

OUR LADY'S BOYS CLUB (31-05-12)

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Our photograph today is of a 1950's soccer team representing Our Ladys Boys Club, taken in Terryland where facilities were quite primitive at the time and as you can see, the preferred mode of transport apart from shanks mare was cycling. The team is, back row, left to right; Patsy Burke, Richie O'Connor, Brod Long, Brendan Dowling, Paddy Power, Tommy Carr, Paddy Beatty. In front are Danny Collins, Billy Carr, John Rushe, Steve Mannion, Gus O'Connor and Barney Birkett.

The Boys club was founded in 1940, a time when there were no after-school recreational facilities for boys in working class areas. The Jesuit community gave them the use of a clubhouse at the back of the Columban Hall and here the boys were involved in many activities and prepared for later life. They were taught self respect, loyalty, how to help others and the importance of team spirit. Much of this was done through the medium of sport, soccer, rugby, boxing, Irish dancing, table tennis, snooker, rings, swimming etc.

The highlight of the club year is the annual 'camp' where the boys are taken on a week long holiday. The following is a newspaper description of the 1944 experience.

'Tanned and sunburned, 30 happy boys arrived back in Galway having just ended their week's holiday together in Ballinamanagh House, Clarinbridge. For one brief week of glorious weather, they had left aside their messenger cycles, they had escaped from the dusty din of the Foundry, the hum of the woollen mills, the cinema queues, the drabness of the streets and gone out into the country to relax, to gain new strength, to get fresh courage to face their heavy lives of labour. They were all members of OLBC, all selected according to their attendance at meetings of the club in the Columban Hall on Mondays and Thursdays. With the boys went 7 helpers who have volunteered for this work. For the past year they have kept the club nights cheerful and orderly, and now they gave up a week of their holidays to the duties of 'camp' life.

One helper tended the many outdoor fires and produced excellent meals. Another organized the boys into six groups that took turns at 'fatigues' --- fetching water, collecting firewood, sweeping and washing up, collecting potatoes and peeling them. A third looked after the games of rounders and football, the sports and the kite-flying, and rendered

first aid in minor ailments. A leading figure in local swimming showed the lads how to swim, dive and life-save, and the remaining helpers were kept busy hunting for potatoes or rabbits and coping with the eager demands of the youngsters at mealtimes.

And who paid for it all? Well, the boys paid by their cheerful hard work at the camp tasks. The helpers paid by carrying the strain of responsibility, the anxiety about the next meal, the constant care to keep the lads interested and amused. The boys' employers paid by letting them off for a week and giving them their weeks wages. As for supplies, they were for the most part provided by different Galway firms. Butchers gave meat, bakers supplied bread, confectioners provided sweets and biscuits and cakes. Potatoes, vegetables, milk and eggs were given by the kind people of Clarinbridge.

It is to be hoped that the people of Galway who were so generous in supporting this summer holiday will continue to take an interest in the club and the ideals for which it works. It was founded to help working lads flung into work at the very age when their characters are most easily formed for good or ill

Times have changed since 1944 but there has never been as great a need for the Boys Club as there is now. On this Saturday a group of 70 boys go to St. Colman's College, Claremorris on the club's 72nd consecutive annual camp. Once again, they are appealing to the generosity of Galwegians to support them in this endeavour. If you would like to help this great Galway cause, please send a donation to Our Ladys Boys Club Ltd. Unit 1, Liosban Industrial Estate, Tuam Road Galway. Their charity number is CHY5150. Thank you.