**John Joe McGirl 25th Anniversary**

This year marks the 25h anniversary of the death of John Joe McGirl. The local Ballinamore Sinn Fein cumann will hold a commemoration for John Joe on Saturday 17th August @ 8pm n Ballinamore Co. Leitrim. We are delighted to welcome Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness as the main speaker at this year’s event. Everyone is welcome to join us in remembering 1 of the greatest republicans of all time! Function afterwards in McGirls Bar on Main Street

John Joe McGirl is one of Leitrim's most famous republicans. Born to Joe and Bridget McGirl (formerly Gallagher) in Drumany, Aughnasheelin on March 25, 1921.

John Joe was the second youngest of five Children that included his sister Mary (nee Creamer) and brothers Tom, Patrick (Pakie), and Michael.

John Joe and his siblings attended Drumbibe National School and he continued his education in the Vocational School, Keshcarrigan.

His mother came from the townland of Aughacullion and imbued in him the republicanism that he was to hold onto for the rest of his life. She was an active Cumann na mBan member during the War of Independence and she later received a medal for her activities during that period.

John Joe grew up in what were still turbulent times after the Civil War and when political allegiances and beliefs were much more of a life and death issue than today.

John Joe was arrested and interned in 1939 as part of a general precautionary round up of IRA men on the eve of the Second World War. It was not to be the first time or last that he was in Mountjoy Jail during his lifetime.

While there he met two other republicans Harry White and Paddy McGrath. They attempted escape by blowing their way out but were unsuccessful in their attempt.

After his release from Mountjoy on foot of legal action by Sean McBride, which found their incarceration to be illegal, he returned to Leitrim but soon after found himself interned again in the Curragh under an old English law of 1800.

Many other republicans from Leitrim were imprisoned alongside him including one from the townland of Crummy called Paddy McWeeney (better known as the Priest) who recruited him into the IRA in the beginning.

After his release John Joe went to work for his uncles John and Pat McGirl in their business in Ballinamore. After Pat died in 1943 John Joe took over the running of the business along with his mother and sister.

He was elected as a TD for Sligo/Leitrim in 1957. Three other Sinn Fein TDs were elected nationally but all lost their seats in 1961 as a result of the abstentionist policy that Sinn Fein followed at that time.

John Joe was interned in Long Kesh in 1974 and was there when the camp was burned. On his release he returned to Ballinamore and took up where he had left of organising republicans in Leitrim. He was responsible for building the large support base that republicans have in Leitrim today.

John Joe served on Leitrim County Council up until he died. He always worked hard for the people of Leitrim and his door was open to everyone.

On Saturday 17th August we remember John Joe McGirl and pay tribute to him and a lifetime of work for the republican movement. ***John Joe McGirl (25 March 1921 – 8 December 1988)***