

Big Heart Fun Run 2013 organisers express thanks



The first man to cross the finishing line at the Roscommon Big Heart Fun Run was Stephen McKeague, Ferbane, Co. Offaly. Pic: Liam Reynolds.

On Saturday 26th of January over 330 people braved the elements and took part in the first Big Heart Fun Run through beautiful Mote Park, Roscommon town.

Sinéad Gannon, Chairperson of the Roscommon Harriers AC Chairperson and the organising committee said: "Everybody really enjoyed themselves from the very beginning, there was a great mix of age groups and abilities. Everyone was a winner on the day!"

The event was a wonderful opportunity to bring people together in a beautiful location and raise awareness about the importance of exercise for heart health. All funds raised are going to Croí, this will help in the fight against heart disease and stroke and also will support cardiac initiatives in County Roscommon.

The winners are as follows: 1st: Stephen McKeague, 2nd: Adrian Smith,



Pictured was the first woman to cross the finishing line at the Roscommon Big Heart Fun Run... Maura Dervin, Roscommon. Pic: Liam Reynolds.

3rd: Colm Walsh. The ladies weren't far behind! 1st: Maura Dervin, 2nd: Maura Brogan, 3rd: Sandra Brandon

The organising committee would like to acknowledge and thank the following people: The people of Mote Park, Sinéad Gannon and Mary Connell, Mary Cunningham and the Roscommon Harriers Athletic Club for taking a seed of an idea and bringing it to fruition, Roscommon Sports Partnership and Noel Feeley for trojan work, Mary and Sine-

ad's extended family the Burkes, Connells, Carrs and Gannons (there wasn't a family member not involved on the day), and the Roscommon branch of the Girl Guides.

We want to thank Dr. Pat McHugh for giving wholehearted support to this venture, Aidan Cashin, Leo Hunt, Coillte, the local branch of the Civil Defence, Paddy Mullen, Ray Dunne, Shane Healy, all those who stewarded and helped organise car parking, Glenn Campbell, Cathal Cregg, Donie Shine,

Sean O'Brien, Carmel Fallon, Helen Ely, Ger Keane, Eoin Hoare, Leo Dunne and Ronan Gately. Thanks to Bernie Dowling for her advice. Also to Sean Mimmagh and Lanesboro Triathlon Club, Barry McCann, Croí, Rosemary Thorpe, Deirdre O'Reilly, Anne Scahill, Sarah Fallon, Clare Murray, Marie Doorly, Susan McGinty, Mary Costello and Mary Dwyer. Apologies to those that may have been inadvertently omitted. We want to thank our sponsors.

Ringforts

Today, we see ringforts on the landscape as circular in shape and in many instances defined by a circle of trees and broken down earthen banks

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or walls. Ringforts are associated with good, well drained agricultural land and, in the not too distant past considered the abode of the fairies. Stories have been told and re-told in the rambling houses of Roscommon about the 'Fairy fort and curses that may come about from disturbing them.'

Ringforts were the homesteads of Irish farmers and the most common form of settlement between 500 A.D. and 1200 A.D. How many ringforts were built at this time will never be known, but archaeologists believe that at least 120,000 existed, of which 45,000 now remain. Of this number, 1,883 dot the landscape of Co. Roscommon.

The ringfort (pictured) is in the townland of Lisnagavragh, parish of Tisrara, one of a cluster of six and all in close visual proximity to one another. Some ringforts are in close proximity to crannogs, which were lake settlements and were very important to the dwellers of these homesteads. In times of danger refuge could be taken on the crannog, a safer place because it was surrounded by water. The ringfort shown overlooks a

crannog on Lough Croan – such settlements were usually built by the upper echelons in society at this time.

Ringforts can best be described as a space, mostly circular, and surrounded by a bank with an outer fosse (dyke) or simply by a defensive stone wall. A timber fence may have been placed around the top of an earthen bank with an entrance usually facing east or south-east.

There are, of course, other types of ringforts but the most common is the one pictured and accounts for eighty per cent of such monuments where people lived during this period. Whether ringforts were built from an earthen bank or a defensive stone wall depended on which material was most readily available.

Within this circular enclosure was the family home, built from post and wattle or stone, which probably had a thatched roof. Craft and textile working took place nearby and outdoor cooking areas or hearths, where the family cooked meals from an almost self-sufficient existence have been excavated.

These farmers, our distant relatives, grew their own corn, vegetables, made their own clothes and shoes, and tended to their farm animals, mostly pigs, sheep and cows.



From the latter they had their own supply of milk, butter and other dairy produce.

Archaeologists believe that they built souterrains or underground passages at a later stage in order to store this produce, in a way your everyday fridge, as souterrains were a suitable way of preserving food for long periods of time, especially during the summer months. Souterrains may also have been places of refuge.

Ringforts went out of use in the 12th Century with none being built after this time. In the early part of the 20th Century many people believed that the 'fairies' lived in ringforts and because of this it was considered bad luck to interfere with them.

It was at this time too that some ringforts became the resting places of unbaptised children, buried here because they died at birth without having been baptised. The father of the dead baby usually went to

the ringfort at dawn, with the child in a sack thrown over his shoulder, his other hand carrying a shovel. The silhouette of this figure is still recalled by members of our group and described as 'bringing a tear from a stone.'

Placenames with Lios or Rath as part of the name signifies that a ringfort is nearby. Some are mentioned in the annals because of their historical importance, an example being in the townland of Rathbrennan, just outside Roscommon Town. This townland was at one time owned by the Prior and convent of St. Comán, the saint from where Roscommon derives its name.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that the farmers who toiled the land and lived in these homesteads had chosen their farms well – what was good, well drained land then, is still good, well drained land now.

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