained sociologists or planners, they were learning as they went along. After about a year they decided to hold an inaugural meeting in the De La Salle School and invite all the residents, local Garda and clergy. During the meeting there were many speeches made, and John was elected chairman of the new Ballyfermot Tenant's Association. The Ballyfermot Association had been going for about twelve months prior to that meeting but they decided to venture out into the open. During John's address to the meeting he happened to say that 'Ballyfermot was designed as a place for lost souls' but there was a lot more meaning to this sentence before and after he uttered these words.

On the following Monday night John was coming home from work, he got the *Evening Press*, and the headlines read 'Ballyfermot a place for lost souls.' He was misquoted and within day's John was told that priests of the parish and even his Grace the Archbishop of Dublin took exception to what John had said. They decided at the Tenant's Association meeting that they could not take on the power of the Catholic Church or any other church as they had a lot of experience over thousands of years and the members of the Tenant's Association were only little people in a very big forest so they decided to say nothing. But they did discover that Dublin Corporation could not reject any claims or requests from Ballyfermot Tenant's Association providing that it was in writing so that's the way they proceeded. There was a divide between the Ballyfermot clergy and the Ballyfermot Tenant's Association, so much so that the Tenant's Association were not let use any of the parish halls or schools for meetings, or events.

About two years later providence took a hand when John went to a Christmas Mass in Our Lady of the Assumption Church. John or the Tenant's Association had no contact with Canon Troy in all of this time. The Canon came out on the altar to ask the congregation would some of the people give a hand to organise the Communion queues. After a few more minutes the Canon came out again to make the same request

as no one had come forward, so John offered his services. The Canon looked at John and said 'could he stop the people coming through the first aisle'. John got a few of the lads together to help him steward and they got the job done. On Saint Stephen's morning a knock came to John's front door and there was Canon Troy. He thanked John for all his help on Christmas morning and asked him was the Tenant's Association still running the Senior Citizens Parties. He told John if the Tenant's Association required anything, they could have it. John and the Tenant's Association developed a good relationship with the Canon and the priests of the parish from then on and worked hand in hand on many matters in connection with community. John found the Canon easy to work with. However, they had to educate many people around them to let them know that the Tennant's Association had a right to be there. They also developed a good relationship with Dublin Corporation.

Figure 25

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Ballyfermot looks to its future

RB2A-000071E

A PLAN aimed at organising the physical resources of Ballyfermot as part of a community development programme to improve the quality of life in the area has been prepared by the Ballyfermot Community Association Ltd. and presented to the Dublin City Manager.

The programme outlined in the plan is based on a paper: "Outline for a living centre and human development programme in a municipal housing estate" which was prepared some time ago. It emphasises the need for a more integrated approach to community development involving the participation of statutory and voluntary organisations.

At a press conference called by the association in Dublin today Prof. Geoffrey Copcutt, the renowned town planner, who was involved in drawing up the plan said that Ballyfermot was "a community in search of a town and hungry for fulfilment."

NO CENTRE

He said it was a town without a physical town centre, in which there were 5,000 dwellings, a population of over 35,000 people. It had the largest suburban population in Dublin and had a larger population than either Waterford or Galway.

The key to Ballyfermot's problem was that it was an incomplete township. As well as identifying a town centre they had also to define the outer boundaries of the area, so that it did not overflow onto the proposed new cities on that side of Dublin into one enormous amorphous.

In the plan it is proposed that the northern part of the "lawn" adjoining one of the existing major shopping centres be used as the focal point of the town-

ship, and the "lawn" as the town park.

In deciding on boundaries for the town, the canal is accepted as the logical southern boundary; the new north-south road as the western boundary, with a belt of trees to define it effectively; on the north it would follow the line of the proposed new road to the west—a continuation of the dual carriageway which will run between the present Ballyfermot Road and the present Chapelizod-Palmerstown road.

**KOZIBABE
NAPPY CO. LTD.**

"Whaddya mean, what are my views on the contraception controversy?"

CANCER CALLERS BOGUS

The public was warned today not to accept as genuine any door-to-door collectors claiming to be members of the Legion of Mary collecting funds for the National Cancer Relief Fund.

The warning was issued by a spokesman for the Legion of Mary who said: "We do not have our members collect in this manner. Anyone claiming to be collecting money door-to-door as a member of the legion is not speaking the truth. We have not authorised any such collections and they are not being made on our behalf."

Residents in Dublin's north-side have recently been approached by collectors purporting to be members of the Legion of Mary raising money for the National Cancer Relief Fund but the spokesman warned that any such claims were not genuine.

It has not been possible to contact the National Cancer Relief Fund, which has offices at 45 Mary Street, for comment.

The Tenant's Association decided that they needed to know more information on the Ballyfermot area and they decided to bring in Professor Geoffrey Copcutt who was a town planner to advise them. It was to Canon Troy's credit that when they went to City hall to present the plan to the then city manager Mathew Mackey, Canon Troy said that the clergy's work in Ballyfermot had been complete and the Ballyfermot people should be listened to now through the Tenant's Association. At that time, there was a chance to stabilize the building work in Ballyfermot. The Tenant's Association wanted to make Ballyfermot one community. John and the Association felt that they should have private houses integrated with Corporation Houses and then there would be a good balance of society within the area. But instead, Dublin Corporation lumped everybody in together. There were over 4,000 houses built in Ballyfermot in a very confined area. Ballyfermot was long and narrow with the river on one side and a railway on the other. Kylemore Road was not open at this time so it was straight through to Cherry Orchard and into Palmerstown. There was no money available to put Professor Copcutt's plan into action which was to open out Ballyfermot but it did let Dublin Corporation see that the Tenant's Association was organised and because of the media coverage that the Association was getting other organisations were taking notice and the Ballyfermot Tenant's Association was asked to play a bigger role in the community. They also found that the people's pride was changing in Ballyfermot, before they would say where they came from originally, now they were saying that they were from Ballyfermot. 'They were a Ballyfermot person and proud of it'.

As far back as 21 April 1964, Sean Dunne who was one of the T.D.s in Ballyfermot raised a question in the Dail Eireann about a Swimming Pool for the area¹². Ballyfermot Community Association was also very much involved in negotiations with Dublin Corporation on this matter. In the 1970s the Ballyfermot people saw this dream come through with the opening of the Sean Dunne Swimming Pool. It is currently under construction and should be complete in 2007 which will see a complete new Sports and Leisure Centre being opened. The Community Association successfully negotiated with C.I.E. to bring the number 18 Bus service from Sandymount to Ballyfermot in the late 1960s. John said 'Blood sweat and tears were put into Ballyfermot. The people got a mess at the beginning and the people

¹² Website, <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/0209/D.0209.196404210035.html>

themselves helped make and shape Ballyfermot as it is today,' John said in conclusion 'That there is only one people that can lead the Ballyfermot people and that is the Ballyfermot people themselves'. They should be included in all decisions in the future that concern Ballyfermot.

Figure 26



L-R Tommy Phelan, Bob Keogh, John Sweeney and two members of C.I.E

Bob Keogh

Bob and Mary Keogh moved into Ballyfermot in 1959. Bob had heard of Ballyfermot but did not know where it was. Therefore when they received the key of their new house Bob followed behind a 78 bus to on his bike to find their house. Soon after he moved in, he joined along with a group of the residents the Ballyfermot Tenant's Association. The Association had just started up. John Sweeney was the chairperson. Many of people at that time had all sorts of problems mostly concerning money as people had very little. Bob remembers one lady who came to his door at 10.30 in the evening and handed him a letter from Dublin Corporation to say that herself and her family were to be evicted the next day because she was behind in her rent. Bob asked about her husband and she told him that he did not know anything about this, and that she was in debt with moneylenders as well. Bob and John managed to contact one of their contacts in the Corporation that night to ask them to delay the evection notice for a week. The next morning they brought the lady to the

Little Sisters in Sevenoaks. The Sisters managed to sort the problem out by getting the moneylender and the backlog of rent that the lady owed paid off. Bob has nothing but praise for the Little Sisters of the Assumption in Sevenoaks as they sorted many social problems like this out in Ballyfermot. In 1962-63, the Ballyfermot Tenant's Association were also involved in the negotiations with Dublin Corporation, on behalf of the Tenant's to buy out their houses. A good deal was set and many people bought out their houses. The Tenant's Association then changed its name to the Community Association and Bob became the P.R.O.

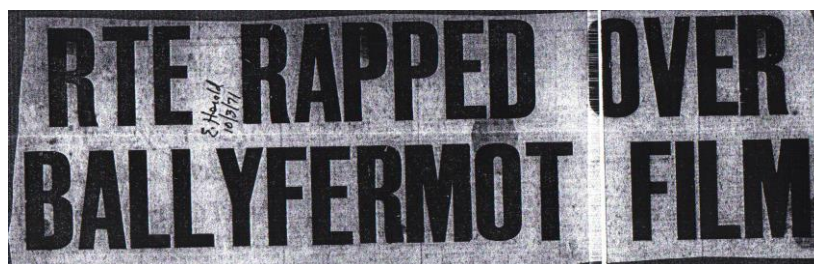
Figure 27



Evening Herald 11 March 1971

From the early days, Ballyfermot was getting bad press, mostly not deserved. Any bad news within a radius of two miles from Ballyfermot was reported as Ballyfermot. One headline stated 'Ballyfermot Man got six months for beating wife' when Bob investigated this report the man lived in Cherry Orchard opposite the hospital where the Industrial Estate is now and he had only lived there for ten days. Suddenly he became a Ballyfermot man. Bob met with the press and they apologised and printed a retraction.

Figure 28



Another case was 'Seven Days,' a weekly program shown on RTE Television in the 1970s. They sent a camera crew out to the Glass Road to film some young lads that were cider drinking. The 'Glass Road' at that time was a nickname as suggested because it was full of dirt and rubbish and covered with broken glass. Some years before it was a field that divided the lanes from Ballyfermot Parade to the Avenue and was dug up by the Corporation and cemented and then left derelict for a number of years. This was shown on T.V all over Ireland. The Community Association protested strongly to RTE on the grounds that it gave the impression that Ballyfermot was a horrible place to live. There were many protest letters written in to the papers and RTE in connection with the program. The papers interviewed Canon Troy and he went on to say

The program was stage-managed and was intended to show the steamy side of life. The vast majority of Ballyfermot people are decent and they were ignored. It was a disgrace and very unfair to the community¹³.

A lady came forward to Ballyfermot Community Association to tell them that the lads were paid to stand around drinking while RTE filmed. RTE denied this and the Community Association were asked to send representatives from the Association to put their case across about Ballyfermot. Bob was one of the people selected. When the lady was asked to go with them she refused, as she was too shy to appear on the national television so they had to make the best case they could. After the show was over, John O Donohue, who was the presenter of the programme, was talking to Bob and he told him that his own community had their problems with drugs to which Bob replied 'why did you not do a program on your community'. John O' Donohue did not reply.

¹³ *The Evening Herald*, 10 March 1981.

Figure 30



Second from left John Sweeney, Bob Keogh, Tommy Phelan, Kathleen Sharkey.

Figure 31



Tommy Phelan holding the first Ballyfermot Lord Mayors chain of office 1981. The chain was specially made by Lee Bros Moore Lane Dublin.

Tommy Phelan

Tommy and Breda Phelan were involved in voluntary work where they lived in the Liberties. When they got their new house from the Corporation back in the 1950s he swore that he was not going to get involved in any voluntary work again and like most of the people in Ballyfermot they had very little just starting off and they wanted to start afresh. That was to change when like John and Bob and many others, Tommy got involved in the Tenant's Association. When people bought out their homes in the middle of the 1960s and the name changed to the Community Association this led him to get involved in the first Dublin Community Games in 1967 and became assistant president. He was later to become chairperson of the Community Association.

In the late 1960s he became a member of the educational committee for the then proposed Senior College. The committee met many obstructions along the way. Some of the obstructions were caused by other schools in the area where they thought that they would lose their second level of education, also where the Senior College would be situated as some of the people wanted it placed with the other schools in the area and the committee felt that it should be separated. As most of the money was coming from Europe, some of the clergy were afraid of what type of students that would be coming into Ballyfermot to be educated. The Senior College opened its doors on the 'Glass Road' in September 1979 and caters for students from all over and has proved most successful down the years.

Figure 32



Fifth and sixth from left Tommy Phelan and Bob Keogh on the committee of the senior College.

Traveller Community

This name is taken to refer to the community of people who are commonly called Travellers and who are identified both by themselves and others as people with a shared history, culture and traditions. As far back as 1952 there were always a Traveller Community in Ballyfermot. Their community started out in Cherry Orchard just across from the hospital where Cherry Orchard Industrial estate is now. They were moved around initially until 1968 specific accommodation was provided at Labre Park in Ballyfermot. When the plans to set up Labre Park were first released objections came from all quarters nobody seemed to want an Itinerant (as the Travellers were known then) camp next or near them. The Ballyfermot Tenant's Association met with Mr Macken who was the city manager at that time to sort out what was then a problem. Mr Macken unfolded the complete plan of Labre Park and what he intended to do in relation to the unsightly roadside camps that were spread out around the area. The Tenant's Association agreed fully with the plans and made many suggestions that were later adopted. The city manager said at that time but for the cooperation of the Tenant's Association Labre Park would have never got off the ground. Labre Park became an example to the rest of the country so much so that the Lord Mayor and Councillors from England and Belfast came to see how both the settled people and the Travelling people became a community. Since then many Traveller families have received accommodation such as standard housing, group housing and halting sites. New plans are in place for a new housing plan for Labre Park to begin in 2006.

Ballyfermot Community Association Television

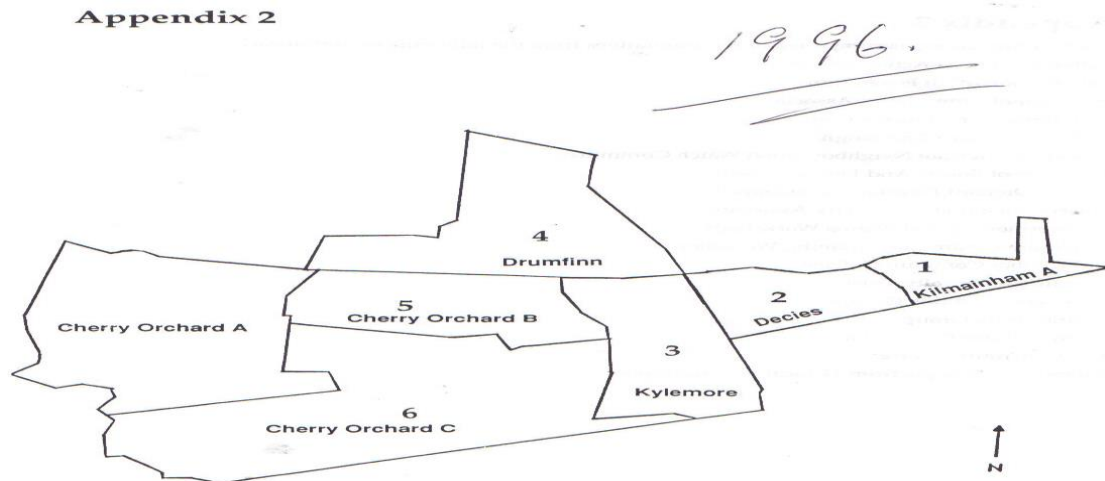
July 1974 saw Ballyfermot lead the way in Ireland after negotiations between Ballyfermot Community Association and Phoenix Relays to provide community television. Initially operated in black and white but due to an investment by Phoenix Relays in an outdoor broadcasting television unit, it was not long before programmes were been produced in colour. Community News, cultural entertainment, documentary and consumer information were televised to every home within the area. Then Phoenix Relays were forced on financial grounds to withdraw their services. A sub committee became even more committed to the idea of community television for Ballyfermot. Negotiations were undertaken with the then Minister for Post and Telegraphs, Mr Conor Cruise O'Brien and after lengthy talks B.C.A. T.V. became licensed to operate on the Phoenix Relays cabled T.V. The only other licence to broadcast then was Radio Telefis Eireann. Having advertised locally for new members this brought a great response. In the summer of 1979, several pilot programmes were produced, directed, and presented completely by new volunteers from Ballyfermot. B.C.A. television went from strength to strength.¹⁴

¹⁴ Ken Larkin. Growing up in Ballyer 50s 60s 70s (Dublin 2004) , p. 24

Population from the Central Statistics Office.

Year	Population	Area Hectares
1936	619	
1951	13,209	
1956	31,892	
1961	37,247	
1971	29,002	
1979	25,525	
1981	27,132	807
2002	26,940	807

Figure 5



Map 1: Electoral Wards in Ballyfermot

1. Sarsfield, Landen, O'Hogan
2. Decies, Thomond, Kylemore
3. Kylemore, Ballyfermot, Colepark
4. Loch Conn, Cloiginn
5. Blackditch, Oranmore
6. Cherry Orchard

Ballyfermot Area Development Plan

In 1996 and 2002 the name Ballyfermot was not mentioned in the censuses reports. This was because they changed the electoral divisions. It is described as follows.

Cherry Orchard A, Carna, Cherry Orchard C, Decies. Drumfinn, Inchicore A, Inchicore B, Kilmainham A, Kylemore.

Chapter 3

Ballyfermot Amenities

Figure 33



The Lord Mayor of Dublin Catherine Byrne Presenting Nicky with Ballyfermot Heritage Person of the year for 2005.

Nicky Brennan grew up in Brunswick Street in the inner city and moved to Landen Road with his mother and sister in 1951. He immediately joined the Legion of Mary in Ballyfermot. Many young people joined the Legion of Mary back in 1960s just for something to do. Nicky was one of the leaders that gave up his free time to take a gang of boys and girls climbing Croagh Patrick, the Sugar Loaf, on hikes to Massy estate and Enniskerry. He even introduced a lot of young people to their first dance as he organised dances for all and he and the other leaders would be the first up on the floor when the slow set came on, not to dance but to make sure that they were not dancing too close to the girls. Ballad sessions and debating were also on his agenda¹⁵. Nicky to this day has continued his voluntary work in Ballyfermot through the Legion of Mary. He has been running the religious shop in Our Lady of the

¹⁵ Ken Larkin, *Growing up in Ballyfermot in the 50s 60s 70s* (Dublin, 2004), pp 26-27

Assumption Church for a number of years and attending parish meetings. Nicky is eighty-three and he still has the same enthusiasm of the young man that he was back in the 1950s. Many of the young people were privileged to know Nicky and indeed many other people down the years owe him a lot not only for the way he took many young people off the streets and gave them something to do but for his entire voluntary work for Ballyfermot. Nicky's voluntary work was recognised in September 2005 by Ballyfermot Heritage association when they presented him with the Ballyfermot Heritage Person of the Year for 2005.

Terry O Neill

Terry who lived on Kylemore Road moved to Ballyfermot in the spring of 1958 from the North Circular Road. The reason he moved to Ballyfermot was that the previous year he was appointed to the position of chief projectionist at St Benildus hall. This hall was at the rear of the De La Salle National School. Every Wednesday afternoon a film would be shown in the hall, this matinee was nicknamed the 'sixpenny rush' as it cost 6d to get in. Terry also tells of a full week of concerts held in the school back in 1960 and how three young lads who called themselves the 'Harmonichords' performed on the stage of the school. The same three lads went on to become world famous having changed their names to the 'Batchelors'.

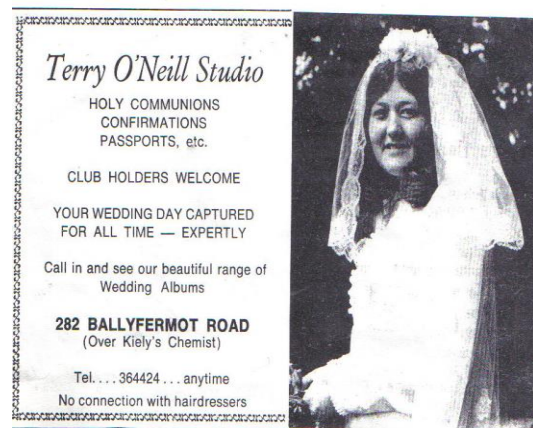
Figure 34



St Benildus hall De La Salle National School

The opening of Radio Telefis Eireann proved to be the final curtain, as it finally succumbed to the financial pressure of dwindling attendances and stopped showing films. Terry went on to be well known in the parish as he became a full time professional photographer in the area taking many of the communion, confirmation, and wedding photographs down the years and also for his great community work in Ballyfermot.¹⁶

Figure 35



Ballyfermot Community news 1969 advertisement for Terry O'Neill studios

Roddy Day School Teacher Mary Queen of Angles School 1969

If it were not for the foresight and determination of a local schoolteacher Mr Roddy Day from Saint Louise School, Ballyfermot would still be without a scout troop so reported the *Ballyfermot Community magazine* in December 1969. He quickly overcame the first obstacle by obtaining the necessary permission and found a meeting place for the proposed Boy Scout troop. On 10 March 1969 in the play centre on Kylemore Avenue, the first twelve recruits were chosen and a long period of training began. On 16 November 1969, the first investitures were held in the convent chapel of Saint Louise. The first scouts of Ballyfermot took their scout promise in the presence of their troop Chaplain Father Randles, the committee and their parents.¹⁷ Roddy loved sport and gave a lot of his free time helping and training the young

¹⁶ Billy French, *The Assumption Parish*. (Dublin, 2003), p. 23.

¹⁷ Ballyfermot Community Association, *Magazine*, (Dublin, December 1969), p. 3.

people of Ballyfermot, not only in the school he was teaching in, but also in the De La Salle National School.

Schools in the Area

Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin in the 1940s, was concerned for the pastoral care of the people in the vast new area of his dioceses and for the pressing need of primary schools, for both boys and girls. The De La Salle Brothers and the Dominican Sisters from the Cabra congregation were invited by him to undertake the education of the children. Both orders accepted the invitation, which was going to be a challenge as there was an immense school-going population, many of whom had never been to school, even though they were seven or eight years of age.

Figure 36



Aerial view of Mount La Salle National School 1952

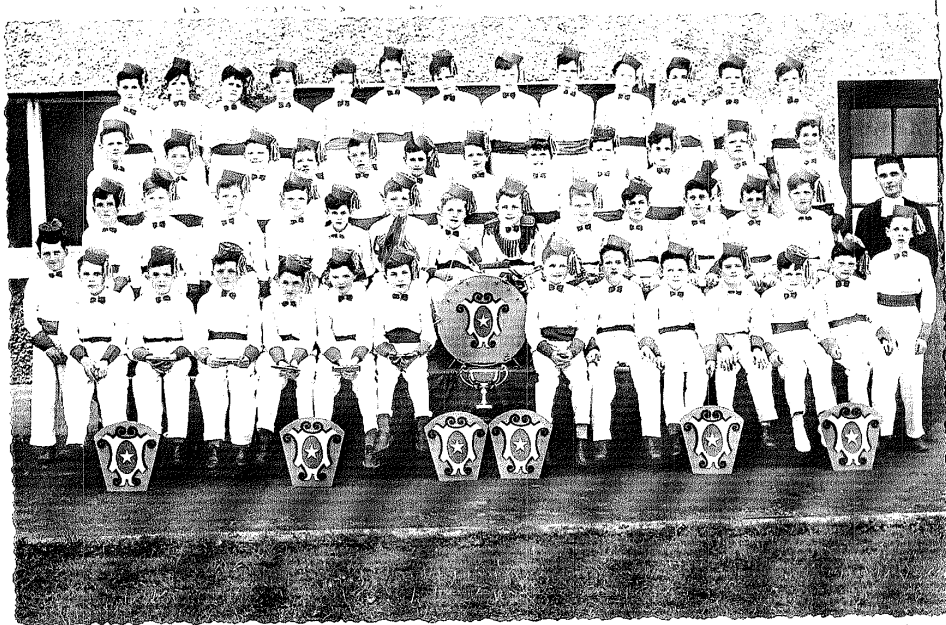
Mount La Salle National School

The Superior General Brother Athanase Emile laid the foundation stone for the De La Salle Brothers Monastery after having been blessed by Archbishop McQuaid on 6 June 1950. Macben of Dun Laoghaire was the contractor for the Monastery. The building of the schools itself began at the same time the Contractor being T.C. Crampton. The builder's providers for both contracts were T.C. Martin. In 1950, the builders stopped work on the sites for two months because of a demarcation dispute between the Unions. The Plumbers Union claimed that the copper roofing was exclusive to their Union. After arbitration, their claim was allowed and the work continued. The schools were divided into three buildings. The first school building, which was named Scoil Iosagain, was opened in 1952. Brother Thomas was the

principal and the other teachers were Brothers Ailbe, Romuald, David, Philbert, Joseph, and James. Brother Andrew managed the small farm.

Figure 37

*BROTHER JAMES & DE LA SALLE BOYS BAND
1958*



Mount La Salle Boys Band 1958 Ballyfermot Library file

The following September Scoil Muire and half of Scoil Seosaim opened. The De La Salle Brothers allowed the Dominican Sisters to have five infant classes in the top storey of Scoil Iosagain as they were waiting for their school to be finished. There were four lay teachers and twenty-three Brothers. The lay teachers were Messrs Keegan, Murphy, O Gallachoir, and O Flatharta. In September 1954, the Dominican Sisters vacated the top storey of Scoil Iosagain, as their schools were now completed. Mount La Salle had 1,600 boys in the school in the 1950/60s and 50 pupils per class. Today there are 546 pupils and twenty-two pupils per class.¹⁸

¹⁸ Brother Donal, Ballyfermot Library. File RB6-0.

Figure 38



The De La Salle Brothers and Teachers 1960s.

Figure 39



Mount La Salle School. Scoil Iosagain, Scoil Muire, Scoil Seosaim. Schoolyard where 1,600 boys played in 1950-60s.

Dominican Convent School

Mother Reginald Lyons, the Dominican Prioress General who answered Dr McQuaid's request agreed to provide the Sisters to teach in the girl's school. The Dominican Sisters asked the De La Salle Brothers for a loan of some rooms in Scoil Iosagain. The top corridor of schoolrooms were given over to the Sisters. On 8 March 1953, six Dominicans Sisters arrived in Ballyfermot and enrolled over 300 junior girls as their first pupils. As the demand for places in the school were so great, rules were made that any parent applying for a place had to guarantee that their children were at least over six years of age, and had not received their first Holy Communion and had not attended any other school.

Figure 40

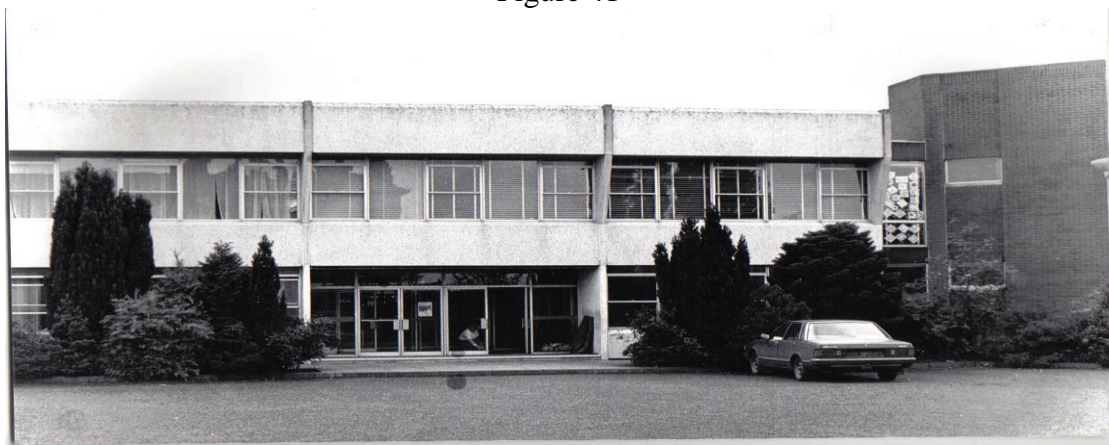


Photo of the Dominican School 1954

Mother Ignatius Gorman was the first principal of the school, there were five Sisters teaching, and they had sixty pupils per class. It was claimed that Ballyfermot girl's school was the largest in Europe. There were more than 4,000 pupils attending when it was at its peak towards the end of the 1950s. The first year was spent in the De La Salle School while the three blocks of the Dominican Convent School were being built. The Sisters travelled from Cabra each day and from 1954 onwards, as the number of the teaching Sisters increased, some travelled from the convent in Eccles Street. The first lay teachers were engaged when their new school opened in 1954. The Dominican Sisters of the 1950-60s were an enclosed order so they did not go outside the convent grounds, except for a very important reason and then they only travelled by car.

This meant that they could not go to the parish church with the children for the first Holy Communion or Confirmation. The lay teachers brought the classes to the monthly confession, Holy Communion, and Confirmations. When the school was at its peak in numbers there were usually about 600 First Communicants each year. This included boys and girls.¹⁹ Today there are three schools and one secondary school in the Dominican complex St Raphael's has sixteen teachers and 245 students, St Michaels has twenty three teachers and 280 students, and St Gabriel's twenty three teachers and 170 students.

Figure 41



St Dominic's - Dominican Convent Secondary School

The Dominican girls Secondary School opened its doors in September 1957. Fees of about £12 to £14 per annum were charged for the secondary school education as this was before the 'free scheme'. Not everyone could continue with the secondary education because some parents could not afford the fees. Therefore, when the 'free scheme' came in 1968, all welcomed it as this gave more girls a chance to further their education. Clubs were opened at night within the school for girls who had to go to work when they left the primary school. One of the innovative ideas which became a reality were the mother's meeting of the pre-first Communion children. In today's world of 'Board of Management' and parent's involvement in school events mothers meeting may seem very simplistic. Nevertheless, the Sisters persevered and it eventually blossomed into parents meetings.

¹⁹ Sister Marie Kealy, O. P. (Sister Cynthia), Ballyfermot Library, File RB6-01.

Figure 42



Johnston House

Johnstown House was not always as big as it is today. The original school started in the house, which is now the Brother's Monastery. The house itself has a very interesting history and even its external appearance is impressive. The house is believed to have been built in 1745 as this date was found inscribed on a wall in the basement of the house. One of the early owners was Lord Spring. The O' Toole brothers who were farmers at the turn of the century purchased the house and its surrounding lands. They used the lands to maintain their dairy herd. The brothers themselves never lived in the house but they rented it out to suitable tenants. One of these tenants was Sir Richard Levinge, who was a Director of Guinness's Brewery. At that time Johnston House was covered by trees and shrubs and could not be seen from the road as a long avenue ran from the house straight up as far as the Silver Granite in Palmerstown which was the entrance to the house. The avenue was later dug up in the late 1940s to make room for a housing programme in the area but the outline with its railing's could be still seen, in 1967 and can be still seen today. During the 1940s, the house became unoccupied and rundown.

Wild bushes, shrubs dotted the landscape, the locals knew it as a spooky place, and many stories were told about ghosts that roamed the grounds. Rumours were also rife at that time about a headless horseman, which was said to appear sometimes at the entrance gate and ride up to the old avenue and down as far as the school wall and disappear. Many of the scenes in the film 'Return to 'Glennascaul' starring Orson Welles, were filmed in the hallway of Johnstown House- notably the Ghost scene in the film.

In 1955, the De La Salle Brothers decided to open a secondary school in Johnstown House. During the work of converting the building into classrooms, the workmen heard strange noises. They were alarmed to the extent that they threatened to stop work unless the foreman took action. The Brothers gave permission to wall off a part of the basement where the noises were coming from. When this was completed, the noises stopped and the work continued as normal²⁰

Figure 43



Saint John's College

Seventy-five pupils enrolled in the college in 1955, and at this stage the teaching staffs were working out of Johnston House. The new college building was completed in 1957.

²⁰ Ballyfermot Library, File rb6-014.

In 1969, a new stone built wing was added to the original building. In 1972 there were four hundred students attending the college. Today there are forty lay teachers, two De La Salle Brothers and 520 pupils.

Figure 44



Canon Troy and Father Daly Blessing the site of St Louise's

On 8th October 1958, Sister Colmcille and Sister Maria Walsh from the order of The Daughters of Charity of the Saint Vincent De Paul came from Holy Angels Glenmaroon in Chapelizod to open the playground centre school at Kylemore Avenue Ballyfermot. The Sisters were given a list of 200 boys aged 6 years old plus. The existing schools were full to capacity and it was decided to open a temporary school. The Educational Department granted a special concession of dual days. The school commenced at 9am and finished at 12 mid-day for the first 100 pupils. The second day commenced at 12 mid-day and ended at 3pm. The school were christened 'the kindergarten school' and the playground was then open to the public. In July 1959, the first girls were admitted with a view to moving in to the new school on Drumfinn Road where it is today. On 1st October 1959 the Sisters started with four classes in Johnston House.

Figure 45



St Louise's School 1970s Ballyfermot Library file No RB6-006.

On 12th September 1960, they then moved to Drumfinn Road and occupied the first six classrooms. The dual day continued with six classes, 50 pupils per class from 12.15pm to 3.15pm. There were then eight lay teachers and five Sisters on the staff. On 7th Jan 1961, the junior school was completed (twelve class rooms in all). In July 1961 the first pupils from the junior school were transferred to the senior school. During all this time the Sisters had to travel from Dublin City and some from Glenmaroon in Chapelizod. On 22 August 1961, nine Sisters came to stay in Ballyfermot.

Figure 46



St. Louise's Primary School (Infants), Drumfinn Road.



Teaching staff of St. Louise's Primary School (Infants), Drumfinn Road conducted by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. Sitting (left to right): Sr. Mary, Miss Patricia Keane, Mrs. Catherine Quinn, Miss Catherine Graham, Miss Mary Durkin. Standing (left to right): Mrs. Catherine Downey, Miss Paula Robinson, Miss Siobhan Curtin, Sr. Miriam (Principal), Miss Etain N. Chingamhna, Miss Mairead McKeon.

Some of the Teachers from St Louise's Ballyfermot Library

Figure 47



Right – left Sister Colmcille, Father Daly, Canon Troy, and Sister Marie Walsh with the first communion children and teachers.

Kylemore College

The second level school first opened its doors in 1965 as a Vocational school. The original name was Scoil Lorcan. The name later changed to the Connolly Block and the newly opened second block was called the Emmet Block. The first principal of the school was Mr Anton Trant and Mr Short was the vice-principal. The school was renowned for its sporting achievements. On 3 September 1969, the school won the schools cross country championship and won many sporting championships after that. Their showcases were always stocked with sports trophies.

Figure 48



Caritas College 1967

Caritas College opened its doors to students in 1967. The word Caritas was chosen by the first school principle, Sister Catherine, and it is a Latin word, which means ‘love’. The school began in a small way with prefabricated buildings in the grounds of St Louise’s. There were eight teachers and forty students. After two years the green terrapin building was erected and lasted twenty-five years. The Sisters at their own expense put up a gym hall. With considerable help from the parents two brick buildings were added, one consisting of a science laboratory, all-purpose area and art room as well as six other classes. These are now part of the present modern school, which were built in 1994-95 and was opened in 1996. Another great change was when the senior college opened on the Glass Road. Caritas College became a junior school and only educated girls as far as Intermediate Certificate (as it was known then.) In 1989, the Leaving Certificate was restored to Caritas College. The Sisters appreciated the help and support down the years from the parents for all the school activities.

Figure 49



Photo by Ken Larkin, Caritas College 2005

Figure 50



1st LEAVING CERT STUDENTS FROM
CARITAS COLLEGE INCLUDED IN THE
PHOTO IS PHILIP DONEY (R.I.P.)
WHO WAS A TEACHER IN THE EARLY
DAYS OF THE COLLEGE.



The Celtic Tiger has done much to try to lure the students away from the school and into the job market. However, the Ballyfermot people have always put a high value on their children's education.²¹

²¹ Sister Catherine, Ballyfermot Library, File number RB6-013.

Figure 51



● GREEN FINGERS — President Robinson planting a beech tree to commemorate her visit to Caritas College in Ballyfermot for the 25th anniversary of the college yesterday. Picture: RONAN QUINLAN

President Robinson planting a beech tree to commemorate her visit to Caritas College for the twenty fifth anniversary of the College.

Mary Queen of Angels School.

The boy's national school Mary Queen of Angels began in Johnston House where the De La Salle Brothers made three rooms available. Three teachers took the first group of children in the morning and another three teachers took a second group in the afternoon. By April 1962, six rooms were ready for occupation. In July 1962, there were twelve teachers and Mr P.J. O Doherty was the principal. By July 1963 the second school, which were for the juniors, were opened and Mr Keegan was the principal. The numbers of boys increased both in the junior and senior school and peaked at 1,299 pupils. Today there are 27 teachers and 320 pupils in the senior and junior school.

Figure 52



Teaching staff of Mary Queen of Angels Primary School for Boys (2). Seated (left to right): Michael Lyne, Bertha McNamara, Paul Burton, Michael Sheehan (Principal), Mary Burke, Richard Walsh. Standing (left to right): Maurice O'Brien, Laurence O'Sullivan, Liam (Roddy) Day, Terence O'Rourke, Donal Moriarty. (Absent): Michael Shanley.



Teaching staff of Mary Queen of Angels Primary School for Boys (1). Seated (left to right): Declan Cullinane, Anna O'Leary, Matt Twomey, Mark Keegan (Principal), Mrs. Pauline Sheehan, Dan Kennelly. Standing (left to right): Sean Segan, Frank O'Carroll, Diarmuid O'Donovan, Mick Reynolds, Dan O'Flaherty, Sam O'Connor.

Some of the Mary Queen of Angels Teachers from the beginning

Markievicz Park

Markievicz Park has played a great role in Ballyfermot down the years. The painter's hut acted as the first Catholic Church on O' Hogan, just inside the park until Our Lady of the Assumption Church opened its doors on 15 March 1953. It also served as a food house, nicked-named locally as the Stew House, where The Daughters of Charity of St Vincent De Paul served meals to the poor and needy of the area. A new food centre was later built on the Glass Road in 1963. Our Lady of Victories youth club also started out there. Surrounded by Ballyfermot Road on one side and Decies Road on the other the total size of the Park is 5 hectares. The Park is called after Countess Markievicz who was the first female Government Minister and was prominent in the war of Independence. Back in the early 1960s Canon Troy P.P planted the first trees. He had a great love for Gaelic games and with his intervention to Dublin Corporation this led to the development of the Park. At that time it only catered for GAA sports, as the Canon would not allow soccer to be played. As the years progressed soccer posts were erected and the soccer leagues and seven a sides were played there. Some of the local soccer teams that played in Markievicz Park were Bromley, Lally, and Black Diamonds. A playground, and all-weather, sport pitch was built on in the late 1990. There is a plan to carry out improvement work in the park in 2006, which entails a new playground, all weather pitch, and upgrading pavilions, boundaries, and planting. Also new gates will be erected on Ballyfermot Road entrance to the park so that Markievicz Park can remain not only in our heritage but also for the Ballyfermot people to continue enjoying for years to come as they have done so in the past.

Le Fanu Park "The Lawns" - Graveyard

Le Fanu Road, Blackditch Road, and Clifton Road surround the Lawns Park. It covers an area of 16.75 hectares. The park was called after the writer Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu who was born on 28 August 1814 in Dominick Street. His father was a Church of Ireland curate and was Chaplain to the Royal Hibernian Military School in the Phoenix Park. Joseph spent some of his childhood walking and playing around Chapelizod and in the fields on which Ballyfermot is now built. He has written about some of the locations in the Ballyfermot and Chapelizod areas in his works. The Park was developed in the late 1950s. It has eight soccer pitches, tennis courts, and changing room facilities. The old graveyard was situated on one section of the Lawns

just across the road from where the Cloverhill Houses are now. Some children in the 1960s used to go to play Cowboys and Indians in the graveyard and to have street war's with other gangs, as all the streets had a gang then. The headstones were broken and unreadable at that time.

Billy French author and poet who lived in Crumlin at that time recalls this graveyard as when he was a young man working with Crampton the builders in 1952. They were starting to build the houses on Le Fanu Road. He walked across the road to see this graveyard.

When Billy went home in the evening and told his father about what he saw, his father told the following story. His father was a boy at the turn of the twentieth century in the heart of the Liberties. There was terrible poverty and the child mortality was the highest in Europe. As there were no insurance then when a child died, the men would have to make coffins out of fruit boxes from the markets. In 1913 there was not a shilling to be earned and there was no social welfare like children's allowance or other benefits. Some of the children that died were buried at night illegally. His father remembered walking behind the horse and cart along with other men as they set out for a place called Ballyfermot to bury those little infants in the darkness of the night. Many years later Billy was telling the story to a De La Salle Brother who was a local historian and the Brother found the story very interesting. The old graveyard ran alongside the Killeen Road and the word Killeen was an old Irish name for 'burial place for children' and the Brother said to Billy that all over Ireland there were 'Killeen Roads'.²²

Ballyfermot Credit Union

The credit union movement was established in Ireland in 1958. In 1963, Joe Ryan from Landen Road, who later became the first president of the Ballyfermot Credit Union, along with a small group of parishioners from the community came together to discuss and to gather information on credit unions and so began the Ballyfermot Credit Union. The De La Salle Brothers who took an active roll in the Ballyfermot community came to their help and offered them the pavilion at the side of St Benildus hall on Saturday and Monday nights. Early growth was slow because the

²² Billy French, *The Assumption Parish*, (Dublin, 2003) , p. 36.

idea was new to the people. By March 1963 the shares were £0 7s. 6d. interest spread and membership increased so that by the end of 1963 they had enrolled 369 members.

Figure 53



The pavilion where Ballyfermot Credit Union started in March 1963.

Gradually In 1967 it became apparent that if a proper service has to be given and more members taken on, that they would require improved accommodation. So, they moved into rented rooms at 294 Ballyfermot Road. Their weekly rent was £15 per week.

Figure 55

SAVE MONEY IN TIME
WITH
**BALLYFERMOT
CREDIT UNION
LIMITED**
294 BALLYFERMOT ROAD

PAVE THE WAY
WITH YOUR NEIGHBOURS TO-DAY
AND SAVE A BIT
FOR A RAINY DAY

Shares	£170	Mar 1963
Loans	£5430	Dec 1963
Loans	£18817	1964
Loans	£47191	1965
Loans	£60043	1966
Loans	£154588	1967
Loans	£180310	1968
Total Loans	£452088	

Advertisement to get more members 1969

Shares and loans 1963/68

The Credit Union membership grew dramatically and by early 1976 they had a space problem again. Number 280 Ballyfermot Road came up for sale. Three people from the credit union went to the auction and came back with the good news that they had purchased the premises.

Figure 54



Photo by Ken Larkin Ballyfermot Credit Union 2005

The growth continued and full time staffs were employed during the day as well as two evenings a week and all day on a Saturday. The credit union has helped many of the Ballyfermot people solve major problems from the beginning by curtailing the moneylenders, as well as helping the people to buy out their houses from the Corporation and at the same time helping them to save their money.

Hugh Harris is the longest serving volunteer as he has being on committees within the credit union since 1963. He was chairman of the credit union from 2003/05 and has seen major changes down the years. Hugh was nominated by the Ballyfermot Heritage Group as the Ballyfermot Heritage Person of the year for 2006/07 for all his voluntary work with Ballyfermot Credit Union.

In 2005 major refurbishment were carried out to the premises with a new entrance to the building and an ATM machine, which makes them the first credit union to introduce this service to Dublin city. With total membership of 13,097 and members shares at €23,955,558 it is a credit not only to the few pioneers from Ballyfermot that started the credit union but also to all the voluntary workers and staff down the years.

Some notes taken from the Ballyfermot Community Association Magazine, 1968-69 written by Joseph Carroll who was then the President of Ballyfermot Credit Union, and Mr Bert Langan.

Written by Tommy Phelan Author and Poet



BALLYFERMOT CREDIT UNION

BALLYFERMOT CREDIT UNION
WHERE MY MAMMY USED TO GO.
AS FAR AS I REMEMBER
T'WAS FIVE AND TWENTY YEARS AGO.
EVERY MONDAY MORNING
SHE PAID THE MONEY IN,
ON THE LITTLE SHE HAD BORROWED
ON THE SAVINGS SHE HAD IN.

I USED TO STAND BESIDE HER
AS SHE HELD ME BY THE HAND
WITH THE BOOKS FOR ALL THE FAMILY
IN A STRONG ELASTIC BAND.
SHE'D TALK WITH OTHER WOMEN
'BOUT THE WEATHER AND THE DAY,
AND THEN THEY'D LAUGH TOGETHER
BEFORE THEY WENT THEIR WAY.

I REMEMBER MY FIRST COMMUNION
I HAD A LOVELY SUIT . . .
AND FOR MY CONFIRMATION
I WAS REALLY DICKIED OUT.
MY MOTHER USED TO TELL US
HOW IN DAYS LONG GONE BY,
HER PARENTS HAD TO BORROW
WITH INTEREST VERY HIGH.

NOW, WITH MY OWN SON BESIDE ME
ON THE CREDIT UNION FLOOR,
IN THE BRAND NEW MODERN BUILDING
ON THE BALLYFERMOT ROAD;
I THINK ABOUT THE DE LA SALLE
AND HOW WE HAD TO QUEUE,
IN THE OLD BUILDING DOWN THE ROAD,
WHERE THE CREDIT UNION GREW.

OUR THANKS TO EVERY PERSON,
ALIVE OR GONE TO REST,
WHO MADE OUR CREDIT UNION
THE VERY, VERY BEST
LET'S LOOK UPON TOMORROW
AS IF IT WAS TODAY,
AND LEAVE OUR PEACE UPON IT,
FOR THOSE WHO PASS THIS WAY.

BY TOMMY PHELAN

Ballyfermot Today

In 1972 a second parish was established in Ballyfermot named St Matthews and on the 22 December 1974 St Matthews Church was officially opened with seating to accommodate 912 people. Then 1985 the first community library in Ireland opened in Ballyfermot, encompassing both the adult and the children library under the one roof and providing an information centre and exhibition rooms.

Figure 56

conservation + environment ——— Smog Air Pollution

Air improvement less dramatic than expected


A DISCERNIBLE improvement in Dublin's air quality this winter is revealed in the smog readings taken by the corporation's environmental health officers at four monitoring stations in the city — two on the northside and two on the southside. But the results are somewhat less dramatic than might have been expected, following the Government's ban on the sale of bituminous coal.

From a comparison of the figures for the last five days of October and the first five days of this month, as against the same period of 1989, it is clear that the most marked change for the better has taken place in Ballyfermot. This is undoubtedly related to the fact that much of the area had been declared a smoke-control zone before the coal ban was imposed.

By contrast, the figures show that the situation seems to have disimproved, slightly in Rathmines, with higher smog readings for four days this year than for the same period in 1989. Average temperatures for the 10 days covered by the readings were higher last year, at 12 degrees Celsius (maximum) and 6.5 degrees Celsius (minimum), compared to 10.5 and 3.8 this year.

The worst outbreak of smog in Dublin last winter occurred during the last week of November, when the EC limits were breached repeatedly at most of the corporation's monitoring stations, coinciding with a severe cold spell and an air inversion which trapped smoke near ground level. It was the subsequent outcry which prompted the Government to act.

Ms Mary Harney, the Minister of State for Environmental Protection, who is generally credited with the idea of banning coal in Dublin, said she was pleased the changeover to smokeless fuels was going reasonably well. "In general, the smog readings are



Environment Correspondent Frank McDonald launches "Smogwatch", which will monitor the effectiveness of the Government's ban on the sale of bituminous coal. The figures will appear in the weather column.

certainly way down on last year's levels, though it will take a bit longer for a clear pattern to emerge," she added.

"Coal won't be totally out of the system for the next six weeks or so. In some cases, people bought in supplies before the ban became effective on September 1st. In others, they would be using up stocks of coal from last winter. And, of course, there are bound to be some who have bought coal outside Dublin to evade the ban in the city."

Ms Harney conceded that banning coal in the Dublin area was a cheaper solution by far than continuing with the former policy of declaring smoke-control areas in various parts of the city. "That would have cost anything up to £150 million, in giving out grants to enable householders to convert to smokeless fuels, and it would have taken 20 years."

Under the terms of the EC air pollution directive, the Government has until April, 1993 to

ensure that Dublin meets its air quality standards. "I didn't believe that we should have waited until then to do something about the smog problem," the Minister declared. "Banning coal was a recognition that this was a serious situation which had to be dealt with."

Ideally, Ms Harney said she would like to see Dublin becoming "virtually a natural gas city" because this would guarantee the elimination of smog. She welcomed the fact that An Bord Gais was now carrying out up to 500 gas conversions per week and said she was pressing her colleague, the Minister for Energy, Mr Molloy, to extend the city's gas grid.

In the meantime, she believed that people were not finding smokeless solid fuel as expensive as they had feared, though there was a degree of consumer confusion about the plethora of products on the market. However, she paid tribute to CDL — Dublin's principal coal distributor — for their co-operation in implementing the ban.

At present, the ban applies to the importation, distribution and sale of coal in the Dublin area — though not the burning of coal. A spokesman for CDL said it was implementing the Government's decision fully. This year, he said, smokeless fuel makes up "100 per cent of our market in Dublin." CDL has carried out an intensive campaign to "educate and reassure" its customers.

The spokesman agreed that consumers were somewhat bewildered by the sheer range of smokeless fuels on the market, but he felt confident that they would eventually settle on a product best suited to their individual needs. Bord na Mona, whose sales in Dublin are up 50 per cent on last year, has also introduced a new range of fuels.

Editorial comment: opposite page.

06/11/1990

DUBLIN CITY SMOG FIGURES

	Oct 27	Oct 28	Oct 29	Oct 30	Oct 31	Nov 1	Nov 2	Nov 3	Nov 4	Nov 5
Ballyfermot	19 (62)	13 (82)	7 (46)	9 (42)	40 —	18 (31)	21 (34)	21 (51)	21 (86)	39 (105)
Cabra	22 (53)	8 (34)	8 (71)	7 (93)	14 (93)	18 (60)	14 (44)	27 (53)	34 (34)	53 (53)
Mountjoy Sq	16 (34)	8 (20)	13 (36)	14 (25)	34 (48)	25 (25)	25 (25)	29 (29)	29 (27)	22 (29)
Rathmines	22 (38)	12 (24)	12 (24)	14 (29)	14 (40)	38 (29)	27 (19)	51 (29)	25 (26)	64 (42)

* Figures supplied by Dublin Corporation for 1990 (and 1989 in brackets) are in microgrammes of smoke per cubic metre of air. The EC daily limit is 250.

RB2D - 131190

Ballyfermot Library. File No RB2D-131190

1989 The news that Ballyfermot was going to be a smog free area.

Beautiful Ballyfermot

□ From Centre Pages

Purcell agrees. "It would make such a difference if everybody did their bit — especially the shops, some of which are a disgrace."

And it's true. Walking between the large roundabouts that dissect the shopping area there is a swathe of litter blowing down the street.

At a cost of £15,000 the Corporation has landscaped both roundabouts — Partnership members single out Mick Fitzgerald of the Parks Dept. for special praise — and Eileen Waters maintains improvements are tangible.

"The two things we want to concentrate on here are litter and graffiti. These are major problems here but with the Corporation we have a five-year plan to bring about a general uplift," she says.

"When you see the litter like this people say what's the point? We're brought up with that attitude. Nobody cares about it. I think a clean-up would be a psychological boost to people."

In addition to the clean-up the plan will involve a general facelift around the town area — Joe Aprile, owner of the Roma take-away, is organizing the shopfront improvement scheme.

Some 47 businesses were represented at a meeting in the local library a few months ago and even though they'll have to fund the scheme themselves, all were very supportive of the idea. Leading the way in refurbishment is Tim Younge's pub, formerly The Lawns, which has been completely renovated with care and style.

Also in place is a Businesswatch scheme to improve security for traders. Already underway is restoration of the Grand Canal which runs



□ Members of the Ballyfermot Partnership celebrate

through Ballyfermot, a pitch and putt course will open in November and efforts are being made to attract investment to create employment. Three months ago Iceland frozen foods opened an outlet off Le Fanu Road, hiring over 30 local people.

"There is a new optimism," suggests Partnership manager Liz O'Brien. "We've always had negative press coverage, particularly since the riots at Halloween. The perception from outside has been one-sided and there's very little positive publicity. Winning the award last week was a major boost for morale and people's perception of Ballyfermot. That's exactly what we're trying to change."

"It's important to realise that Ballyfermot is the most deprived of the Partnership areas. Developments like this create a feelgood situation and if people feel positive they will try things and progress."

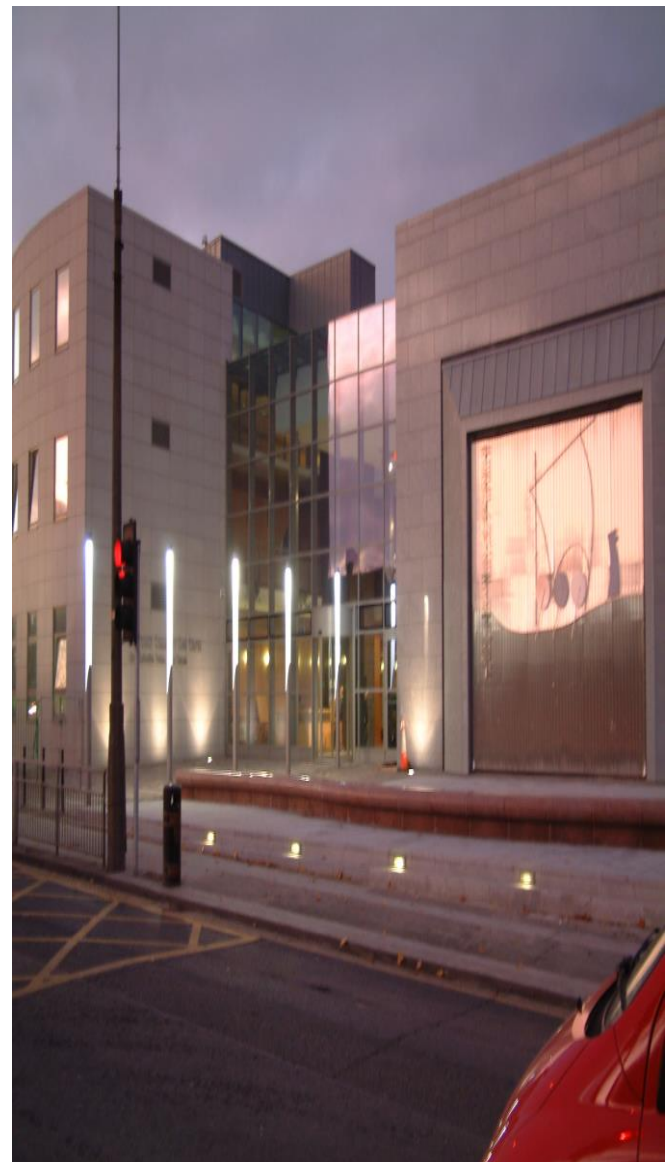
The Partnership operates on an annual budget of £590,000. With one year gone it has three years to run before its performance is re-assessed. For Eileen Waters the partnership model is a key to its success.

"The community has to be involved and to feel involved. It won't work without that and people won't take responsibility. But since the Partnership was formed the local authorities have worked much closer with us. It does seem to be a good model."

"When we put into the Tidy Towns this year it was the first time we entered it," says Waters. "You didn't expect Ballyfermot to get a mention but after doing so well maybe we can get more people involved now."

"It's definitely a start — next year we hope to be neck-and-neck with Malahide!"

Figure 58



The old Community centre, which made way for the Ballyfermot Civic Centre in 2001.

Figure 59



October 2004 Ballyfermot wins the second best place to live in the world.

The LivCom Awards were launched in 1997 and are endorsed by the United Nations Environment Programme. LivCom is the world's only awards competition focusing on best practice regarding the management of the local environment. The objective of LivCom is to improve the quality of life of individual citizens through the creation of 'liveable communities'. LivCom is non-political, embracing all nations and cultures, and over 50 countries are represented within the awards.

Figure 60



Ballyfermot finishes second place in the World to live.

In October 2004 ten people from Ballyfermot travelled to Canada to represent their community at the four-day event. This culminated in the announcement of the decisions from an international panel of world-renowned judges that Ballyfermot, won the silver medal, which meant that Ballyfermot, was judged the second best town in the world to live. The judgement involved five categories Use of Environmentally Sensitive Practices, Community Involvement, Heritage Management, Enhancement of the Landscape, and Planning for the Future.

Cherry Orchard

Cherry Orchard in the early days of the Ballyfermot housing scheme was known only for the fever hospital, but today it has become a very vibrant community. In 1985 saw the opening of the Most Holy Sacrament Church although the church was part of the Assumption parish it catered for Cherry Orchard and Cloverhill estates. With the opening of St Ultan's Primary school by An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern on the 1 September 2006 and the new Report on the Community Consultation and work plan 2006 – 2009 by the Cherry Orchard Regeneration Forum Cherry Orchard can only go from strength to strength as a community.

Urban Ballyfermot 2001/06

Urban Ballyfermot Ltd is a non-profit company funded by the EU and the Irish Government based in Ballyfermot, with a budget of €11.4 million to spend up to 2006. Representatives from the community, local groups and relevant government departments are on Urban Ballyfermot's Board of Directors and its committees, acting in an advisory capacity to urban management since it began. In 2001 Ballyfermot secured the only EU Urban programme in Ireland. The funding plans that were approved by the EU were developed through extensive consultation throughout the community. Based on this plan, Urban Ballyfermot has been able to commit funding to community projects between 2001 and 2006. The money is being spent in the community for the community of Ballyfermot on youth and family, building and environment, and groups and organisations working together. The projects that Urban is now running and supporting are innovative and self sustainable. This urban initiative has brought Ballyfermot a step further. The people always had a great community spirit down the years and they now have finance to help them along with their different projects and community work so that the future looks good for all in Ballyfermot.

MEMORIES OF BALLYFERMOT

It was summer time in '54 well that's what I was told
I don't remember very much I was only six weeks old
We moved into our new house, with
rooms three up and two down
It was Spiddal Park, number two
four miles from Dublin town

The first few years passed very quick and
I was nearly four
Our neighbours came from Cabra
and Keogh Square in Inchicore
New shops were built on Claddagh Green a total of 8
Ruane's the sweet shop the Veggie and
Mario's who always opened late

I remember the penny snow cake
and the two penny chalk racing car
The yellow chicks from the ragman
for some old clothes and a jar
I remember the dolly mixtures and
the penny lucky lumps
The half penny cleeves and
nancy balls were sure to come up trumps

A penny's worth of broken rock
or a bag of hot fish crumbs
No matter what we got or had,
we shared it with our chums
Those were the days when I was young,
I'll remember them forever
But its sad today when I look back,
we've all changed like the weather

I remember going to school and paying for the drill
A penny for the black babies, I often wonder still
I remember Father Daly and dear old Canon Troy
They would put the fear of god in
you when I was just a boy

I remember Ballyfermot when I was just 13
And joining Mary's youth club
across the on Claddagh Green
I remember all the fun we had and
all the games we'd play
Fair play to Mary's youth club, its
still going strong today

I remember playing marbles and
all the gullies in the shore
And this is the house that Jack built,
you don't see that anymore
For those of you who do not know,
its proper name was Jackers
And when we'd finish playing that game,
we'd end up out the backers

And backers was our favourite spot,
we'd play there all day long
But today you see its all built up
and all our fields are gone
If the kids today would learn to play
like us in days gone by
They would be proud to walk our
streets and hold their heads up high

I remember Ballyfermot and all
the games we used to play
Kick the can, spin the bottle,
knock on doors and run away.
There were no such things as
skateboards when I was very small
We'd play hide and seek and blind man's buff
and over the garden wall

I remember the wooden bridge where we'd
sit and watch the trains
And the fields were full of flowers and
girls making daisy chains
And the boys would always be in the swamps
and they'd be catching frogs
And the bigger lads were with
their dads and they'd be catching logs

I remember Ballyfermot and the stories we were told
Of banshees and headless horsemen
in bygone days of old

I remember Lynch's Lane and Chapelizod down below
And the pick-a-rooney special
to the tip head we would go
We didn't have much money then
we all had empty pockets
But we got by, I'll tell you why,
we all had Frawley's docketts

I remember Ballyfermot and me in my late teens
I could get a sub in Tim Young's
pub and a pint from Billy Dean's

I remember Ballyfermot and Moycullen's old tin hall,
It was over at the terminus beside the backers wall
And Spiddal Park was just a field all
covered with green grass
But today you see, believe you me, that too has come to
pass

I remember Ballyfermot and the California Hills
We'd go there every Sunday for all our spills and thrills
I remember Ballyfermot and I remember Parker's farm
And I remember poor Ned Marlowe sure he did no one
any harm

And Downey's pub and the holy hour
you'd be locked up safe inside
And Bannan's on the seventh lock,
well that was bonafide
And Nalty's with her swinging
doors there were two on them I think,
I hear Ned went in one day on his horse to have drink

I remember the stew houses where the
nuns they gave out the dinner
The bigger the pot, the more you got,
you were sure t be on a winner
I remember Dirty Aggies and the stuff she used to sell,
Loose cigarettes and gur cake, I remember it so well

I remember John Stonehouse
and the church in Markiewicz Park
I remember the pumps on
Blackditch Drive and the road it was so dark

We played conkers in the Autumn
and dressed up on Halloween
And on Christmas eve at half
past eight no Children could be seen
For we were all put up to bed and
we'd think about our treats
And on Christmas mom' when
we'd wake up, our socks were filled with sweets.

I remember Ballyfermot and the days that passed us by
Do you remember Noely on the buses, ah,
he sure was one nice guy

And big Harry in the Gala, he'd stand right out at the door
And Larry the waste man with his horse and cart, you
don't see him no more.
Where I live now I used to play and it really was a thrill

But my friends have gone, new houses
there and they call it Cloverhill
I remember Ballyfermot and the way it used to be
We had Cherry Orchard's apples and
blackberries and they would all be free

Its not so long when I look back when I was very small
I remember walking through the
fields and the trees were very tall
I recall another member of the graveyard in the lawn
We'd oft sit there and reminisce but know that too is gone

I remember Ballyfermot and our hall the B.C.A.
President Childers and his
good wife came out to visit us one day
I remember all the songs sang and all the nursery rhymes
I do remember Bally'er in the rare old times

I remember when the gas man
called and we'd all run and hide
For fear he'd find what we all knew,
there was nothing there inside
It was only a savings box you see,
for saving up some cash
And when he'd gone we'd creep
out slow for our bangers and our mash

I remember Ballyfermot, the neighbours really cared
If you were down you were never out,
the neighbours always shared
They would split a loaf of bread with you
and say 'you never mind'
That's the way the neighbours were,
it was a pleasure to be kind

You see I'm forty years in Bally'er
and I love this wonderful scheme
I'm only half way down the road and
I'll hold on to my dream

God bless Ballyfermot and all here children here within
And try not to change it anymore,
'cos that would be a sin.
Tell your kids the stories of the bygone days of the past
And tell them all about our days and make our memories
last.

I remember Ballyfermot and I just know I always will

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