

## **Skibbereen AC**

### **Pat Walsh**

Skibbereen AC would be one of the smaller clubs in the county but nonetheless have contributed in no small way to the development of athletics in the region. Primarily a BLOE club it covers an area from Roscarbery to Drimoleague and to the west as far as Schull.

Some of the highlights for the club over the years have been the holding of the County senior track and field Championships and the senior cross-country Championships in the 'seventies.

Over the years there have been a number of significant performances by members of this small club, most notable of these would be: Margaret Cadogan - winner of the gold medal in the All-Ireland Colleges in 1976 in the 1,500 metres. She also represented Ireland on five occasions. Richard O'Donovan was second in the All-Ireland Colleges 1,500 in 1975, in which John Tracey was third. Peter O'Sullivan was 440 youth champion at Munster level and at All-Ireland level for the Army.

Billy Flaherty is one of the new generation of athletes who has won many cross-country races for Cork - Munster Novice. Munster U23, second in the Munster Intermediate, winner of the County intermediate in 1992 and led the club to first team prize in that event. In 1992 also he won the County Senior 800 metres.

Margaret Cadogan in the 'seventies kept Skibbereen colours flying at County, Provincial and at All-Ireland level and indeed went on to represent Ireland in the Home Counties International in which she was seventh. She was second in the 1,500 metres in an International in 1977. She qualified for the AAA Championships that year but a serious injury prevented her from competing and also brought her running career, effectively to a premature end. She was coached by the late John McSweeney and Brother Dominic of the De Salle Brothers. After finishing her running career she did become involved in coaching the young athletes of the club and of course is now a PE teacher in Skibbereen.

John McSweeney was without doubt the most hard working and diligent club official that the club has had. He occupied all positions of officership in the club as well as being Chairman and PRO of the West Cork Board. Without doubt it can be said that the club would have closed down - at least temporarily - without him in the 'eighties. When he retired from the railway in the late 'sixties, athletics became his chief interest and he was involved not only in administration but in coaching young athletes of all ages. He was a prominent starter at track and field events and cross-country at County level for many years. Together with his brother, Michael, he had a huge role to play in guiding the fortunes of athletes like Margaret Cadogan, Ann O'Sullivan and Ina Kingston. Both were unselfish in transporting athletes to events all over Munster.

When John passed away in 1991 the club lost one of its most treasured members.

The club continues to grow and remains very much a vibrant body both in West Cork and in the County at large.