

• HISTORY • of

McGRATH'S LIMESTONE WORKS LTD



Michael & Mamie McGrath

The story of Cong cannot be accurately told without mentioning the influence of Limestone and the powerful impression it has had on shaping almost every facet of our local history. As far back as the 12th century the Augustinian monks expertly built Cong Abbey and it became renowned as one of the finest examples of ecclesiastical architecture in Ireland...



In keeping with the developments in industry McGraths are deeply committed to maintaining high standards in Health & Safety, Quality and Environmental issues. In recognition of this commitment the company has received both a National and European award for its work in maintaining environmental standards. Respecting our setting and our environment are core principles for our modern plant.

In 2012 McGraths Management System was certified to EN ISO 18001, EN ISO 14001 and EN ISO 9001 standard by N.S.A.I. Ireland.

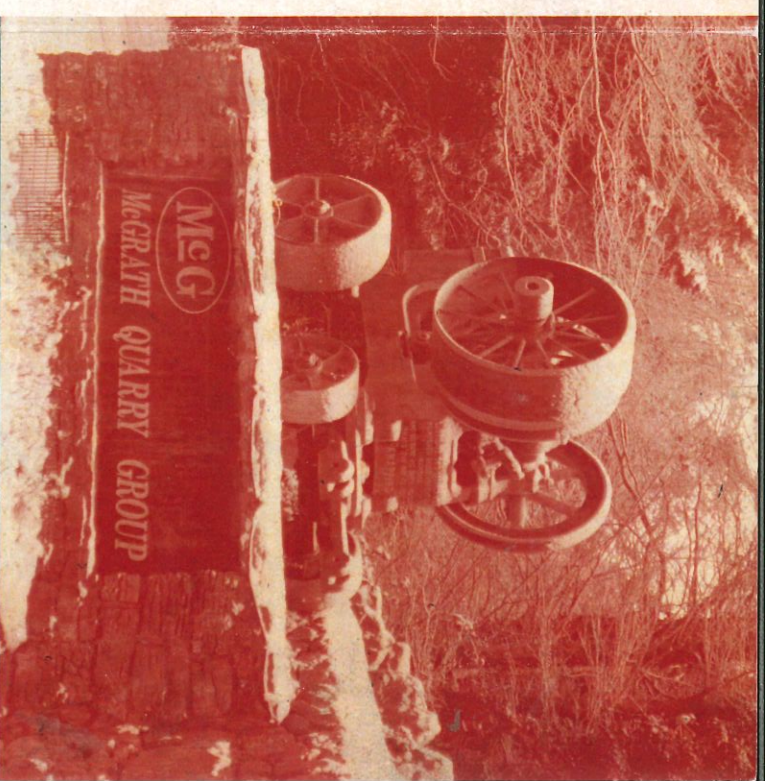


It is fitting that we celebrate fifty years in business and recognise the hard work, courage and resilience of our families and many workers and colleagues that have contributed to our success over the years. We think that our farsighted late father would be proud of what we have achieved.



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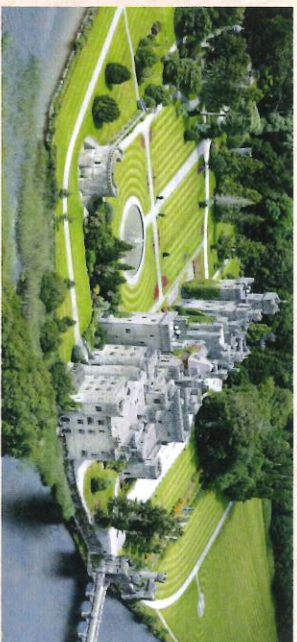


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CELEBRATING OVER 50 YEARS IN
GROUND LIMESTONE PRODUCTION





During the 19th Century many other notable examples of limestone construction were completed including Ashford Castle and its high surrounding walls (1850-1870). The iconic "dry" canal hewn out of limestone rock with meticulously crafted canal locks, a project conceived as a Famine relief scheme is very failure a fitting epitaph to a darker period.

The first official record of quarry activities on lands at Cregaree dates from 1912 with details of excavation to provide building stone for Cong and the surrounding areas.

The catalyst for the next significant development in limestone quarrying was a country wide soil analysis conducted by the Department of Agriculture in the late 1940s and 1950s. The results identified widespread low PH values in land and encouraged the spreading of lime as a corrective measure. Furthermore a subsidy was introduced to promote and encourage the spreading of lime.

The earlier process for producing lime involved burning limestone in "Lime Kilns" and many ruins of these kilns exist today. This was both costly and inefficient leading inevitably to the greater use of machinery and a more effective process of crushing limestone.

The demand for lime coupled with the subsidy resulted in the setting up of a number of Lime Producing Quarries. In the Cong area quarries were operated by families such as Murphys, O'Connors, Varleys, Donoghues, Maddens and Cosgraves.



The Glynn family opened a lime producing quarry in Cregaree in 1952, an event noted in the Connacht Tribune of March 5th 1952 ;

Most of the machinery has been set up for a ground lime factory at Cong. The site of the factory will be at the old road at Cregaree and it

The Glynn family produced lime from Cregaree from 1952 to 1963 when the late Michael McGrath purchased the plant.

Michael was a visionary who understood machinery and its potential, indeed he was one of the first people to purchase a tractor in the area and for many years worked on hire to the local farming community. Michael McGrath could see a future in quarrying and lime and this inspired his purchase of the plant from the Glynn family.

In the early days the transport of lime was carried by CIE but it was not long before McGraths purchased their first lorry - a Thames Trader.



Gradually the demand for lime increased and Michael McGrath added larger machinery and more transport to cater for the increased volumes. Unfortunately Michael McGrath died suddenly in 1970 and for the next number of years the plant was operated by his wife Mamie McGrath. Those were difficult times, problems with machinery, training new staff, safety problems not to mention the difficulties that farmers experienced during the 1970s.



In 1975 a decision was taken to hand over the running of the company to the late Michael's two eldest sons Michael and John Joe McGrath.

Gradually the company began to grow with increased volumes of ground limestone and the addition of new products for road making for the local Councils and local building industry.



Our first computer

In 1983 the next major milestone involved the setting up of a Ready mix Concrete Plant and thankfully demand for ready mix concrete was high especially with farm improvements and related building projects. A Concrete Block Making facility followed shortly after opening a complete package for the then burgeoning house-building industry.

In the late 90's and with the increase in funding for roads the company decided to install a tarmac production plant facility. Although a significant and costly investment fortunately it coincided with an increase in grants for road making.



Early days roadworks



Block making in the 80's

Diversity, continuous development and improvement have been the hallmark of McGrath's success over the years. Following tests carried out on the quality of the limestone in the Quarry it was found to have a high calcium content containing little or no impurities. Our lime therefore, proved highly suitable for the production of animal feeds (calcium) and for the production of glass and many other ancillary uses.

As a result of this unique set of qualities there is a big demand for our product abroad and we are currently supplying glass plants in Ayre & Inverkeithing in Scotland and Varberg in Sweden with our new material.

We are regularly exporting ships loaded with between 3000 - 4000 tons of material and are now one of the major exporters from the port of Galway.

McGrath's currently employ 55 people on full time basis and sustain a significant network of indirect employees with local firms. There are still four sons, a daughter, grandchildren and a great grandchild of Michael and Mamie McGrath currently working with the company.