

GRANGE/FERMOY AC

Bob BURKE

The Grange/Fermoy Athletic Club was founded in 1960 by the late Paul Barry of Fermoy. The election of officers at the first AGM resulted in the following being elected; President - Fr John Kelleher; Chairman - Paul Barry; Secretary - Bernard Dempsey and Treasurer - Bob Burke.

The Club's first major victory came in its second year when James Cummins won the county novice cross country championship. From there on the club went from strength to strength and won many major events - in 1965 the club claimed all the county cross country team titles - novice, junior, intermediate, senior and youths - a feat that has never been equalled since. In 1966 the club took part in the 170 mile relay commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Rising. This relay commenced in Rosmuc in Galway and finished at the GPO in Dublin. The team of S.Roche, J.Meligan, J.D.Murphy, J.Beecher, D.Turner, T.J.O'Reilly, D.Cummins, C.O'Connell, J.Morrissey and R.Buckley had the honour of finishing first.

One of the club's most famous athletes John Hartnett won the World Junior Cross Country title at Vichy in France in 1970. This was to be the start of a very illustrious career in athletics for John. Another prominent Athlete in the Club at this time was Fanahan McSweeney who held both National and European Records. The icing on the cake came in 1972 for both John and Fanahan when they competed at the Olympic Games in Munich.

The women members of the Grange Club made their first major impact on the Cross Country scene by winning the County Senior League, County under 18 championship, Munster under 18 championship, National under 18 championship, Munster senior and National Senior championships all in the same year, 1974. The above victories were achieved by just the five M.Mellerick, D.Mellerick, M.Lehane, M.Roche and T.Roche. That same year M.Mellerick made the Irish Senior team and Eddie Hartnett made the Irish junior men's team to run in the world cross country at Monza in Italy.

However all honours did not go to the senior athletes. The Juveniles of the club were among the best in the Country, winning numerous county, munster and national titles. If space allowed it, we could list many, many more outstanding successes over the years and thankfully at this present time, the club has some very dedicated and promising athletes.

Another monument in the history of the club was the hosting of the Grange International Cross Country for a number of years and some of the top athletes in the world took part in this event each year. This annual event ranked among the top cross-country events in the world and all the leading runners of the time made their way to Fermoy. Athletes from Europe, Africa and the American continent were regular visitors.

A life time ambition of the club was to lay its own all weather track. 1991 saw this dream come true when sufficient funds were raised and work set in motion. The track was officially opened by none other than Fanahan McSweeney in 1992.