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BALLINASLOELIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 3 Issue 6: Feb-March 2014

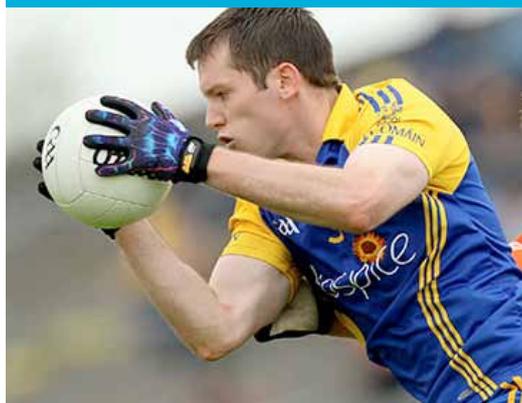
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BALLINASLOE LIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 3 Issue 6: Feb-March 2014

REAMHRÁ



The ghastly spectre of the final 22 beds closing from the St. Brigid's complex seems to have come to pass. The stately "Custom House" cut stone signature building now stands boarded up like a derelict tenement. The madness of it all really lies in the fact, that the same week we in East Galway and South Roscommon are being told that our mentally distressed citizens will now have to go to UHG for assessment and admission, the same HSE appealed to patients not to use its A&E and all scheduled operations were cancelled!

Reports suggest that the maternity function of Portiuncula will be moved to UCHG. We have local election this year at the end of May, if we don't wise up to what's really going on, we will see a struggling town centre, bookended on the East and West side by two boarded up historic sites. We all believed in the honeyed words and sugary promises of a variety of public representatives over the past 20 years. We now have a Heritage site in Creagh, falling into disrepair, by a state system that promised this community in the wake of our loss of 1,400 Manufacturing jobs that our future would be in healthcare provision.

After six generations of sleepwalking we let the Psychiatric Hospital go, we have only had two generations with Portiuncula. Are we to let the legacy of the FMDM Nuns disappear in the same fog of indifference? As you are canvassed for a vote, let candidates be under no illusion of the lack of trust in the State's ability to manage resources or indeed co-ordinate HSE West. It's gone beyond a sick joke, really it has!

Colm Croffy, Ballinasloe Life Editor



A new dawn, a new year what does 2014 hold for us all? Economic statistics all show improving trends and most analysts concur that we have turned a corner. As a group of people with common goals we now need to all work together to capitalise on these green shoots. It will be 12/18 months before we see the benefits of tax relief, the benefit of the Town Enhancement Scheme and more job vacancies.

In the interim we need to grasp at the opportunities as they arise and look for the the benefits to us all. In the Enterprise Centre we will continue to work with Government Agencies, Politicians and Entrepreneurs to try and create the right combination of circumstances to drive this. Minister for Small Business John Perry T.D. will attend the AGM of Ballinasloe Area Community Development Limited on the 6th March and we will use this occasion to show him the Town and harness his support for the further development.

We also have Chris Wade, CEO Action For Market Towns, a 20-year-old UK based Company working with Towns in the UK similar in size to Ballinasloe, coming to town on 3rd Feb to launch Volume 4 of Ballinasloe Life. This Company has seen Towns successfully take steps to ensure that their town centres not only survive, but thrive, and it will be interesting to hear his view on where Ballinasloe stands.

The bottom line is nothing will happen if we don't have a unified plan and a vision as to how we want to develop. Our AGM is the 6th March in the Enterprise Centre and I extend an open invitation to you all.

*Seamus Duffy, Chairman,
Ballinasloe Area Community Development*

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Clear as Fudge

By Colm Croffy

The Local Government Reform Bill 2013 provides for the abolition of Ballinasloe Town Council (which has been in existence since 1897) and Minster Hogan is pressing ahead with his REFORM of local Government. He has set a date for Local Elections for the 23rd of May but the nuts and bolt practicalities that were promised some months ago are sadly still lacking.

The Council is to be replaced with a "Municipal District Committee", the geographical boundaries of which are broadly in line with the geographical area of the current Ballinasloe County Council area. Effectively it is being replaced by the current area county committee structure which in turn will be answerable to the full Galway County Council. The only difference instead of 5 area council seats there will now be 6 for the Ballinasloe County Council area.

This new proposed "Municipal District Committee" will be just what it says on the tin, a Committee. It will certainly not be an autonomous Town Council as we now have. The Bill as regards future functions and powers of councillors is littered with vague possibilities but very short on specifics. However what is crystal clear is that unlike current rating Town Councils who have such powers, the proposed Municipal District will not have the power to strike the business rate, and neither will they be a Housing or Planning authority. Such powers will in future be in the hands of the full County Council where there will be allegiances to other towns and areas. Although it is not clear at present, it is hoped that the new Municipal Districts will have some financial autonomy as regards their own area budget. It is still not at all clear how civic functions, town twinnings, town events etc. etc. are to be managed by this new Municipal District Committee.

Our community will have no Mayor or first citizen, who will speak on behalf of the town when it comes to national matters, to Government, to the press? Who will receive visiting delegations, business people, Ministers, what protocols will be in place?

The abolition will present the Business Community with a stark reality in the form of increased business rates. It should be well noted that our Town Council currently strike the third lowest rate in the country at €52, significantly lower than Galway County Council at €66.59 and neighbouring towns. Historically of course, rating Town Councils throughout the state normally strike a much lower rate than their County Council counterparts. Under the proposed new arrangements Galway County Council will decide the rates for the Business community in our town. This could result in a 28% increase in rates for such businesses.

At the annual budget meeting for 2013 held last December, the Town Council agreed a rate on valuation (business rate) of €52 (a rate which has not increased for the last six years) and which compares very favourably with Co. Roscommon at €74.38 and Co. Galway at €66.59.

Ballinasloe Town Council currently deal with housing applications, queries, allocation of houses, rent reviews, repair requests, adaptations for disabled persons and all estate management issues on a daily basis. If such functions are moved from Ballinasloe tenants will have to contact County Hall in Galway City for such queries which will not be practical and will prove most unsatisfactory and troublesome.

Where will local organisations now seek funding for such projects as the town's Christmas lights, Great October Fair and numerous other local projects. There is no doubt whatsoever but that the very specific and direct focus which our Town



Council place on our town will be completely lost under a Municipal District situation. We will then be just another part of a much larger area with no direct focus.

Spare a thought also for the 35 staff who have been told their jobs are safe but that they could be re-assigned to Loughrea, Tuam, Athenry, Gort or another sub-station. Imagine three months out from a company amalgamation and the employees have no clear idea of how things will proceed as departments and functions will cease? Would this be tolerated in the private sector?

Aside from the administration and services though for the public representatives is the lack of democratic engagement "A fundamental issue now facing all our towns and indeed our country is that the absence of Town Councils will present society with a democratic deficit in that future generation of public representatives and community activists will be lost to the democratic system" stated Councillor Johnny Walsh, Deputy Mayor of Ballinasloe. *Ballinasloe Life* will continue to update readers on developments.

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Frank Feighan: A TD in Profile

By Pamela Ryan

Our constituency lines are changing and with it are the faces of local representatives. Fine Gael TD Frank Feighan has represented Roscommon and South Leitrim for seven years now and with the boundary change, he will be a new candidate for the next Roscommon-East Galway Election. He is an eager man and strives to be “the voice of the people” in cabinet as the only Government TD in the area.

Frank's connections to Ballinasloe might be few since he is a native of Boyle in Roscommon, but they are memorable to him. While searching his mind the most prominent early memory for him and indeed for most, was attending the October Fair & Festival throughout the seventies as a young boy. Moreover he has many sporting connections with the town. “I used to play soccer with Boyle Celtic, down in the Curragh District League,” he recalls, while also adding he had a stint as treasurer of Roscommon District League and “I even trained a lot of the underage that played in Ballinasloe .”

Frank's family ran a busy newsagents in Boyle for many years (McDonaghs) and Frank himself ran a bar and restaurant and employed over 30 people and understands the challenges of being a small business operator.

Frank's political career may not have begun here in Ballinasloe but it is safe to say he has a vast amount of experience and a good record under his belt to bring to the town. Roscommon County Council was Frank's first political victory as he “topped the polls and Fine Gael won four out of five seats in 1999.”

He was later elected to the 22nd Seanad by the Administrative Panel in July of 2002 and was appointed as Spokesperson on Health in the Upper House. Frank was first elected to Dáil Éireann in 2007 and has been representing the Roscommon-South Leitrim constituency ever since.

When speaking of the problems the town is facing Frank believes “Ballinasloe has suffered as much as any town of its size.” With job losses, especially in the manufacturing sector, Frank says “the town is still suffering.” One of the greatest problems facing the town right now is the drastic changes to the face of Ballinasloe's healthcare sector. “People are concerned about St Brigid's and the A&E,” he said.

“The 22-bed acute unit closure is a huge concern and the HSE still has a lot to answer for.” The TD continues to raise



This is part of a series of interviews by *Ballinasloe Life* which profile all current Oireachtas members from the Roscommon-Galway Constituency.

the issue and is currently giving his full support to Senator Michael Mullins on the issue to retain the acute beds.

Regarding the hospital in Roscommon and recent comparisons made between the facilities there and in Ballinasloe, Frank mentions that Roscommon has secured €20 million in investments to safeguard both the healthcare service provided and the jobs there. “Most importantly, patients are now safer,” he stated regarding the hospitals upgrade in facilities. There are still a lot of issues arising with the hospital. Roscommon A&E was servicing less than 20 patients a day and “an A&E needs to be busy to ensure surgeons are up-skilled,” said Frank. Portiuncula has a much busier A&E and one can deduce that is why it emerged the more successful in the end. “I'd like to think a lot has been done and a lot of lives have been saved,” he said.

A pressing matter for all towns of this size is the employment rate. Looking to the town's future Frank sees great challenges and opportunities ahead. “When we took over government, the economy had fallen over a cliff!” The last few years have seen 250,000 jobs lost but this TD sees a positive future for the economy steadily growing.

“There are 5,000 to 6,000 jobs being created every month which is a huge positive,” he said before clarifying: “The jobs are coming in twos and threes and

fours and fives but they're all adding up. We're coming into a new era of employment.”

Frank notes the positive work being done in the area to boost job creation and the local economy. “A lot of good work is being done by various agencies,” he said regarding events he witnessed at a Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre Annual General Meeting, including the provision of facilities, structures and work spaces. Creagh Medical Devices is also a company Frank deems very important to the area and the town has the potential to attract more international business. The Western Digital Corridor provides high speed broadband capabilities across 300km of the country and runs through Ballinasloe and is a “great advancement in communication services,” he said.

Another issue arising which affects the local economy according to the Fine Gael TD is agriculture. “Farming is a very important local industry, people forget that.” There are a number of challenges facing the agricultural sector this year including cap reform, which is very significant. “We must do whatever we can to protect the level of payment and attending local IFA meetings and marts I would be optimistic for the Agri-business sector especially with the €12.6 Billion package and associated incentives announced by Minister Simon Coveney recently.” he said.

The main drainage works in the town and flood prevention schemes are also of great importance to Frank. “I'm determined to work on behalf of the people and be their voice in government,” he said. “I represented Roscommon/Leitrim for seven years and the people were very satisfied. I continue to work on behalf of and represent Roscommon/Leitrim and I like to think my record has been very good.”

Having been involved in the creation and upgrading of schools (such as Clonakilla NS in Bealnamulla) and community hospitals among other infrastructure, Fine Gael TD Frank is looking forward to improving upon what this town already has and take upon himself any concerns of the locals. “The town has many positives; it needs employment and a new sense of confidence. I will continue to work alongside my party colleagues at Town Council Level – Messrs Concannon, McGrath, Broderick, County Councillors Michael Finnerty, Kevin Ryan and Senator Michael Mullins and my door is always open to deliver.”

Frank is available to assist locally and can be contacted at his constituency office on his mobile at 086 833 1234 or by email: frank.feighan@oireachtas.ie

Conneely Builders - 20 Years On and Still Forging Ahead

By Colm Croffy

It's rare to find a reputable building firm in the Construction sector still winning contracts, still employing people, still building and more importantly developing and expanding the business, but that in essence is the story of Brian Conneely Builders.

Brian & Breda Conneely started the Company in 1994 after Brian spent 14 years with Coffey Construction in Athenry at the Civil Engineering business. The Abbeyknockmoy native saw the company's fortunes ebb and flow in common with most in the sector but today can feel quietly proud in the contribution he is making to the recovery and to the local economy with over 25 vehicles in the fleet and in excess of 65 people employed full time.

With a modest headquarters adjacent to the family home in Kellysgrove, the company has a depot and gravel pit in Perssepark where it has a maintenance facility. Brian chose Ballinasloe in the mid '90s as it was a great central location in which to develop a construction company that specialises in Civil Engineering work nationally.

"This has been a fabulous town to develop our business from, with the new motorway, we are only an hour and 45 minutes from the M50 and within three and half hours from any site in Ireland. For the locally based management team and staff at the Company, we are thrilled with the second to none educational, sports and leisure facilities that the town boasts."

In the past few years Conneely's firm have developed an expertise in winning EU Tender bids for public works and has been a selected contractor to a number of semi-states such as Irish Rail, Bus Éireann, Bord na Mona, Irish Prison Services & the Defence Forces. "These framework tender processes are



very detailed and painstaking and are usually for works up to 36 months at a time. We have built up good relationships with key agencies and their staff which has helped us weather the storm a bit", states Brian. In the past decade Conneely's firm have refurbished a vast amount of Irish Rail bridges and platforms. Some of the stations refurbished have been Malahide, Portmarnock, Sallins, Newbride, Ballinasloe, Gort, Ardahan and Craughwell.

A new railway platform and car park were built in Oranmore in 2013 for Irish Rail and Galway Co Council. The Company also undertake a lot of civil engineering work for Local Authorities and the Dept of Environment. Locally the Company constructed the Flood Relief works in Ballinasloe for Galway Co Council and OPW. The company built some houses around Ballinasloe but the main emphasis is on civil engineering. Brian was one of the four business partners to the IDA project in

An advertisement for Right Price Holidays. The main visual is a large puzzle made of interlocking pieces, each showing a different holiday scene: a family at a beach, a person sunbathing, a hot air balloon, a couple dining, and a person relaxing. A red price tag graphic is attached to the top left of the puzzle, reading "Right Price HOLIDAYS by Keller Travel Worldchoice www.rightpriceholidays.ie". To the right of the puzzle, the text "CREATE YOUR HOLIDAY FOR THE RIGHT PRICE!" is written in large, bold letters, followed by "Design your own Winter or Summer Sun Holiday". Below this is a list of five bullet points: "Any Duration", "Daily Departures", "Wide choice of destinations and accommodation", "Cheaper than most traditional package holidays", and "Open everyday, 24/7". At the bottom right, a red box contains the text "Brought to you by KELLER TRAVEL Your Local Holiday Experts". At the bottom left, contact information for Keller Travel Worldchoice is provided: "5 Main Street, Ballinasloe. Tel: 090 9642131 Email: info@kellertravel.ie". At the bottom center, it says "Book Online 24/7 www.rightpriceholidays.ie or call 090 9642131 (Mon/Sat)".

the late nineties which alongside Noel Dillon, Gerry and Mike Barrett built and leased the first two industrial units in the IDA Creagh business park which now houses APTAR Group and Creagh Medical Devices.

Brian has built up a loyal and dedicated core management team, many who have been with him from the start and he is keen to stress that the company's success is down to their hard work and effort as much as his. "I am very fortunate that we have people of tremendous ability and calibre like Declan Murphy our Commercial Manager; Senior Contracts Managers John Mitchell, Declan Flannery, Colin O'Connell & Mark Conneely; Nuala Barrett in Finance; Collette Donnellan PA; Mary Naughton HR; Mary O'Rourke, Plant Admin; JJ Sheil, Health & Safety; Alan McGuire, Keelan Headd, John Mulconroy, Site Agents; Niall Hynes QS and Kieran Coughlan Estimating. The main site staff include, Christy Curley, Sean Kelly, John McKendry, Sean Dolan, Maurice O'Sullivan, Willie Hough, Tommy Dolan, Ian Manton & Alan Egan. The Plant Maintenance and support is headed by Patsy Hawkins, Contractor, Jonathan Canavan and Gary Connolly. Local Contractors include Anthony Cunnane, Kiltormer Fitted Furniture, Rory Donnellan and Sean Callanan and Niall Tierney.

Brian and his wife Breda, who teaches locally in Ard Scoil Mhuire has been a steadying influence and support in the business since it started. They have a family of three girls and two boys, and the eldest son Mark, who studied Construction Management in Athlone IT, is now involved in the business. Aoife and Orla work abroad, and Emer & John work in Dublin. Brian, Breda & Mark are members of the Ballinasloe Golf Club and enjoy a round of golf. "Our staff are involved in local clubs and organisations and the Company assists with expertise and machinery on local projects, when needed."

At the moment the business has ongoing projects in Dublin, Railway Station Upgrade in Charleville, Cork; The Prison Services in Dublin and a visitor's facility and carpark in Boora Parklands in Offaly for Bord na Móna.

The Company had been looking for a base in Dublin and in 2013 purchased Weston Airport and lands. It has developed a new Restaurant at the Airport and this is open daily. It can

be accessed at Junction 5 off the M4, just 20 minutes from the City Centre. The Restaurant is an ideal place to stop for refreshments, with its large car park facility only 500 metres from the Motorway. It is an ideal stop off for families or groups travelling from the West.

The Company has exciting plans to develop the Airport as a private business facility with a quick turnaround time for aviation traffic. "Our new plan is to create a world class aviation academy at the location and with this in mind we have joined forces with College Ireland Aviation Services (CIAS) to develop Weston Airport as a centre for aviation education. This will cater for pilot training, ground and cabin crew training and other aviation courses up to Degree level. Senior Executives from College Ireland signed an agreement with one of the Gulf Airlines, on a recent trade mission to the Gulf States for aviation courses in Ireland and abroad", says Brian. This fits in very well with the Pilot training that is already based at Weston.

Looking to the future Brian is optimistic for the business for 2014 and beyond "There is definitely more activity coming down the pipeline on the Irish Construction scene and I would be cautiously optimistic that over the next few years our vision for Weston Airport will be realised in full. There is still a lot of hard work to be done."



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Left, Under-6 Merit Winners: Lisa Marie NI Chlochaire, Katie Gibbons, Gerard Ó Doláin, Maria Donnellan, Amy Clarke, Adelle Ni Fhinneagain, Eoghain Dunne, Simon McGuinness, Robert Cruise, Oisín Connelly

Right, Under-7 Winners: Alex Blackweir (3rd Place), Sean Larkin (1st Place, SN Category), Shannon Martin (2nd Place), Emily Kenny (1st Place)



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Build A Bank School Challenge

By Kevin O'Connor

The Munster and Leinster Bank (now AIB Bank) first opened its doors locally on 1st Sept 1919. Prior to this the premises was known as "The Irish House" and was a drapery shop with a little snug if you wanted a beverage while shopping!

The Ballinasloe branch is a very key part of AIB's distribution and customer service offering and in the past year it has undergone significant investment with the installation of new in-branch technology enablement. They are very much open for business and have a committed specialist advisory team in place to meet all your financial needs.

While the town has lost some other players in the Banking sector in recent years, AIB is sending out a clear message to existing and potential customers that it has the capabilities and commitment to look after the full range of financial requirements and welcomes your enquiries.

Seamus Duffy is Branch Manager for over 11 years and he is very proud of the service that the team in the Bank has provided to its customers in East Galway. Seamus is very involved in a number of local community organisations.

Colm 'Gooch' Cooper who is Youth Ambassador with AIB Bank visited and spoke to the Branch Team on a recent call before he paid a visit to the two school Banks in Town, St Joseph's



Front: Claire Verdon, Anne Derwin. Second Row: Colette Lynch, Maeve Carty (Asst. Manager), Linda Kelly, Maeve Lynch. Third Row: Colm Cooper (Youth Ambassador), Seamus Duffy (Branch Manager). Fourth Row: Shane McLoughlin (Finance & Leasing), Sinead McClearn (Asst. Manager), Sally Ann Caulfield, Mary Gavin, Damien Garrett, Fiona Blythe. Back: Philip Riddell (Customer Services & Support), Eamonn O'Reilly (Agrl Rep), Con Wall (Financial Planning Consultant).

College Garbally and Ard Scoil Mhuire. Colm is visiting schools around Ireland who have entered for this year's *Build a Bank* Competition, which is one of the largest schools competitions in the country. This programme links directly to the Business Studies curriculum and is a great way for students to develop key business and entrepreneurial skills in a fun and interactive way. Students set up and manage their own school bank and compete at the National final for a top prize of €5,000 for their school.

Throughout the year, Colm will be supporting students involved in the AIB Build a Bank Challenge. He will also be

visiting schools to give hints and tips to students participating in the competition along with a football skills sessions.

Colm said: "Students throughout Galway have had a long and successful history in competing in the AIB Build a Bank Challenge and I would encourage teachers and students to get involved. I am looking forward to meeting many of the students who will get involved in this year's competition."

More details on the AIB Build a Bank Challenge are available on www.aib.ie/buildabank with up to date information on the competition's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/aibbuildabank.



Action For Market Towns CEO to Launch Volume 4

As chief executive of Action for Market Towns (AMT), Chris has re-shaped its work to provide support to maintain thriving small towns by working with communities across the UK, providing advice to local authorities and influencing decision-makers. Chris has nearly twenty years' experience in environmental management and rural affairs as well as a strong background in running independent rural development organisations. Until recently Chris was Chair of Locality's Policy Committee and Vice Chair of both the South East Rural Towns

Partnership and the Yorkshire and Humber Market Towns Network. He is also an active member of the Rural Coalition. Chris is visiting the town on a fact finding mission and is the keynote Speaker for the Launch of Volume 4 of the acclaimed Community Development Company Magazine Ballinasloe Life, next February 3rd in the Carlton Hotel. His address will look at "Provincial Market Towns at Cross Roads: trends, challenges and key opportunities and Marketing the location, Future Focus for Investment and Development."

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Cutting Globe

Owned by Liam O'Meara and Mike Hoban, it is the newest innovation of the botanic industry the products are a very effective space in which to quickly grow new plants from cuttings. Liam and Mike have over 40 years combined experience. After losing 30% of plants in the garden centre in 2010 over the bad Winter, Liam had to use all his



experience to propagate large shrubs and trees quickly to sell that Spring. "We developed The Cutting Globe to facilitate a propagation method called air

layering. Visiting customers continually asked what they were and were keen to purchase," said Liam. The duo knew they had a sellable product and so The Cutting Globe was born. In the late last Summer "when our first specially designed Cutting Globes arrived in for assembly and packaging; Our first delivery sold out in two weeks!" said Liam. The duo are currently speaking with a distributor who would like to take the product to the UK market.

Ballinasloe Town Council

Comhairle Baile Bhéal Átha na Sluaighe



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New Funeral Directors in Town

By Kevin O'Connor

Spain Funeral Directors is a family run business, jointly owned by Joe Spain and his son, Keith. The business started back in 2009 as Dignity Funeral Care. They are now located in the building formerly occupied by the ACC Bank on Main Street.

"My father worked in St. Brigid's for 35 years, so we have a long association with the town of Ballinasloe," said Keith. "We've spent the better part of the last three years looking for a suitable location here in the town. We're a very traditional, family oriented business, but we felt there was a need for a higher quality service in the area."

Their new location has been completely refurbished. "The space has been given a very modern, contemporary look" Keith said. "The new premises has a Reception Area, a Private Consultation Area, the Main Viewing Room, a Private Show Room, toilet facilities and a car park at the back of the building, with space for 100 cars." There is a Smart TV in the reception area, that can display digital photographs or share family memories.

"We are very open and transparent with pricing and planning," Joe said. "We offer free consultations to people. There is a lot of information on our online space. We also offer a webcam service, whereby people who can't attend a funeral if they are living far



away, in Australia or America, can see the funeral take place. This is becoming more frequent."

Spain's fleet of hearses and courtesy transportation vehicles is very modern, with a significant investment in their new fleet last year, offering reliability and peace of mind to those who have lost a loved one.

Commitment to the highest quality of care and professional service is something easily placed on a website but difficult to be independently verified for Dignity is one of only two funeral directors in the country that has received the Q Mark, a quality management system. Every year, they undergo an audit, which checks that they observe best practice and that their services are of the highest standard in the delivery

of funeral care to the public. They are also the only funeral directors in County Galway that are currently completing a certificate in funeral practice from the Association of Irish Funeral Directors.

Spain's offer full funeral home services, traditional burials, cremations, advanced planning, bereavement counselling, a 24 hour call out service, repatriation and multi-denominational ceremonies.

Their funeral homes have a full range of individually customised services embracing civil or indeed humanist ceremonies in their premises or in the deceased person's home.

With the withdrawal of the Bereavement Grant in the last budget many in today's community worry about how their estate or family will be able to cover the cost of funeral expenses but Keith and his firm have packages to suit all budgets and approved methods of allowing an individual to agree arrangements and financing thereof.

Spain's is also involved with supporting the local community. They have a three year sponsorship deal with the rugby club and sponsored their nine teams. "We are hugely committed to the area," said Keith.

For anyone looking for more information, Spain's will offer free consultations to everyone and also has a very informative and user-friendly website, which can be found at www.dignityfuneralcare.ie

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BACD Spearheading New Connect Ireland Galway Push

Connect Ireland is an innovative way to create new jobs in Ireland by harnessing the power of the global Diaspora. The mission is to attract foreign companies that are expanding internationally to Ireland through ordinary people, creating jobs and securing the future of the economy. Connect Ireland are partnering with Galway Co. Council in an effort to engage with a number of Communities to harness that sense of Community Spirit, Knowledge and the Fantastic

Relationships that exist in order to try and bring jobs here. If the connections the community make are successful you will not be helping the economy but you will also bring much needed funds into your community by way of a direct payment from Connect Ireland, to spend on the many great projects you are all involved in. BACD Ltd have joined up with Galway Co. Council to spearhead this initiative in Ballinasloe. More info: www.connetireland.com/community.



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Young Voices Support Local Businesses!

By Kevin O'Connor

This December the young people of Ballinasloe rowed in behind local businesses, encouraging shoppers young and old, to support the town by shopping locally for Christmas.

The *Get Lippy!* Youth Democracy (a youth group based on the concept of youth participation and democracy) organisation joined forces with the business community to launch their Christmas poster campaign.

Throughout November, the group looked at the importance of local shops and how they can't survive if the public doesn't support them. With the increasing popularity of online shopping, we all need to make a choice about where we do business. *Get Lippy!* used this project as a way to

remind everyone that local shops provide local jobs and that most of what is needed can be bought in town. Posters were distributed to all businesses throughout the town as a public awareness campaign to support the business community.

December was a positive shopping month for the lead up weeks to Christmas with practically free on street parking thanks to the Town Council and the festive lights thanks to the Chamber of Commerce. The Christmas lights were switched on in the first Saturday in Dec and the second Saturday saw the "Festive Gathering" event on the top of the Square with Coronation Street stars and many schools groups and musicians carolling their way through the afternoon.

Chamber President Donal Scannell was pleased with the reaction of shoppers to the Shop Local Campaign and reported that in the lead in the retail sector was encouraged by the community effort.

Using their voices in a musical way, the *Get Lippy!* members decided to go carol-singing prior to Christmas. After weeks of practice, the group took its musical talents to the local Franciscan convent and to Whyte's Nursing Home to sing for the residents and to visit for a while.

Each venue welcomed the group and the residents were thrilled with the singing and the chat. It also gave a great sense of community and achievement to the young group members. Helen Butler of Youth Work Ireland Galway said, "Young people have so much to offer and are so willing to give their time, energy and enthusiasm to projects that can support the town. All they need are adults willing to work with them. We had such fun on both these projects and the sense of achievement in the young people on making a contribution to the town was wonderful!"

Get Lippy! is a youth group for 12-18 year olds looking at ways to give young people a voice and encouraging meaningful involvement of young people in their local community. It meets in the Youth Information Centre at Marina Point and is supported by Youth Work Ireland Galway.

The group has several new members and so are working on getting them settled in. Work in the immediate future will be Safe Social Media and Personal Development. You can contact *Get Lippy!* through Helen Butler on 087 678 0640, email on ycbsloe@eircom.net or the *Get Lippy!* Facebook page.

Gerry Croffey

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AIB Build A Bank Challenge

Transition Students from Ardscoil Mhuire held their Launch Day for *Cinderella Savings: The Magical Bank* on Wednesday. It was officially launched by special guest DJ Fergal D'arcy from iRadio. The launch was also attended by Branch Manager of AIB Ballinasloe, Mr Seamus Duffy and AIB Student Officer Sally-Anne Caulfield. "Cinderella Savings" was proven to be very popular among the students who attended the Launch. The Ard Scoil Mhuire Bank will compete in the AIB Schools Bank Challenge.



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Age Friendly Town Recognition

By Kevin O'Connor

“Ballinasloe Town was recognised for its involvement in the Age Friendly Towns process at the ‘Building an Age Friendly Town’ seminar in Limerick City.

The town was represented by the Town Clerk of Ballinasloe Town Council, Ms. Caitriona Morgan along with other local representatives from the Active Retirement group, local businesses and An Garda Síochána.

The Age Friendly Towns Programme is a partnership between the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme www.agefriendlycounties.ie, the Irish Planning Institute, DIT and Alzheimer’s Society Ireland (dementia friendly communities) and is an integral part of the WHO’s global Age Friendly Cities Programme.

The seminar, Building Age Friendly Towns, was opened by Jan O’Sullivan, Minister of State for Housing and Planning, and was attended by more than 80 representatives from

across Ireland, including local authority staff, planners, engineers, community officers and those involved in the Age Friendly Towns process. “Ireland is now at a unique social and demographic crossroads,” said Conor Skehan. “CSO figures show that by 2028 the majority of the population will live in urban areas, with the majority of these being in Leinster. Irish people are living longer than ever, and changing age profiles bring up all sorts of new housing and community requirements. By 2028 Irish people will expect drastically different communities in which to start families and live out increasingly long and active lives,” he said.

The town’s programme began in 2013 following the pioneering work done in Ardee, County Louth, and it involved placing 8 graduate planners in 15 towns, villages and neighbourhoods across the country. At local level, the programme is a multi-agency collaboration between the local authorities, health services, Gardaí, business, academics and older people’s organisations.



Age Friendly Towns Recognition (L-R): is Garda John Scully, Community Garda; Garda Aidan Lonergan, Community Garda; Ms. Maureen Cahalan, local business representative; Mr. Gabriel Rohan, Active Retirement group Ballinasloe; Ms. Deirdre Madden, Active Retirement group Ballinasloe; Ms. Caitriona Morgan, Town Clerk with Ballinasloe Town Council; Mr. Donal Scannell, Chair of the Chamber of Commerce in Ballinasloe; Ms. Lyn Donnelly, Manager of Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre; Mr. Terry Noone, local business representative and Mr. Shane Winters, Planner for the Age Friendly Towns Programme.



St. Brigid's Hospital Campaign Update

The recent decision of the H.S.E to remove the 22 beds from the Acute Admission Unit in what is left of St. Brigid's after a €2.8 mil refit has been making headlines recently, as a large, determined group of activists have taken a very firm stand of opposition.

There have been numerous protests against the removal of these beds, including a bed push in Galway City to the HSE Offices but there is to be no let up in the pressure being applied to the Government for the foreseeable future.

The Clinicians and the local GPS have all raised their concerns over the flawed medical reasoning and are seeking an independent review of the decision. The group is urging people to lobby their local politicians, and to keep updated on their Facebook page, www.facebook.com/Galwayeast22, and their twitter page at www.twitter.com/GE22.

Their immediate plans involve a Motion that will be tabled in the Seanad in the next two weeks. When the matter is tabled, the group plans to demonstrate outside of Government buildings in Dublin.

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2014 BEST Finalists Announced

By Kevin O'Connor

The finalists for this year's BEST Competition (Ballinasloe Entrepreneurial Skills Tournament) were recently announced at a workshop held in Ard Scoil Mhuire. Think Young Scientists meets the Ernst and Young Entrepreneur awards for second level students and you have an inkling of how significant this Tournament is for the youth in the area learning about innovation, business and enterprise.

This year's judges are John Power, Gerry Kelly and Pat Ward, who had the difficult task of choosing the 11 finalists from 102 entrants received from the secondary schools involved. The judges were very impressed this year with the calibre of ideas from the students which included projects from the technology, sports, agriculture, music and gaming sectors, along with some very practical solutions to everyday problems.

The following 11 entrants qualified for the final:

- Aoife Downey, Ard Scoil Mhuire
- Victoria Maksimchika, Ard Scoil Mhuire
- Kelvin Kelly and Michael O'Neill, Garbally College
- Eimear Costello, Ard Scoil Mhuire
- Laura Hession, Ard Scoil Mhuire
- Saqib Zardari, Garbally College
- Hannah Finn and Genevieve Duncan, Ard Scoil Mhuire
- Cathal Goode and Shane O'Hara, Garbally College
- R Coen, E Butler, C Carrick, C Callaghan, G Dooley, N Curley, all Ard Scoil Mhuire
- Aoife Sidaway, Ard Scoil Mhuire
- Lara Clifford, Ard Scoil Mhuire

The Finalists will now present their projects at the *Dragons Den* stage, where they will pitch their projects to the judges and fight it out for prizes, totalling over €2,000. All participants will then attend the awards ceremony on March 20th 2013 in the Carlton Shearwater Hotel, where the winners will be announced and a prominent entrepreneur will give a speech to the students and their parents.



Last year's winners for the jointly awarded top prize all came from Ard Scoil Mhuire, namely Laura Creaven for her Football Boot/Golf Shoe Protector and Sally-Ann Parsons with her O'Kale Crisps.

All members of the public are welcome and are encouraged, to attend the awards night, to see for themselves the amazing entrepreneurial skills that the youth of Ballinasloe have to offer. The competition is sponsored by The Ballinasloe Credit Union and The Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre.

For Full details of the competition and Awards night log on to www.ballinasloeenterprise.ie or contact Lyn Donnelly in Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre 0909646516.



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Jorena Relocates to Larger Premises



Jorena Staff: Rena Kilcommins (Director), Helen Haverty Nuala Kelly and John Kilcommins (Director)

By Kevin O'Connor

John and Rena Kilcommins have lived in Ballinasloe since 1964 and started their business, Jorena, in 1994. They named their store by combining their names, John and Rena, to come up with the name Jorena. They just finished a move into a new unit, beside their old location on Society Street, after Christmas.

Walking into the new store, the first impression you get is one of space and light. It is an easy store to be in and the product are all easily accessible. The new store is roughly 2500 square feet in size. "The extra size really makes a difference," said John, who is feeling positive about the future. "People can see all the products, there is plenty of space and natural light, so people can browse as much as they want."

John, a former Gaelic football player for both Galway and London, also holds an All-Ireland Medal with Galway in 1964. "Rena has a great interest in health foods," said John. "It started out as a hobby and she built it up from there. She has helped a lot of people who have to cope with ailments."

Jorena has a lot to choose from. "We have natural remedies nobody else in town has got," said Rena. They offer a wide, diverse range of products. "There is a natural remedy for every ailment," said John. Looking around the shop, it's easy to see why. There are hundreds of products from dozens of healthcare companies. There are foodstuffs from healthy snacks and natural juices to oats and protein powders. There are natural skincare products, medicines

and supplements. They have a large range of gluten, wheat, yeast and sugar free foods as well. "We also have a new frozen foods section," Rena says, "And we can order in whatever people want for them here."

Jorena also carries a large gifts section, with lots of pottery, glassware and bronze statues on their shelves. Notable names include Galway Crystal, Newbridge Glass, Genesis and Louise Mulcahy. The store also consists of a large accessories section, with colourful handbags, hats, scarves and big jewellery cabinet. Any of these items would make an ideal present for someone, or could even be a great addition to your own home. There is something here for everyone and something here will almost certainly catch your eye.

Many of the items the store carries come from local producers. John and Rena seem to like local though, as he says: "We got all local people and workers to do the shelves, the tiling, lights and everything else." He stressed that people need to stay positive and said: "Ballinasloe is a good town. We opened the store to meet the needs of the people." The Christmas period may be over, but there are still plenty of deals and sales in the town centre for shoppers to snap up.

At this stage, most people's New Years' Resolutions may have crumbled, but Jorena could help anyone trying to eat healthier this year. With their vast new range, just follow their slogan and "Let your food be your medicine and your medicine be your food." 



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Council's €1.2m Development

By Kevin O'Connor

As the Town Council prepares to wind down officially, transferring its powers, staff, functions and capital accounts to Galway County Council in May of this year, the last nine elected members devised a scheme to dispose of some of the surplus capital account into a significant injection of grant aid to local community groups.

The Town council has one of the largest capital balance sheets in the country as over €20 million in landfill receipts from the municipal waste facility had to be ring fenced for future remediation purposes and between interest earned and other payments from land transfer gave the Council in a time of austerity the ability to allocate the guts of €4 mill for the old convent being renovated into a new library, the new street enhancement works of €3 million and then the disbursement of €1.2 million.

They created a Capital Grant Scheme advertised in October locally and received some 44 applications of which 39 were successful. In November a council sub committee reviewed and allocated the funds under the scheme. The full Council met on the funds scheme and altered and ratified the programme and it's receipts in November and all the participating groups had to have their contracts signed by the 22nd December.

Grants of between €2,000 and €100,000 were given, funding was awarded in most cases upto a maximum value of 75% of the project cost subject to a maximum allocation of €100,000. The Grants were categorised into three main headings as per the table, with the majority of the money going for community buildings/new facilities or extension to current facilities. The Schemes recipients have until the end of April to complete all

their activities/works and must have all the money vouched, receipted and final reports by May 2014 - a very tight window for delivery but one that will surely make the community a hive of activity for the first months of the year.

The lionshare of the big beneficiaries were in the sports and cultural area with the Rugby, Soccer, GAA carving up practically €400,000 between them. The Emerald Ballroom in total will see €190,735 invested in its buildings, fittings and equipment with four large grants going to the Social Services, Emerald Boxing Club, The Social Centre and The Snooker and Billiard Club, who are users of the building. The Town Hall Theatre will get a new roof, the Bros of Charity are getting a new building and the Show Society are investing another €98,000 into All Weather and toilet facilities in the Grounds.

Cllr Michael Kelly stated "As Mayor I am delighted that 29 locally based community, voluntary and sporting organisations/groups have benefited collectively of funding of €1.2 million euro from Ballinasloe Town Council's Special Capital Grant Scheme, these groups, organisations and clubs make an invaluable contribution to our community and in a time where funding for such groups has all but dried up and extremely difficult to access this is a much needed boost as clubs and groups strive to enhance their facilities which play such a vital role in our town and community."

He also thanked Director of Services Kevin Kelly, Town Clerk Caitriona Morgan and her staff for their assistance and professionalism in dealing with the grant applications, and a special word of thanks to my fellow council members for their initiative to develop this scheme and ensuring these monies were ring-fenced to fund these projects for the town and also thank them for their co-operation throughout the process.

SMALL GRANTS FOR CAPITAL EQUIPMENT, OR TO CARRY OUT SMALL IMPROVEMENTS

Group/Organisation	Project Approved	€ Approved
Ballinasloe Swimming Club	Purchase equipment for swimming training	1,970
Ballinasloe & District Athletic Club	Purchase equipment for athletic training	2,150
Ballinasloe Section	County Galway Water Safety Committee Purchase equipment for Water Safety courses	2,250
Ballinasloe Town Band	Purchase equipment for music tuition (chairs/desk, storage units/band presser)	5,346
Ballinasloe & District Anglers	Purchase of angling equipment	4,540
Ballinasloe Care & Repair	Purchase equipment for maintenance service (shed, tools, lawnmower & van)	9,124
Ballinasloe Musical Society	Replace stage sets & equipment	5,211
Ballinasloe Community Resources Ltd	Upgrading IT equipment (computers & printers)	10,000
Ardscuil Mhuire	Upgrade & replace existing computers	10,000
TOTAL		50,591

GRANTS TO IMPROVE OPEN SPACES THAT PROMOTE A RANGE OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES FOR COMMUNITY ENJOYMENT

Group/Organisation	Project Approved	€ Approved
St. Teresa's Special School	Purchase wheelchair accessible bus for school	29,689
Ballinasloe Camogie Club	Upgrade small area to Astro turf purchase lawnmower and provide toilet facility	19,683
Ballinasloe Golf Club	Upgrade existing sewerage treatment system at Ballinasloe Golf Club	24,075
Clonfad & District Gun Club	Purchase 2 additional traps & minor improvement works to Clubhouse	13,640
Creagh Community Development	Council Restoration of 32 fallen headstones in Creagh Cemetery	5,825
TOTAL		92,912

GRANTS TOWARDS WORKS TO ENSURE THAT COMMUNITY BUILDINGS/ FACILITIES ARE FIT FOR PURPOSE; NEW FACILITIES OR AN EXTENSION OF CURRENT FACILITIES

Group/Organisation	Project Approved	€ Approved
Brothers of Charity	Purchase suitable single storey building with adaptations for specifically designed service.	100,000
Ballinasloe Show Ltd	Provision of all weather sand arena and toilets for Ballinasloe Show Grounds.	98,319
Creagh School Parents Association	Convert area of school pitch to Astroturf sports area.	53,669
Ballinasloe Social Club	Renovation/Refurbishment work to 1st Floor.	38,940
Ballinasloe Town Hall Ltd	Replacement of roof at Ballinasloe Town Hall Theatre.	86,827
Ballinasloe Social Services	Upgrade facilities in the Social Services Centre.	36,560
Ballinasloe GAA Club	Development of new training pitch.	€100,000
Ballinasloe Town AFC	Construct dressing rooms, referees room, showers & toilet facilities with ancillary site works.	100,000
Duggan Park Dev. Committee	Installation of flood lighting system.	100,000
Emerald Boxing Club	Renovation/Refurbishment work to 2nd floor, Emerald ballroom.	51,000
Ballinasloe RFC	Construct all weather training area, 2 additional dressing rooms.	100,000
East Galway Cancer Support	Alterations to existing building & construction of new vehicular entrance, footpath & ramp	20,250
Ballinasloe Social Centre	Emerald Ballroom Renovation/Refurbishment work to Ground Floor.	64,235
Society of St. Vincent De Paul	Completion and fit-out works required for new Shop & Conference facilities development.	56,250
Derrymullen Handball Club	Ballinasloe Renovation/ Refurbishment works	27,129
TOTAL		1,033,179

Reflecting on Public Life: Noel Treacy

By Pat Johnston

“There is an old saying, ‘Men’s evil manners we write in brass and their virtues we write on water.’ This is true in the modern Ireland, which hammers in an unforgiving way, those who have to make decisions even though every decision made has some positivity therein. We must always take a lateral view and at least consider the wider picture. My philosophy has always been and continues to be that it is better to be sorry for speaking than for not speaking. In other words both your opinions and your decisions do matter – that’s the true essence of democracy.”

This was part of the talk given by former Minister Noel Treacy who was guest speaker at the AGM of Ballinasloe Social Services. He had been asked to speak on ‘Learning from Life’s Experiences.’ Mr. Treacy worked as an auctioneer and financial services manager before entering public life. After a 29-year career in the Dáil, he retired from Politics in 2011 and is currently Chairman of Galway GAA County Board.

The Parish of Gurteen-Ballymacward, where Noel was born some sixty years ago, has only 300 houses and yet it had five Politicians elected as Councillors between 1905 and 1982. They were,

in consecutive order: Thomas Griffin, Patrick Finnerty and his brother Martin, Thomas Burke, all of whom collectively served for fifty years until 1954 and the Treacy himself served from 1982, when he became a Dáil Deputy.

Reflecting on his upbringing, Noel said that he was blessed with good parents and a solid family, which he considers vital to shaping an individual’s future. At the local National School, there were two outstanding Teachers and 85 Pupils, divided into two Class Rooms. It was there that he developed his love for the Irish language, which he speaks fluently. Academic success came early with Co. Council and Garbally scholarships.

Gurteen-Ballymacward was once the centre of the Diocese, when the Bishops of Clonfert lived at Mount Bernard. The Parish also had strong links with Garbally, the Diocesan College and it was Fr. James Cogavin, a Gurteen native, who was President, when the College moved from The Pines to the Clancarty grounds, in 1922. Noel’s arrival in Garbally was delayed by two months due to a farming accident, but his departure was also late, due to their having to repeat 1969 Leaving Cert papers, which had prematurely gone into the public domain in Dublin City.



Garbally, he said, was an enriching experience. In the late ‘60’s there were fourteen Priests on the Staff, with some lay men and the first ever female teacher, in 1968. ‘A dedicated academic curriculum, along with a myriad of extra-curricular activities gave us all a rounded education, preparing us for the wide world of opportunity with a confidence and a knowledge that we could succeed. It created a common bond among all of us, that transcended the generations and geographical boundaries.’

In 1969, Noel had many options including two different Third Level Courses but he chose to combine working on the Family farm with the pursuit of a professional career. He began an apprenticeship in auctioneering at Ballinasloe Co-Op Mart that September, qualifying in 1972. He worked with Galway, Mayo and Clare marts for the next ten years, while also establishing his own business in finance, property and livestock.



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- Panfried Breast of Chicken with Garlic or Pepper Sauce—€10.95
- Chicken and Smoked Bacon Penne in a Cream Sauce—€10.95

8oz Sirloin Steak, cooked to your liking and served with sauté Mushrooms’n Onions with Pepper Sauce—€12.50

All above served with fresh cut seasonal vegetables and creamed potatoes

DESSERTS

- Selection of desserts—€4.50
- Tea/coffee
- Tea and Speciality Coffees—2/€2.50

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Sports-mad Noel played for his local Club, Pearses, as a Juvenile from 1966 but it was in the administrative area that he really shone, taking up various positions at County, Provincial and National levels. He was also involved with Muintir na Tíre, now Foróige and Macra na Feirme, where again he advanced through the administrative ranks, holding posts as Branch, County and Regional Chairman.

In 1982, following the death of sitting TD Johnny Callanan, Noel Treacy won the East Galway By-election. Although Chairman of the local Fianna Fáil Cumann, he was a reluctant Candidate, only agreeing to run after 'the 9th delegation of 66 People'. But, having agreed to stand, he became an enthusiastic campaigner. Relinquishing his other Employment and Business, he spent the next three decades as a full-time Politician, fighting ten Elections in that time and serving in various Government Departments between 1987 and 2007. He said he loved being a legislator, which is the primary role of a National Politician, but said, "all Politics is local". He was elected to Galway Co. Council in 1985, a position he held until 1991 and served as its Chairman.

In what might be taken as a master class in how to succeed in Irish Politics, Noel noted that four men, who worked in Galway Marts: Colm Hilliard, now deceased; Paul Connaughton, Paraic McCormack and Noel himself, were all elected to Dáil Eireann. Five who were members of *Macra Na Feirme* together were later elected to Galway County Council and later to the Oireachtas: Paul Connaughton, Paraic McCormack, Joe Callanan, Noel himself and Michael Mullins, who succeeded Noel as Chairman of Macra in 1975.

The former Politician said that public political service brought a myriad of experiences as well as 'a pride in and love of our Country, an understanding of our ability to perform at all levels, no matter what the challenges or responsibilities, a knowledge of the resilience and capacity of individuals and their families to respond to their personal and collective challenges, sometimes in very difficult circumstances.'

Reflecting on his time in Politics he went on, 'Evolving public experiences taught us the need for change in our attitudes, to bring progress to serve the greater good. It gave us the knowledge that we are all a privileged People to live in a beautiful Country with people who are innately decent, where our democracy is so strong, underpinned as it is by a written constitution, which protects the interests and will of the people.'

Diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2010, he was given five treatment options and chose robotic surgery to be followed



Bishop John Kirby, Noel Treacy Speaker and Michel Lally Secretary

by radiotherapy in 2011. He was just one week into the treatment, when a General Election was called. From his hospital bed, he had to call his wife, the Taoiseach and the General Secretary of Fianna Fáil to say that he had been told by his Medical Team that he was medically unfit to run. It was a sudden end to the political career, that he had loved and enjoyed. He is still on medical treatment but 'optimistic for the future, with God's help.'

Noel emphasized the need for personal responsibility on health matters. He urges every man over 50 to have an annual check-up. He had been doing so for seven years and that is why the cancer was found so early. 'Have the check up in January,' he says, 'then you can plan the rest of the year.'

We have, Noel said, 'a world class Health system, both Public and Private, within which are employed some of the world's best Professionals, outstanding Nurses and Carers both within our Institutions and in our Community. Locally we have an excellent Hospital here in Portiuncula and it is vital that it remains an integral and permanent part of our Public Health System. Similarly it is absolutely vital that the Acute Residential Psychiatric Unit in St. Brigid's Hospital is retained to serve and protect individuals and families, who require its services which have been delivered so well to so many people, for well over a century.'

In November 2011, Noel received an unexpected delegation from Co. Galway GAA asking him to stand for the vacant County Chairman position and in due course he was elected. In that role he was involved in the first ever International Hurling Gathering, which brought teams from four Continents to Galway, last September.

Deflecting the talk from himself, Noel's talk concluded with generous praise for Voluntary Workers, as he went on:

'Finally, I can say without fear of contradiction that this Nation could not survive without a unique, dedicated and generous voluntary sector. This is where the Ballinasloe Social Services is a beacon of excellence for so long, giving a quality of life to so many People, through the delivery of so many services,

on a daily basis. The quality of both your Staff and Volunteers brings a smile to so many faces and truly portrays the meaning of Christian Solidarity, through the resources that you deploy and the fantastic work that you all do.

Moreover the assembly of so many State Agencies and Services here, in partnership with the Voluntary Sector enhances, expands and enlarges scarce state resources, to their absolute limits and gives true meaning to public service and value for money. Long may this continue for the People of Ballinasloe, East Galway and South Roscommon.

For a Country of only 5 million People, with an international Diaspora of about 100 million People, we have come a long way as a relatively young Country. We have boxed above our weight; we have earned the respect of the wider world and this is due to the capacity and quality of our People, both at home and abroad. Together we must maintain our culture, our traditions, our value system and maintain and retain the attraction of our Emerald Isle, as a highly regarded place, where the warmth of our People is one of our greatest assets.

Pádraig Pearse publicly stated that "Patriotism is not measured in formulae, but by the services which are rendered". I say to the Board Members, Officers and Staff of Ballinasloe Social Services that you are the modern Patriots in our Country, through the delivery of your excellent services to so many People. I can truly say that you run a centre of excellence and I salute you all on your great work. I wish you all every success in the years and decades ahead.'

In the discussion that followed, People reminisced on the times they had worked with Noel in the delivery and opening of Schools and other local Projects. Apart from one Speaker, who asked him about austerity there was little critical comment and there was no reference to his membership of the second last Fiann Fáil Government, testament to the openness and honesty of his talk, showing the man behind the politician, blindsiding his potential critics. Besides, it would not have been appropriate in the overall context of the evening, where he was a guest among an attentive and enthusiastic audience.

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New Reporter at *Life* Headquarters

Ballinasloe Life thanks the wonderful contribution of another young UL undergraduate, Tipp native Pam Ryan, who was the Reporter on the block from August to December last. She did a great job delivering copy and especially promoting our online presence. Pam heads off (like a lot of our reporters) to Denmark for her third year Erasmus stint and we wish her well. Following in her footsteps is English and Sociology UL

undergraduate, this time from Limerick City, Kevin O'Connor. He has the arduous task of compiling the last edition of Volume 3 and the next three of our Volume 4. We welcome him and wish him well as Press and Communications Assistant at AOIFE. We will be launching our 4th year of publication in early April and would welcome all and any suggestions on how we can improve content for our readership at home and abroad!

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Carlton: Best Wedding Venue

By Kevin O'Connor

2013 has been a year of many awards for the Carlton Shearwater Hotel. Their expertise in their Wedding service and experience has shone through with the Carlton Shearwater Hotel being awarded the Best Galway Wedding Venue for the second year running by weddingdates.ie.

They have launched their new 'American inspired touches' to our wedding packages for 2014. At the Carlton Shearwater Hotel they are always focused at providing the most in vogue wedding concepts to their brides and grooms. Their newest concept has a strong influence from their American

counterparts and other industry leaders. This reflects strongly in the new Wedding Brochure with packages starting from €40 per person. A new flavour for wedding parties to consider is the introduction of the welcome 'Cocktail' Reception, the inspirational and design of the 'Dessert Buffet' and the traditional 'Candy Cart,' to give brides and grooms the 'Wow!' factor on their special day. "If you're looking for the perfect Wedding venue for your special day, you should consider visiting the next wedding showcase on February 16th from 12-2pm to create that amazing and wonderful day that will have life long memories" states Wedding co-ordinator Annette Ryan. Annette is always on hand at 090 96 30400. 

CSpa LaStone Therapy

The team at C Spa have launched their latest in therapy treatments for this season with the arrival of LaStone. LaStone is the application of Geo-Thermotherapy, which involves the application of either heated or chilled stones to the body for the purpose of changing the physiological responses that are going on in the body to promote healing.

When using heated stones in either a Massage or Reflexology treatment you are increasing the blood flow and by using chilled stones to an inflamed area you are facilitating the removal of toxins and inflammation, encouraging a healing response deep within the body's systems. Throughout LaStone therapy, circulation rapidly changes, and therefore nutrition, and the reaction of every cell in the body, responds to the experience of the alternating temperatures being applied.

Our Wedding co-ordinator Annette Ryan will be on hand at 090 9630400. Email events.shearwater@carlton.ie or Visit our website www.carlton.ie/shearwater 

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All-Ireland Football Champions Presentation Night in Carlton

By Kevin O'Connor

Ballinasloe Intermediate Footballers, All-Ireland Junior Champions 2013, were recently presented with their All-Ireland medals at a function held in the Carlton Shearwater Hotel.

There was a large attendance on the night, of players, family and friends to honour the occasion. Special guests were two of town's most famous footballing sons, Sean Keeley and Cyril Dunne, who presented the medals to the team. Also present were Noel Treacy, Chairman Co. Galway GAA Board, Mike Kelly, Mayor of Ballinasloe and officers of the Club.

Chairman Pat O'Sullivan welcomed everyone to the function and spoke of the wonderful achievement of winning the All-Ireland and winning it in style. Sean Riddell the team manager, thanked

the players, his own management team and backroom staff for all their help. He said with the passion, dedication and skill shown by the players during the past year he looked forward with great hope for the future.

Sean Keeley spoke on behalf of himself and Cyril Dunne and he once again remarked of the great achievement it was to win an All-Ireland medal. Sean and Cyril then presented the medals.

Keith Kelly, team captain, thanked the players for all their hard work over the year. He said he was very proud to captain such a fine group of players. Keith thanked Sean Riddell and the management team and all who helped during the year. On behalf of the players, he made a presentation to backroom staff in recognition of all their hard work. There was a special award for the kitman

who brought them such great luck and nearly gave himself a coronary in Croke Park on that memorable day!

Mayor Mike Kelly also praised the players and thanked them for the honour they had bestowed on the town and he looked forward to greater success in future years. The Chairman of the County Board, Noel Treacy, said that the players, club, management and town could feel justifiably proud of the wonderful achievement in winning the All-Ireland Junior Championship. He had a special word of praise for the families of the players who helped them in their quest for All-Ireland glory. He said Ballinasloe had a proud tradition in the history of Galway football, exemplified by the presence of Sean Keeley and Cyril Dunne and he said that with the present group of players he saw a bright future for Ballinasloe and Galway. 

FEBRUARY-MARCH Events Guide

1st FEBRUARY

No Half Measures	An Táin – Downstairs bar	8.00pm
Live DJ	An Táin – Upstairs bar	9.30pm
Chequers	Canal Bar	10.00pm
Gerry Flynn	The Auld Sod	10.00pm
DJ Bosco	East Nightclub	10.00pm
Geagan Pagans	Pillarhouse	10.00pm
Live Music	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Last Man Standing	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm
Chris Nash	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm

2nd FEBRUARY

Pillar House Trad Session	Pillarhouse	6.00pm
Hip Hatchet	Maud Millar's	8.00pm
Mike Denver	Carlton Shearwater	9.30pm
Ultan Conlon	Maud Millar's	9.30pm
Industry Night	The Venue	10.00pm

3rd FEBRUARY

Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	7.30pm
Line Dancing	Gullane's Hotel	8.00pm

4th FEBRUARY

Unislim	Gullane's Hotel	5.30pm
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9.00pm

5th FEBRUARY

Active Retirement	Gullane's Hotel	3.00pm
Trad Session	An Táin	10.00pm

6th FEBRUARY

Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	11.00am
Bruno Groening - Circle of friends	Gullane's Hotel	7.00pm
Country & Western Dancing	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm
The Thursday Sessions	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Kevin Rohan	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm

7th FEBRUARY

Country Market	Town Hall	9.00am
The Beahan Family and Friends	An Táin	6.00pm
Michael Regan	Canal Bar	10.00pm
The Dunlo Session	Dunlo Tavern	10.00pm
Ladies Night	The Venue	10.00pm

8th FEBRUARY

Shtick Her Down	An Táin – Downstairs bar	9.30pm
Live DJ	An Táin – Upstairs bar	9.30pm
Backstage	Canal Bar	10.00pm
The Blaggards	The Auld Sod	10.00pm
Liberty	Pillarhouse	10.00pm
Washout	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Black & White	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm
DJ Bosco	East Nightclub	10.00pm
Lorraine & Adrian	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm

9th FEBRUARY

Pillar House Trad Session	Pillarhouse	6.00pm
Macey South	Maud Millar's	8.00pm
Seany Mac	Carlton Shearwater	9.30pm
Industry Night	The Venue	10.00pm

10th FEBRUARY

Mothers & Toddlers	Gullane's Hotel	11.00am
Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	7.30pm
Line Dancing	Gullane's Hotel	8.00pm

11th FEBRUARY

Unislim	Gullane's Hotel	5.30pm
Pairs Championship	Ballinasloe Bridge Club	8.00pm
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9.00pm

12th FEBRUARY

Open Information Night in Clubhouse	Ballinasloe Golf Club	7.30pm
Ballinasloe Flower & Garden Club	Gullane's Hotel	8.00pm
Trad Session	An Táin	10.00pm

13th FEBRUARY

Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	11.00am
Country & Western Dancing	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm
Singers Circle	Dunlo Tavern	9.30pm
The Thursday Sessions	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Kevin Rohan	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm

14th FEBRUARY

Country Market	Town Hall	9.00am
Sweet Sensation	Canal Bar	10.00pm
Mr and Mrs Quiz Night with Frank Nestor	The Auld Sod	10.00pm
Ladies Night	The Venue	10.00pm
Strange brew	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Valentines Party	An Táin	10.00pm
Teen Disco (Guest Scotty T, Geordie Shore)	East Nightclub	10.00pm
Valentines Session	Dunlo Tavern	10.00pm

15th FEBRUARY

The Big Lad	An Táin – Downstairs bar	9.30pm
DJ Fergal Darcy iRadio	An Táin – Upstairs bar	9.30pm
Chris Nash	Canal Bar	10.00pm
Downward spiral	The Auld Sod	10.00pm
Ultan Conlon	Pillarhouse	10.00pm
Imposter	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
DJ Bosco	East Nightclub	10.00pm
One-to-One	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm
Kensey 3	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm

16th FEBRUARY

Monthly Wedding Showcase	Carlton Shearwater	12.00pm
Pillar House Trad Session	Pillarhouse	6.00pm
Bad moon	Maud Millar's	8.00pm
Derek Ryan	Carlton Shearwater	9.30pm
Industry Night	The Venue	10.00pm

17th FEBRUARY

Mothers & Toddlers	Gullane's Hotel	11.00am
AGM Town Hall Society	Gullane's Hotel	8.30pm
Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	7.30pm
Line Dancing	Gullane's Hotel	8.00pm

18th FEBRUARY

Unislim	Gullane's Hotel	5.30pm
Pairs Championship	Ballinasloe Bridge Club	8.00pm
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9.00pm

19th FEBRUARY

Nathan Carter Show & Friends	Carlton Shearwater	7.30pm
Trad Session	An Táin	10.00pm

20th FEBRUARY

Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	11.00am
Daphne Maltpress	Gullane's Hotel	7.00pm
Country & Western Dancing	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm
The Thursday Sessions	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Kevin Rohan	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm

21st FEBRUARY

Country Market	Town Hall	9.00 am
Live Music	An Táin	9.30pm
Happy Bar Stars	Canal Bar	10.00pm
Ladies Night	The Venue	10.00pm
The Cool Hand Dukes	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
The Dunlo Session	Dunlo Tavern	10.00pm

22nd FEBRUARY

The 3J's	An Táin – Downstairs bar	9.30pm
Live DJ	An Táin – Upstairs bar	9.30pm
Peter Boyle	Canal Bar	10.00pm
Big Deal	The Auld Sod	10.00pm
Chris Nash	Pillarhouse	10.00pm
Live Music	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Last Man Standing	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm
DJ Bosco	East Nightclub	10.00pm
Too Tall Paul	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm

23rd FEBRUARY

Pillar House Trad Session	Pillarhouse	6.00pm
Loose Rooster	Maud Millar's	8.00pm
Jimmy Buckley	Carlton Shearwater	9.30pm
Industry Night	The Venue	10.00pm

24th FEBRUARY

Mothers & Toddlers	Gullane's Hotel	11.00am
Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	7.30pm
Line Dancing	Gullane's Hotel	8.00pm

25th FEBRUARY

Unislim	Gullane's Hotel	5.30pm
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9.00pm

26th FEBRUARY

Trad Session	An Táin	10.00pm
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27th FEBRUARY

Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	11.00am
Bruno Groening - Circle of friends	Gullane's Hotel	7.00pm
Bank of Ireland Rophy	Ballinasloe Bridge Club	8.00pm
Country & Western Dancing	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm
The Thursday Sessions	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Kevin Rohan	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm

28th FEBRUARY

Country Market	Town Hall	9.00am
The Beahan Family and Friends	An Táin	6.00pm
Harp Concert	Hayden's Hotel	7.00pm
Sweet Sensation	Canal Bar	10.00pm
Live Music	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Ladies Night	The Venue	10.00pm
The Dunlo Session	Dunlo Tavern	10.00pm

1st MARCH

Mass for Deceased Members	Ballinasloe Golf Club	TBC
Pillarhouse Trad Session	Pillarhouse	6.00pm
Wollop The Cat	An Táin Downstairs bar	9.30pm
Live DJ	An Táin Upstairs bar	9.30pm
Country Music Act	Carlton Shearwater	9.30pm
Chris Nash	Canal Bistro	10.00pm
Wash Out	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
BoJangle	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm
The Crime	The Auld Sod	10.00pm
DJ Bosco	East Night Club	10.00pm
The Gaegan Pagans	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm

2nd MARCH

Captains & Presidents Drive-In	Ballinasloe Golf Club	TBC
Live Music	Maud Millar's	8.00pm
Industry Night	The Venue	10.00pm

2nd MARCH

Vol. 4 Live Lounge	Carlton Shearwater	6.30pm
Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	7.30pm
Line Dancing	Gullane's Hotel	8.00pm

FEBRUARY-MARCH Events Guide

4th MARCH		
Unislim	Gullane's Hotel	5.30pm
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9.00pm
5th MARCH		
Trad Session	An Táin	10.00pm
6th MARCH		
Dragon's Den BEST Competition	Garbally College	9.00am
Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	11.00am
BACD Ltd AGM	Enterprise Centre	8.00pm
Country & Western Dancing	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm
The Thursday Sessions	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Kevin Rohan	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm
7th MARCH		
Country Market	Town Hall	9.00am
The Beahan Family and Friends	An Táin	6.00pm
Mike Denver	Carlton Shearwater	7.30pm
Mike Regan	Canal Bistro	10.00pm
The Rivulets	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Ladies Night	The Venue	10.00pm
The Dunlo Session	Dunlo Tavern	10.00pm
8th MARCH		
Shtick Her Down	An Táin Downstairs bar	9.30pm
Live DJ	An Táin Upstairs bar	9.30pm
Country Music Act	Carlton Shearwater	9.30pm
Chequers	Canal Bistro	10.00pm
Ultan Conlon	Pillarhouse	10.00pm
Bad Moon	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Black & White	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm
Woodbines	The Auld Sod	10.00pm
DJ Bosco	East Night Club	10.00pm
Chris Nash	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
9th MARCH		
County Ploughing Championships	Aughrim	All day
Running Against Cancer	St Michaels Square	9.00am
Pillarhouse Trad Session	Pillarhouse	6.00pm
Live Music	Maud Millar's	8.00pm
Industry Night	The Venue	10.00pm
10th MARCH		
Fr. Dunne Cup	Ballinasloe Bridge Club	8.00pm
Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	7.30pm
Line Dancing	Gullane's Hotel	8.00pm
Mothers Union Meeting	Gullane's Hotel	8.00pm
11th MARCH		
Unislim	Gullane's Hotel	5.30pm
Charity Night	Ballinasloe Bridge Club	8.00pm
Me & My Girl	Town Hall Theatre	8.00pm
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9.00pm
12th MARCH		
Ballinasloe Flower & Garden Club	Gullane's Hotel	8.00pm
Me & My Girl	Town Hall Theatre	8.00pm
Trad Session	An Táin	10.00pm
13th MARCH		
Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	11.00am
Charity Night	Ballinasloe Bridge Club	8.00pm
Me & My Girl	Town Hall Theatre	8.00pm
Country & Western Dancing	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm
Singers Circle	Dunlo Tavern	9.30pm
Kevin Rohan	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm
The Thursday Sessions	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
14th MARCH		
Country Market	Town Hall	9.00am
Monthly Wedding Showcase	Carlton Shearwater	12.00pm
The Beahan Family and Friends	An Táin	6.00pm
Me & My Girl	Town Hall Theatre	8.00pm
Kiwi Paddy	Canal Bistro	10.00pm
Strange Brew	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Small Deal	The Auld Sod	10.00pm
Ladies Night	The Venue	10.00pm
The Dunlo Session	Dunlo Tavern	10.00pm
15th MARCH		
Me & My Girl	Town Hall Theatre	8.00pm
The Big Lad	An Táin Downstairs bar	9.30pm
Live DJ	An Táin Downstairs bar	9.30pm
Country Music Act	Carlton Shearwater	9.30pm
Backstage	Canal Bistro	10.00pm
Hickory Wind	Pillarhouse	10.00pm
Live Music	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Last Man Standing	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm
Chris Nash	The Auld Sod	10.00pm
DJ Bosco	East Night Club	10.00pm
The Suspects	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
16th MARCH		
Max T Barnes	Carlton Shearwater	TBC
Pillarhouse Trad Session	Pillarhouse	6.00pm
Vigil St. Patrick's Mass	Creagh Church	6.30pm
Vigil St. Patrick's Mass	St. Michaels Church	7.00pm
Geagan Pagans	Pillarhouse	9.30pm
The 3J's	An Táin Downstairs bar	9.30pm

16th MARCH (continued)		
DJ Fergal Darcy iRadio	An Táin Upstairs bar	9.30pm
Imposter	Maud Millar's	8.00pm
One-to-One	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm
The Blaggards	The Auld Sod	10.00pm
Industry Night	The Venue	10.00pm
For Folk Sake	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
17th MARCH		
St. Patrick's Day Mass	St Michaels Church	9.00am
St. Patrick's Day Mass	Creagh Church	10.30am
St. Patrick's Day Mass	St Michaels Church	11.00am
St. Patrick's Day Mass	St Michaels Church	12.15pm
St. Patrick's Day Parade	Town Centre	1.30pm
St. Patrick's Day Session	Dunlo Tavern	6.00pm
Happy Bar Stars	Canal Bistro	10.00pm
Wash Out	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
St. Patrick's Day Party	An Táin	10.00pm
18th MARCH		
Unislim	Gullane's Hotel	5.30pm
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9.00pm
19th MARCH		
Trad Session	An Táin	10.00pm
20th MARCH		
Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	11.00am
BEST Awards Night	Carlton Shearwater	6.30pm
Bruno Groening	Gullane's Hotel	7.00pm
Country & Western Dancing	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm
The Thursday Sessions	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Kevin Rohan	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm
21st MARCH		
Country Market	Town Hall	9.00am
The Beahan Family and Friends	An Táin	6.00pm
Peter Boyles	Canal Bistro	10.00pm
The Cool Hand Dukes	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Ladies Night	The Venue	10.00pm
The Dunlo Session	Dunlo Tavern	10.00pm
Céili	Gullane's Hotel	10.00pm
22nd MARCH		
Too Tall Paul	An Táin Downstairs bar	9.30pm
Live DJ	An Táin Upstairs bar	9.30pm
Country Music Act	Carlton Shearwater	9.30pm
Chris Nash	Pillarhouse	10.00pm
Sweet Sensation	Canal Bistro	10.00pm
Live Music	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
He's Not me	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm
Big Deal	The Auld Sod	10.00pm
DJ Bosco	East Night Club	10.00pm
Live Music	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
23rd MARCH		
Pillarhouse Trad Session	Pillarhouse	6.00pm
Loose Rooster	Maud Millar's	8.00pm
Industry Night	The Venue	10.00pm
24th MARCH		
Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	7.30pm
Line Dancing	Gullane's Hotel	8.00pm
25th MARCH		
Unislim	Gullane's Hotel	5.30pm
Gus Hynes Trophy	Ballinasloe Bridge Club	8.00pm
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9.00pm
26th MARCH		
Trad Session	An Táin	10.00pm
27th MARCH		
Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	11.00am
The Beahan Family and Friends	An Táin	6.00pm
Country & Western Dancing	Hayden's Hotel	8.30pm
The Thursday Sessions	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Kevin Rohan	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm
28th MARCH		
Country Market	Town Hall	9.00am
Ladies Night	The Venue	10.00pm
Macey South	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
The Dunlo Session	Dunlo Tavern	10.00pm
29th MARCH		
No Half Measures	An Táin Downstairs bar	9.30pm
Live DJ	An Táin Upstairs bar	9.30pm
Country Music Act	Carlton Shearwater	9.30pm
Frankie McDonald	Canal Bistro	10.00pm
Live Music	Maud Millar's	10.00pm
Black & White	Hayden's Hotel	10.00pm
Tír na nÓg	The Auld Sod	10.00pm
DJ Bosco	East Night Club	10.00pm
Kensey 3	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
30th MARCH		
Live Music	Maud Millar's	8.00pm
Industry Night	The Venue	10.00pm
31st MARCH		
Ciorcál Comhrá	Gullane's Hotel	7.30pm
Line Dancing	Gullane's Hotel	8.00pm

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Barry Johnston's *Taste of Fame*

By Kevin O'Connor

Barry Johnston, a local Creagh man, whose mother Pat is a regular contributor to this magazine, became an overnight sensation when he appeared on Channel 4's *The Taste* earlier this year.

He impressed the judges with his imaginative mackerel and wasabi mayonnaise dish. Despite the reaction he knew he'd get from friends, he decided against Nigella's team and went with his culinary hero Anthony Bourdain.

He was given a standing ovation for his fish dish, despite not having any experience in a professional kitchen. All three judges, Nigella Lawson, American food writer, Anthony Bourdain and legendary French chef Ludo Lefebvre emotionally pleaded with the 27-year-old to join their team. After tasting a spoon of his offering, emotional Ludo said Barry had provided the "best dish in the competition and they are going to win the competition with that."

He added: "I wanted to do *The Taste* to test my method and see how good I was. The first impressions seem to be good, it was very intimidating cooking on the show. You're used to your own kitchen and knowing where everything is - but you're thrown into this new environment, there are cameras in your face, lights everywhere. Anthony is a hero of mine and he was the most intimidating to cook for. "I was totally outside my comfort zone." He was unlucky to exit the show



in the second round. "I would say I'm self taught. I learned from watching cooking shows on TV and trying out what I saw on those," said Barry. "My dad Johnny does a decent Sunday roast, but the fancier stuff I learned myself."

In a RTÉ Radio interview with John Murray after the show. He did warmly acknowledge that his Mum Pat did a mean scrambled eggs dish.

Barry works as a Senior Political Advisor in London for a charity called Christian Aid, the English equivalent of Trocaire, and says that London is a great place to live for someone who is into food; "You can eat food from a different country every day of the week," he said. "I definitely eat more than I cook. I'll go out and try something and give it a go myself," he said. He isn't someone to stick to the recipe though; "I'll often use a different type of meat, or mix it up with other spices. I could spend months changing a recipe around; for example, I spent years working on the mackerel recipe, tweaking things and trying different ideas."

Barry went to Creagh NS, then Garbally Secondary School and finally went to college in NUIG. "The seafood in Galway is excellent. McDonagh's Seafood Bar is one of my favourites." Barry is a fan local food. "It's great that Ballinasloe has so many great local producers and shops. It's important that people support them," he said. Barry also has a taste for less refined local specialities: "I'm also a big fan of Supemacs Coleslaw Cheese Chips. That's something I get homesick for in London," said Barry, who also used to frequent Tohers in town before it closed. Barry and his family also go to The Bread Basket for their potato cakes on Christmas Eve.

Barry's time on *The Taste* had an unexpected result. "One of the great things about the show was that people, some of whom I hadn't seen in years, came out of the woodwork and left messages on Facebook and things like that, wishing me luck," he said. "You don't meet a lot of people from Ballinasloe in London, so it meant a lot, even if it didn't help me get very far!"

Barry doesn't have any plans to become a professional chef. "I'm definitely going to continue to eat, if not cook," he said. "I'd like to get a job writing about food. I'm currently working on *Feast: A Dinner Journal* with Donal Skeehan and Ross Golden-Bannon," he said. *Feast* is available on www.feastdinnerjournal.com and will soon be available in Easons and other speciality bookstores. 🐣

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Ballinasloe Native Hosts Mum on a Christmas Visit to Qatar

By Kevin O'Connor

You wouldn't really think that Galway and Qatar have much in common, would you? Qatar sits on a small peninsula in the Persian Gulf and shares a land border with Saudi Arabia. Most of us know it as the country that will host the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

However, Qatar is home to a Ballinasloe man, David Gallagher. David is a Chartered Engineer working on a 76 acre, €15 Billion project called Msheirib Downtown Doha. He sent us in this rather interesting picture of him, his daughter Noorah (14 months old and has already flown 29 times and visited 8 countries) and his mother, Nora Gallagher, next to the worlds' largest flag, which also happens to be in the Galway colours of maroon and white!

David moved to Oman in 2007 and met his wife Salha whom he married in 2011. Then he moved to the United Arab Emirates for four and a half years and has been living in Qatar for the last two years. His mother, Nora, visited him for Christmas and the New Year and they visited the record breaking flag while they were there. "My mum has been sending me over copies of Ballinasloe Life since it started," he said. "I'd love to see her face if a photo of her next to the flag was published!"



The flag is a massive 101,000 square metres and weighs a whopping ten tonnes! It spans the length of nineteen football pitches and beat Romania's former flag of 79,000 feet, which took 43 miles of thread to stitch. The flag entered the Guinness Book of World Records on December 16. Naturally, there is no flagpole capable of flying such a massive flag, so it will remain grounded. Qatar hold some other unusual records as well. They hold the record for the largest soccer ball, the longest thank-you letter to a ruler, the largest monopoly

game, the largest squash racket and the world's largest T-Shirt! The flag will be made into 200,000 bag-packs and distributed to children in need in 60 countries around the world. "There is a good GAA club here," said David. "I know there are a few guys from town in the United Arab Emirates, but I haven't met any here in Qatar."

Flag colours and David Gallagher may be all that Qatar and Galway have in common, but it just goes to show that there are always connections to be made, even in the most unlikely of places!

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Town Band Reforms

By Kevin O'Connor

The Town Band, formed in 1878, is one of the oldest institutions around and has just reformed. "Every town should have a band. We decided it was time to get it back together," said Conductor Noel Madden. The band stopped in 2002. "These things go through phases. Like anything, hurling or football, interest comes and goes," said JJ Smith.

"One of the most important things we do is to teach kids. If a child, say, 8 or 9 years old comes to us, by the time they're 16,

they'll be able to play any instrument and read music," said JJ Smith. JJ is part of a family that has had four generations involved in the Town Band. "Kids nearly always keep up the music, even after they stop playing with the town band. They could move away, but they'll always have that skill."

The skills you learn with the Band will definitely stay with you for life. The Town Band has a store of over 50 instruments that people can borrow from the full range of brass and woodwind and a few points in between. As these can be

quite expensive, having a large store of musical instruments is a huge bonus. "The instruments belong to the town, so anyone in the town can use them," said Noel.

Experience is not a requirement either. Anyone, no matter what age they are or how much experience they have, is welcome to join. The Town Band can teach you how to play and can easily set up private lessons if you want them. "What we'd encourage is to practice your instrument for maybe 10, or 15 minutes a day at home," said JJ. Everyone learns at their own speed and the band is more than willing to help people master whatever instruments they want.

At its peak, the band had 52 people marching in the parade on St. Patrick's Day in 1984. "It'll be about a year until we're ready to do any performances. Our main priority is to get people in, get the classes up and running and start practicing," said Noel.

There are currently no plans in place for getting involved in competitions, or playing private functions. Practice is temporarily in Duane's Archway, but will be moving into the Town Hall Theatre once the new roof is finished. "We would aim to get a practice in once a week and have it on a certain day every week," said Noel. "People can come whenever they can, as we realise it might be difficult for people to attend all of them."

People wishing to join The Town Band can call Nora Flaherty at 0872927563 or Joe Duane at 0879969872, or e-mail Joe at duanejoe@gmail.com



(L-R): Noel Madden, JJ Smith, John Smith, Nora Flaherty, Des Duane, Joe Duane

Left: Shauna Concannon: Band Member, fourth Generation of the Smith Family to be a member of the Town Band. JJ Smith and Nora Flaherty are her Uncle and Aunt, Jim "Giggler" Smith was her Grandad (who played Bass Drum) and his father, Willie, was drummer with the Band.

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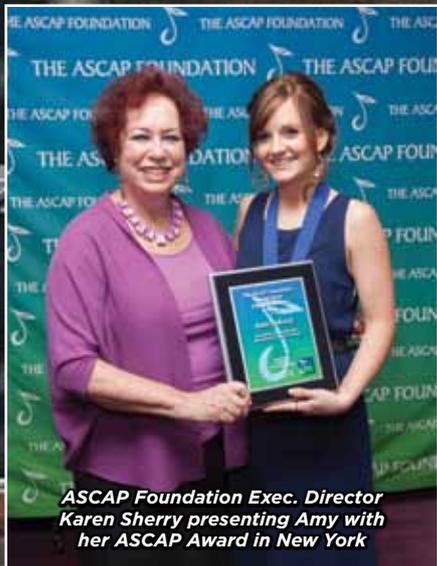
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An International Composer To Watch Amie Doherty



ASCAP Foundation Exec. Director Karen Sherry presenting Amy with her ASCAP Award in New York

By Kevin O'Connor

Local Lass Amie Doherty enjoyed Christmas and New Year with her family before heading back out to Los Angeles where she is busy developing her career as a composer in the movie industry and winning awards and accolades.

Listening to Amie's music makes travelling the hinterlands even more breathtaking than usual. There are some fantastic, awe-inspiring views hereabouts and these dramatic landscapes can really be accentuated with powerful piece of music, which Amie provides with gusto. From chilling, atmospheric pieces to uplifting, dramatic crescendos, here is a composer that knows her craft. She is able to instil powerful emotions in listeners, masterfully exploring a plethora of feelings with her sound.

Amie is the daughter of Chris and Martina Doherty, Brackernagh. She credits her family for her interest in music. "All of my family are very musical, my mam plays the trumpet, my brother's a drummer, my dad plays guitar and my sister plays flute and piano," said Amie, who started playing piano at just four years old.

"I'd like to be a successful film composer. I'm very determined," said Amie. A look at her past achievements certainly proves that. Amie went to school in An Croi Niofa NS and went to Ardscoil Mhuire Secondary School, here in town. She learned piano from local music teachers Nelly Hurley and Marie Power and completed her 8 Grades in piano at the Royal Irish Academy of Music.

At 16, she gained her diploma in piano performance from Victoria College of Music in London. She went on to study Music Technology at Trinity College and graduated magna cum laude from Berklee Colleges inaugural masters programme in Scoring for Film, Television and Video Games.

She has been credited in seven short films to date and composed the music for four of them. She also composed the music for the feature length film *Tumbleweed*. She was named as one of the American Society of Composers, Authors

and Publishers (ASCAP) 'Composers to Watch' in their 2013 Composer Spotlight. She has won various competitions for her music, including becoming one of twelve composers chosen for the ASCAP Foundation Harold Allen Award, something hundreds of people apply for every year.

She also received a scholarship from Academy Award and Grammy-winning composer Howard Shore (composer of *The Lord of the Rings*, *Hugo* and *Silence of the Lambs*.) who said: "Her music has a great sense of adventure and lyricism. She has a unique voice."

Amie has been chosen as one of four composers out of hundreds for the Society of Composers and Lyricists Mentor Programme and recently moved to LA, where she is now based full-time. "I'm going to miss my family and my mam's dinners," she said. She is definitely no stranger to travelling though, as she has lived in England, Spain, America, Korea, Vietnam and India. "I took a big break from doing anything musical for a while," she said.

For kids looking to get involved in music, the Town Band is a great facility and Amie used to play the cornet in it. Getting involved in school plays can also be useful, as Amie said: "I learned how to play background music sitting at a piano when my mam was directing school plays. She'd tell me 'play something dark,' or 'play something happy,' and I picked it up that way." She also used to play in the school orchestra. All that experience has certainly stood to her, as she has since worked with the 47-piece Clint Eastwood Scoring Stage at Warner Bros Studios and the 61-piece Hollywood Studio Symphony on the Newman Scoring Stage at 20th Century Fox orchestras, which is quite a leap from the early days. The Town Band is reforming and would be a great way for people, of any age group, to broaden their musical horizons.

Amie's music is available from her own website at www.amiedohertymusic.com. Listening to her music is a richly rewarding and moving experience. It is easy to tell that she is a composer we are going to hear a lot more of in the future.

More Defibrillators For Creagh



L-R: Fr Declan Mc Inerney, Committee Member, Mary Molloy, Creagh Community Council, Kevin Cunniffe, Aptar, Tommie Costello, Committee Member, Mike Dolan, Dolans Service Station, Aidan Curley, Committee Member.

By Helen Harney

In Ireland about 100 people each week die from a sudden cardiac arrest. 68% of cardiac arrests occur in the patient's home. An AED (Automatic External Defibrillator) is a life-saving piece of equipment used in the early treatment of cardiac arrest that can increase survival rates dramatically. It delivers an electric shock to the heart and is very safe and easy to use. If CPR and defibrillation are provided within 3-5 minutes of collapse, survival rates can be increased up to 74%. Great efforts are being made to increase the availability of AED's and to train the general public in their use and in CPR.

With this in mind a group of Creagh residents formed a committee to fundraise for an AED and provided training to people in the locality in 2012. A fundraising night in the Countryman Inn was held and local businesses and organisations also contributed to the cost. The AED was positioned on the external wall of the Countryman Inn.

Recently two more AED's have been purchased thanks to local fundraising. These are positioned at Dolan's Centra in Kilgarve and the entrance to Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre, Creagh Rd. "The committee would like to thank Creagh Community County, Cregg Stone, Heart of the Matter, Dolans Service Station and Aptar for providing funding for the two new AED's."

Along with the provision of AED's over 30 people from the area have been provided with training in CPR and use of an AED. Some people can be initially fearful of training in CPR and using an AED as they might feel they would harm the victim. The reality is that the AED will guide the user step by step through the process. Training is free and takes about three hours and trainees become proficient in providing CPR and using AED's very easily in a relaxed environment. The training is provided in the National Ambulance Service College in the Enterprise Centre, Creagh Rd.

In the event of a person collapsing in the locality, the ambulance services should be contacted immediately by phoning 999 or 112. If help is available a person can go to the location of their nearest AED. A list of phone numbers of trained responders in the locality is mounted beside each AED and when called will respond to the situation. In the near future it is planned that the ambulance service will contact the relevant responders directly.

The committee are planning to hold more training this March with the aim to have as many people as possible able to provide CPR. It is hoped to provide additional AED's locally if funds are raised. The scheme could also be extended throughout Ballinasloe if other local community groups are interested in fundraising for AED's.



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Out and About in Ballinasloe



Members of Bros of Charity Rainbow Services at Brothers of Charity, Deerpark Centre, Ballinasloe (L-R): Teresa O'Brien, Helen Kelly, Bernie Topliss, Billy Arnold, Ciara O'Connor, Michael Hogan and Maura Ward (Art Teacher) at the National Intellectual Disability Database Committee's Annual Report Cover competition 2013 award ceremony.



Michael and Kathleen Cunningham, Clonbeggane, Ballydangan, Athlone, celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary recently with family and friends at the Shearwater Hotel, Ballinasloe. Pictured here with Linda and Niall Cunningham, Kieran and Della Finnerty, Tom and Pearl Kenny and Joe and Margaret Cunningham.



Mayor of Ballinasloe, Cllr Mike Kelly visited Ballinasloe Library during Library Ireland Week to present prizes to children from Scoil an Chroí Naofa NS, Ballinasloe.



Mock Wedding Cheque Presentation to Ballinasloe Social Services (L-R): Teresa Coughlan (Ballinasloe Social Services), Annette Lynagh, (Ballinasloe Social Services), Diana Walsh (Fundraising Committee), Brendan Canning (Fundraising Committee), Cllr. Johnny Walsh.



Run Against Cancer Participants 2014



Kilnadeema Mummies with Sean O'Rourke (Sponsor), Winners of the Junior Mummies Competition at the Galway Mummies Festival in New Inn.



Accepting the cheque, from St Michael's Church Folk Choir, on behalf of the East Galway Cancer Support were Vicky Costelloe and Mary Jordan.



At the launch of Portiuncula Hospital's Smoke Free Zone were: Standing, Peter Finnerty, Carmel Boyle, Marita Fogarty, Dr. Joel Kavanagh, Margaret Casey. In Front, Maeve Doherty, Killian Hurst, Chris Kane, Máire Kelly, Lizzy O'Sullivan, Denis Minton, Dr. Michael Brassil.

Rachel Goode Charity Concert



Rachel Goode



Conor O'Meara



Donna Malone



Peter O'Reilly

By Kevin O'Connor

St. Michaels Church is looking forward to hosting what is sure to be a fantastic charity concert. Local Rachel Goode will be performing along with Peter O'Reilly, Conor O'Meara, Donna Malone, Organist Marie Power, the Ard Scoil Mhuire Choir and David Kennedy. The event will take place on the February 28 and whilst admission is free, all proceeds are going to Galway Hospice.

"I recently heard that Galway Hospice lost all their government funding and I thought this was a huge loss," said Rachel. "They are asking for people to help to raise money in any way they can and I've always wanted to put on a concert." There is also a more personal reason for why she chose this cause. "One of my friends' mum passed away in the hospice and their family couldn't speak highly enough about it."

Rachel got involved in singing from a very young age. "I started getting voice

lessons at eight or nine," she said. "I was involved in Irish and hip-hop dancing and school plays when I was younger." Rachel began classical training at 15, when she went to an audition in the Royal Irish Academy of Music. She was awarded a scholarship to train with Dr. Veronica Dunne and later moved to DIT, with Collette McGahon. "I'm in my final year in my degree with the Conservatory of Music and Dance, specialising in performance," said Rachel. "I'd like to go into opera, which involves really, really hard training. Opera singers don't use microphones, so they rely on the power of our voices to fill the opera houses and carry over the orchestra."

Rachel had a memorable year of it last year when she agreed to enter the Queen of the Fair Competition for her local Centra Store and Garge where she works - Dolans. Little did she know that not alone would she be representing her part time employers and neighbours firm but she actually wooed the judges and

took the title. After a mad few days in October during Fair Week, she faces the fun of representing the Fair and Festival in the up coming Galway Rose Contest in April of this year.

Rachel has some excellent advice for children and young people who have an interest in singing or performing. "Joining the choir for mass is a great way for kids to get involved in singing," she said. "I started out that way and started getting to do solos. Getting involved in everything musical is great, it really builds confidence. The earlier you get into it, the better, but it's never too late either!" There are a lot of music resources in the area, like school and church choirs and the Town Band, for people to join.

Rachel's concert will cover a wide variety of musical genres, so there is sure to be something for all tastes. The event is in aid of an excellent cause as well, which deserves all the support it can get.

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Town Hall Poised For Upgrade

By Kevin O'Connor

The Directors of Ballinasloe Town Hall Theatre have been offered a capital grant of €86,827 from Ballinasloe Town Council which will be used to repair the roof.

Since securing the lease on the building in 2011, they have investigated the availability of funding from various sources including Local authority, Arts Council, Leader and The Heritage Council. Two major stumbling blocks were the lack of charitable status, which was finally obtained in 2012 and fact that the building is not fully secure from the elements.

In the last 24-30 months the building has been inspected by Conservation Architects and Structural Engineers, whose reports are necessary for all grant applications. Ms Maureen Duddy, Conservation Officer with Galway Co. Council, is assisting the project as they move forward. Conservations Architects, a Theatre Consultant and a Structural Engineer have all been appointed and are they engaged Project Management Services from BACD to fast track the capital programme. The Theatre applied for and received the necessary Planning Permission in accordance with Part 4, Section 57 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 on 23rd April 2013.

The church graciously gifted the sum of €43,000 to assist with capital works. This is being used as matched funding for the grant received from the Town Council. There has been a number of successful fundraising events such as: Golf Classic and Rose Cabarets. The E-Tendering for the Renovation of the Roof and Ancillary works has commenced and it's anticipated the total works of phase 1 to be approximately €190,000. Their fundraising target is €60,000. All the works must be completed by 1st May 2014 to receive the funding and they hope not to discommode current users in the interim.

To date all core operational income is derived from rent received from groups using the venue. This is charged at €250 per night, plus heat and light costs to all amateur groups in the locality. Professional groups are charged more. Licences



use the building (ie. AOIFE and the Country Market) and some performing arts schools. In 2013 they expanded the use of the hall to include professional acts (ie. Seán Keane), a book launch, a 3-day history seminar, TG4 production location, All-Ireland Credit Union Talent Competition, Sean Nós Dancing competition and the filming of a music video.

All current expenses to the building are paid from this income. Small repairs, cleaning and upkeep of the building and its surrounds are attended to by workers on the Community Employment Scheme, allied with a TUS operative. They will be meeting representatives from all Local Performance groups early in the Spring to consider how growing audience and usage of the building can be mutually achieved, without aggravating the under pressure finances of the User Groups, the Building and indeed you the audience. They are hosting an AGM of Ballinasloe Town Hall Society on February 19th and will be looking for new Society Members to join the efforts to keep this building at the heart of cultural activity in the town.

Chair Mary O'Connell thanked all our local performance groups for their continued support for the Town Hall, in these trying times and our audiences for their ongoing support to the venue. "We would be happy to hear of your views on how we proceed, by email: ballinasloetownhalltheatre@gmail.com or contacting any of our Directors: Colm Croffy, Gerry Sweeney, Pat McGovern, Eamon O'Donoghue, Fr John Garvey, Brendan Tully and John Boland."

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Musical Society's *Me & My Girl*



By Catherine McCormack

This year along with an impressive local cast of 55 and production team, Paul Norton (Director), Shane Farrell (Musical Director) and Sarah Griffin (Choreographer), Ballinasloe Musical Society are all set to deliver their audience yet another Musical treat *Me and My Girl*.

It's that kind of show; a snappy, tuneful British musical comedy, that delights with its breezy score, humorously drawn characters and clever writing. Music by Noel Gay and words adapted by Stephen Fry, *Me and My Girl* is full of catchy tunes, corny jokes and lashings of lively dancing.

The show features a host of familiar faces along with a few new ones, bringing the

Town Hall alive with favourites such as "The Lambeth Walk" and "The Sun Has Got His Hat On".

Set in the late 1930s, The local earl has died, the musical tells the story of his heir, Bill Snibson, (played by the very talented Eoin Costello, a transition year student in Garbally and son of Tom and Ethel Costello, Moore - no stranger to theatre and drama!) an unapologetically cockney gentleman who learns that he is the rather unlikely 14th Earl of Hareford, much to the horror of his family and fellow blue bloods. Worse yet, he's stuck on dear, sweet Sally (played by Sarah Corcoran, no stranger to Ballinasloe audiences - well known singer and Vocal Coach) who acts and sounds like Eliza Doolittle did before her crash course with that fast-talking professor.

Add to the mix, gold-digger Lady Jacqueline (Joanne Kelly), her dumb-founded boyfriend (Patrick Byrne), the family solicitor (Seamus Feerick), the formidable Duchess (Majella Flanagan) the ever caring Sir John (Mike O'Reilly) along with a host of well known characters and no strangers to local audiences: Dave Hardiman (Charles the Butler), Brian Derrane (Mr Battersby), Catherine Madden (Mrs Browne) and Eoin Quinn (Bill Barking) and you have all the ingredients of a great night's entertainment.

The show runs for five nights, starting Tuesday 11th March at 8pm with the Patrons and Sponsors Gala Opening Night and nightly at 8pm until Saturday 15th March.

Followed by the Festival Club after show party on the 15th which will be held in Gullane's Hotel, why not join the cast? As always audiences, Patrons and Sponsors are vital to the continued success and even existence of the Society. Without their support the society would be unable to preserve the art of live musical theatre in Ballinasloe. Should you wish to become a Patron or Sponsor, please contact any committee member or Frances Leahy on 087 222 0282.

Tickets will be on sale from 3rd March in the Town Hall Theatre Office and Ballinasloe Credit Union, contact no: 083 1085544. Find us on Facebook or visit www.ballinasloems.ie

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The Art of Keeping and Giving

By Maureen Cahalan

When Dorothy in the epic film "The Wizard of Oz" wanted to return home she clicked together her now famous ruby slippers. This iconic moment was designed to show that home is where we want to belong.

Recently, with this in mind I took a step back from my life. I spent weeks decluttering the house, getting rid of old clothes, furniture and bric-a-brack which had accumulated over the years and made space for three piles; the first of these was assigned for the things I will use and thus keep. The second pile I allocated to 'maybe' section and the third pile consisted of what was committed to being given away, as these were items which were no longer needed. By setting up this process of 'keeping and giving', I began to view my life with a fresh new perspective.

Each day over a few weeks I set aside 30 minutes to determine the allocation of my 'keeping, maybe and giving way' piles. I had been undeniably motivated into action, as by the end



of this process there was a huge sense of accomplishment. The biggest thrill was in converting my 'maybe pile' into the 'the giving away pile'. Delivering well presented bags to appreciative recipients was by far the greatest reward.

The art of keeping makes us more aware of what is important to us, while the art of giving makes us more human. As it happens, I found a pair of little red shoes in the mix. It was so good to be home, home for me is truly Ballinasloe. 



Ambrose Judge Tribute By Pat Joe Guinnessy

Local Guitar player, Ambrose Judge passed away back in early December. I first encountered Ambrose at Frank Owen's house in Creagh where he came to live some years back. I knew that I had met someone very special. Ambrose was highly intelligent, knowledgeable and well read a fact well concealed by his unassuming and modest manner. He was a gifted guitar player and a marvellous teacher of the instrument. He published a book explaining his methods of instruction and hoped to follow this with a DVD to compliment the book. In fact Ambrose could play all stringed instruments well but will be best remembered musically for his sensitive interpretation of old Irish and general folk tunes on that big well worn guitar of his. As a proud Crossmolina man - Ambrose played all over including Germany, England as well as the Irish scene and was a most welcome addition to any session. He leaves behind in Ballinasloe many friends and a stable of fine young musicians taught by him. His friends intend to hold a tribute/benefit concert in his memory in Gullanes in April where the cream of Irish musicians will perform. Deepest sympathy to his brothers and sisters, his daughter Danielle and to the extended family at their great loss.

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THURSDAY Sheep Sale from 5.30pm



SATURDAY Suckler
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Sale from 11am



The Work Begins for 2014 Fair

By Kevin O'Connor

As the Christmas decorations come down, the Fair and Festival Committee are already planning for this year's fair. There is a little more time for planning as this year's fair starts nearly a full week later than 2013, on 4th October.

Chairman Adrian Ahern said, "The hard work starts again and we have to grind our way up through the gears for October 2014. When you start preparations in earnest, you realise what keeps you going and in our case, in addition to a very dedicated committee it's our sponsors. We really cannot thank them enough and I mean that. Their continuing support keeps us ticking over."

Ahern has also pointed out that this year will be different, "This year we have a changing landscape and I'm not talking about the Fair Green. We are facing a changing and challenging landscape and we will have a new local

authority and we don't know what the implications are for the co-ordination, local authority interaction and financial support. We hope and will be asking the elected members of the new authority to support us in our work which means so much to the social and economic life of the town and its hinterland. Outside of Ballinasloe just try getting a hotel room in Loughrea or Athlone on the first weekend of Fair week. It is nigh on impossible. That's how big it is and we have to remember how important Fair week is to people all over Ireland."

With plans for 2014 taking shape Ahern is relishing the challenges ahead, "It's tough at times, money is tight, despite making a detailed submission we weren't lucky enough to get any funding from the recent allocations from the Town Council, but as voluntary committee we move on. We pick ourselves up and go again. Some aspects of the Fair have been building nicely in the last few

years and we are looking to continue that trend. One aspect we would like to improve this year is to get more local people involved, make it a bigger part of the community and indeed, a community-building event. We are putting plans together for locals to get involved through volunteering initiatives. It's very exciting. We are always look for local feed back as well, we always listen."

"2014 is the Chinese year of the horse and we are looking forward to our week of the horse!"

Everyone at the Ballinasloe Fair would like to wish Mike Stapleton TOW and Ballinasloe TOW teams all the best at the World Indoor Tug-Of-War Championship taking place in Castlebar next month. Both teams have learned their craft on the streets of Ballinasloe, pulling rope during Fair Week over the years. Best of luck head coaches Mike and Noel and their squad members." 

Fr. McCormack's Swedish Success [facebook.com/ballinasloe.fair](https://www.facebook.com/ballinasloe.fair)

Recently, the Connemara Pony Breeder Society celebrated their 90th anniversary in Carey's equestrian centre Creagh, commemorating the founding of the society, an event that took place 91 years ago, in December 1923 in west of the country, in Connemara. One noteworthy Connemara Pony, *Ballinasloe Ambassador* was bred by Fr Christy McCormack, Fohenagh, Chairman of the Show and is currently owned by Maja Gunnar in Sweden. This registered Connemara pony was sold in Goresbridge as a two-year-old, although presented for sale as a yearling at the Ballinasloe Horse Fair. Whilst it

did not secure a potential purchaser, it was providential for Maja Gunnar resulting from the Goresbridge sales. The pony was initially purchased by an English Customer and sold on to its current owner in Sweden. In Sweden, owners and lovers of Connemara ponies descended on the town of Norrköping where the Swedish Connemara society, together with the riding club *Ekenryttarna* arranged a three day Connemara show. The festival ended with championship awards being given to deserving ponies. The gelding *Ballinasloe Ambassador* was given the award for jumping!


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The Passing of Frank Barrett

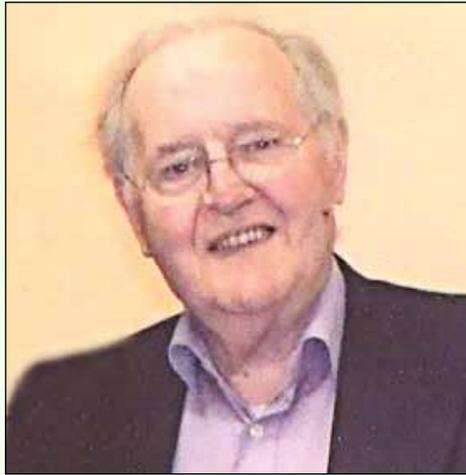
By Ken Kelly

The sudden passing of Frank Barrett, Glentaun, Ballinasloe, came as a great shock to all who knew the popular former businessman, who was part and parcel of his adopted town for over fifty years.

Born in Ramore, Killimor on 28th July, 1928, Frank grew up with his brothers Paddy, Joe and Kevin as well as his sisters Mai and Rita. From an early age he took a very active part in all sports, lining out with his native Killimor in under age hurling. He was selected on the Galway minor hurling team in 1946 and soon afterwards featured with the Galway senior team in the late 40's and early 50's.

Frank began his apprenticeship in the hardware business in Sweeney's of Loughrea and later in Coen's of Gort before opening his own business in Main St., Ballinasloe in 1954, formerly owned by John Cunningham. Frank married Olga Moylan from Kanturk in Co. Cork and together the pair were a formidable team, expanding the business into one of the country's leading hardware stores.

In the early 70's, Frank was a founder member of Associated Hardware Limited, a buying group for smaller hardware businesses throughout Ireland, now known as Homevalue Hardware. Afterwards, in the early 80's, the Barrett family purchased a premises on Society Street and moved their business there



to accommodate their ever expanding enterprise. Homevalue Hardware soon became a household name all over Ireland as one of the leading hardware outlets and giving much-needed local employment.

An accomplished golfer, Frank gave freely of his time encouraging and coaching youngsters and others to improve their game at his beloved Ballinasloe Golf Club. He was a very competitive player himself, at one stage off a handicap of 3, where he became a respected opponent on the fairways of Ballybunion, Waterville, Lahinch and other top courses. His voluntary contribution to his Ballinasloe Club was acknowledged when he was elected captain in 1969, president in both 1978 and the Centenary Year of 1994, as well as being one the club's trustees for years.

A member of the Bridge Club for several years, Frank rose to be a Regional Master and was a member of an All-Ireland winning team in the 80's. He took a huge interest in encouraging new members and was always available to impart his considerable knowledge and skills of the game.

He was a modest man, a kind and helpful neighbour and a genuine sportsman. Frank Barrett was first and foremost a family man. Following his retirement, he and Olga enjoyed regular social outings with friends and former businesspeople of his adopted town, to reminisce, chat and talk about the town, its characters and people for nigh on sixty years. He will be sadly missed but will be remembered as one who helped and encouraged so many on their ventures into the sporting, business and industrial world.

Large numbers of mourners turned up to pay their respects as Frank's remains reposed at the family home and also at the funeral Mass in St. Michael's Church. Colleagues and friends from many organisations formed a guard of honour as Frank's mortal remains made its final journey for burial in Creagh Cemetery.

The late Frank Barrett is survived by his wife Olga, sons Gerry, Kieran and Mike; daughter Carol, son-in-law Jim, daughters-in-law Gerardine, Máire and Mary; 11 grandchildren, granddaughter-in-law, one great-granddaughter, sister Rita Lyons (Loughrea) as well as many other relatives and friends.

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Golf: A Sport for All Your Life



By Tom Lucas, President, Ballinasloe G.C.

A NEW YEAR, NEW PLANS? Why not include golf and become a member of Ballinasloe Golf Club. Golf is a great Social outlet for anyone from 9 to 90, age is no barrier in golf. Many members started playing golf in their retirement years and get many great years of enjoyment out of it. It is a great sport which can be very beneficial to your health and wellbeing. Parents can introduce their children to the game from any age, they might just be the next Rory McIlroy or Leona Maguire!

SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP OFFER: Ballinasloe Golf Club has a great membership offer in place to get you started and also to bring back friends who have left for various reasons down through the years. Membership for new and returning members this year is at the special price of €350 plus GUI fees of €25.

This can be paid in interest free installments throughout the year. An open night for new and prospective members will be held in the clubhouse on February 12th. New members have the option to avail of lessons with our local pro Mark Staunton which is a great way to get you started and back in the game.

Ballinasloe Golf Club is set on an attractive parkland course. It is a very friendly, easy going club that you can feel at home in, have a game of golf or relax with friends in the clubhouse. We have a bar and restaurant which opens all year around for all sorts of functions and get togethers. Ballinasloe Golf Club is open to the community for local charities and organisations for functions and fundraising. We are also very proud of our association with The Ballinasloe Eagles who use our facility and who did so well to bring home gold and silver medals from the Special Olympics.

DATE TO REMEMBER: 2nd March we are holding the Captains/ Presidents drive in. All are welcome. Details of all other events for February and March are available on our website.

We would also like to wish good luck to Men's Captain Joe Gaffney, Lady's Captain Noreen Kenny and our president Tom Lucas in the year ahead. Our website address is www.ballinasloegolfclub.ie. We are also on Facebook and our phone number is 090 96 42126.



Over 90 and still going strong: Val Martin still enjoys his weekly round of golf and chat at the nineteenth.



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Pearses' Roscommon Captain



By Kevin O'Connor

Niall Carty, prominent Pádraig Pearses footballer, was recently named as captain of the Roscommon Gaelic Senior Football team. Originally from Ballydangan in County Roscommon, Niall has been involved in his local GAA club since he was a young lad. He is one of three top Pearses players currently on the county side, alongside Glentaun brothers Conor and Nially Daly who play at full and centre-back.

"I've been playing for Pádraig Pearses GAA club since I was about 6-years-old," he said. "People from around the parish got me interested and my parents got me involved when I was young. Johnny Johnston and Gerry Kenny would have coached me and Pat Barrett coached me too." Niall is the second oldest of four in his family, along with his mother Brigid and father Michael.

Niall attended St. Kierans N.S. and after that Garbally College. As he became older, Mike Dawson and Ollie Dooley were his coaches and he started playing for Roscommon at County level at 16. "I played for Roscommon at Under 16, Minor, Under 21, Junior and subsequently Senior level," he said.

Niall got the call in December asking him to be the captain of the Roscommon football team. "It's a great honour and a privilege, to be asked to be captain. I'm thankful for the opportunity," he said.

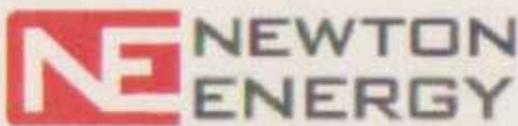
He would be one of the few players at senior level to have had the honour from the Club in it's 54-year history of serving the Gaelic Games needs to the hinterland of Creagh, Moore and Taughmaconnell. He is ambitious and hopeful for the coming season. "Our main focus is on the National League for the moment," Niall said. "We would also aim to make it out of Division Three and into Division Two. If you want to be competing with the bigger teams, the likes of Mayo, Galway or Dublin, you would need to be in Division Two. But for the time being, we're just going to take it one step at a time."

Pearses GAA has a large support base, as Niall pointed out; "It covers a massive area and the majority of people around here are football mad, hurling mad and GAA mad really! Obviously, the better you do the more people start to come to your games, so support around here is excellent."

They have 24 teams at all levels, in all codes, including ladies football and camogie and have an All-Ireland winning Scór team!

Pearses have got brilliant facilities as well. With two full sized pitches and three smaller ones, they have a set up anyone would be envious of. They have numerous dressing rooms, a squash court and a lovely clubhouse. Pearses were named "Connacht Club of the Year" recently, so as Niall said, "They'd be right up there with the best clubs in the country."

Niall advises young players to practice the basics. "Keep practicing with your left leg, left hand, right leg, right hand. Wise up to listening to your coaches and you'll be more accomplished player when you're older."



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Fred Kilmartin Cup

Teresa Kilmartin of Fred Kilmartin Ltd, Ballinasloe presented a trophy in memory of her late father Fred Kilmartin to the Ballinasloe GAA Club. The Fred Kilmartin Ltd. Memorial Cup is for an underage tournament within Ballinasloe GAA club. Organisers intend to run a Minor hurling tournament early in the new year for the cup. It will probably be a four team tournament with some local teams but the details have yet to be confirmed.



Pat O'Sullivan and Christine Kenny (Ballinasloe GAA), Teresa Kilmartin (Director, Fred Kilmartin's), Gerry Seale and Damien Naughton (Ballinasloe GAA), Michael Kelly (Fred Kilmartin's)

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Rugby: U15 Girls are Connacht League Cup Winners 2013-14

By Kevin O'Connor

It all started at the end of August last Summer. A group of girls, most of whom had never played rugby before, took up the sport on a warm summer afternoon in Ballinasloe Rugby Club. Under the guidance of Catherin Devine, Marie Codyre, Gearoid Finneran, Stephen Reilly and Declan Murphy, this enthusiastic group proceeded to learn the skills of rugby.

As the weather returned to more familiar Irish conditions especially during November and December, training continued every Tuesday night and most Saturday afternoons. Saturdays that were not spent training were taken up with league matches against various Connacht opponents. The girls created history by hosting the first ever Girls league match at Graigueawoneen on 9th November and ran out comfortable winners over a spirited Creggs side. Further victories followed against Galwegians (home), Tuam (away) and Ballina (home). The much anticipated match against Westport, last years' league winners, took place in Westport on 11th January 2014 with

Ballinasloe eventually overcoming a strong Westport team 34-20. Their last league match was a comfortable win over the Connemara All-Blacks and the girls were crowned league winners at the first attempt!

This was a tremendous performance by the entire panel to win the league in their very first season. As a reward for winning the league, the girls have been invited to play at half-time in the Womens 6 Nations game on Friday, 31st January in Ashbourne against Leinster opponents.

However, the girls do not intend to rest on their laurels. The first round of the Cup starts 8th February, with a very tough fixture away to Ballina.

Recently, Ballinasloe RFC set up U18 Girls rugby team, with a surprisingly large contingent turning up for the first training session last Saturday. New members are always welcome. For U18 details please contact Patricia Tierney 087 917 6541 and you can follow all Ballinasloe Rugby Club news and events on www.facebook.com/Ballinasloe Rugby Club.



Back (L-R): Marie Codyre, Aoife Dudgeon, Aoibheann Reilly, Emily Gavin, Leona Larkin, Aoife Horkan, Sarah Dent, Georgia Codyre, Ellen McLoughlin, Aisling Murphy, Abbie Hynes, Breann Walsh, Amie Hawkins, Aine Galvin. Front (L-R): Maebh Deely, Beibheann Parsons, Niamh Kenny, Roisin Lyons, Natasha Walsh, Eva Sinclair, Hannah Murray, Isabel Finneran, Alisha Williams. Absent from the photo: Rosa and Ellen Bleahen, Eimear Grehan, Heather Payne and Roisin Lyons.

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St. Bridgid's, Ballinasloe, 1973 Senior Hurling County Finalists: Back (L-R): Sean Kelly, Sean Flaherty, PJ Lawless, Pat Lally, Joe Kelly, Seamus Burke, Willie Ward, JJ Murray, Johnny Coughlan. Front: Gerry Mitchell, Tony Carr, Gerry Coone, Mike Cormican, PJ Lynch, Peadar Ryan and Cyril Dunne.



At the Reunion (L-R), Back: T Purcell, J Costello, O Gannon, M O'Connell, M Hynes, Pat Coleman, F Leonard, C Cormican, P Loughnane, F Curley, M Craughwell. Middle: S Ruane, S Kelly, S Flaherty, PJ Lawless, P Lally, J Kelly, S Burke, W Warde, J.J Murray, J Coughlan. Front: J Shaughnessy, P Sullivan, G Mitchell T.Carr, G Coone, M Cormican, P.J Lynch, P Ryan, C Dunne, J Manton.

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Camogie Review Positive Year

By Kevin O'Connor

Even though Ballinasloe didn't win any silverware this year they have come on leaps and bounds within one year. Comparing to 2012 where they didn't win any matches to making a League Final and a County Semi Final in 2013. The backroom team of Noel Gavin (Manager), Niall Kelly (Fitness Trainer), Adrian Feehily and Gavin Hynes (Selectors). Walsh & Darren Kelly (Selectors), Niall Kelly (Fitness Trainer) and Kevin Hardiman (Hurling Coach).

Maud Millar's came on board as our main sponsors this year. Avril Keighery won "Best Young Player of the year 2013", Caroline Walsh received "Most improved Player of the year 2013" and Aisling Brannelly who won "Most dedicated player of the year 2013." For anyone who is interested in playing camogie in 2014 you can contact Noel on 0872756615.

They are holding an 8k walk, jog or run on Sunday the 23rd February. Registration on the day starts at 10am-11.30 with the Run beginning at 12. Entry is €10. There will be refreshments after the race and prizes on the day. Promises to be loads of fun! Under 12 Camogie registration will be held on the 23rd February from 3-5pm in Ard Scoil Mhurie. If you are interested in helping out with or managing an underage team this year please contact Peter Dolan 086 050 6000.



New Officers Elected for New GAA Season Ahead

At the GAA Club AGM John Burke was elected Club President. Pat Sullivan was returned as Club Chairman, but after nine years as Secretary John Shaughnessy stood down and has been replaced by Conor Ryan. Club Registrar Noreen Stankard was also returned. Football Chairman Willie Stankard stood down after a term of six years to be replaced by Seamus Duffy. Brendan

Kelly was returned as Hurling Chairman. Intermediate football Manager Sean Riddell, who guided Ballinasloe to All-Ireland Junior Honours is back in charge with mentors Cathal Coleman, Mike Tully, Lloyd Kelly and Cathal Croffy. U21 Football Management Aidan Dooley, Vincent Parsons and Joe Kelly have a first championship game at home on 8th February. U21 Hurling management

is Donal Tully, Ronan Lally and Mark Ward. Kiltormer and Annaghdown are in their group. The Club is delighted that Nathan King and James Shaughnessy started for Galway in the FBD League. Currently Noel Cotton is training with the Galway Minors while James and Brian Shaughnessy are with the U21s. Membership for this year is €120 for family, €60 adult and €40 juvenile.



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Paddy Kelly (Cahalan Jewellers, Sponsors of Suck Valley Hurling League) presenting club of the tournament award to Gerry Seale, Ballinasloe.



Maura Cox winner €1000 Jackpot at Ballinasloe GAA bingo receiving her cheque from Santa and Gerry Seale (Ballinasloe GAA)



Suzanne Treacy, winner of €1000 jackpot receiving her Cheque from Mairead Mitchell at Ballinasloe GAA Bingo

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Ballinasloe Town's New Signing

By Kevin O'Connor

Ballinasloe Town AFC recently signed Des Hope, a footballer who grew up locally and has had an interesting career in football over the last number of years.

Originally from Kildare, Des moved here when he was 14 years old. He attended Garbally College and joined the local team. This turned out to be very fortunate for the club, as the Under 15 team and then the Under 16 teams he played for won their All-Ireland Leagues.

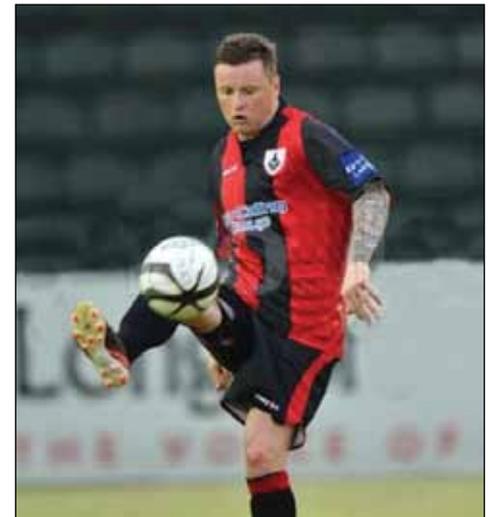
"My mother said that my first steps were after a football," said Des. After starting to study at Athlone Institute of Technology, Des was asked by a friend to play for AIT's football team. "Jimmy Greene, the manager at AIT, was involved with the team here in town," he said. "He signed me up with the Under 21's team in 2001 and we got to the final of the All-Ireland that year. It was against Waterford, who had Noel Hunt on their team and he went on to play for Ireland." Des has had the opportunity to play with great players before. David Moran, from the same Under 16 team Des played on, was signed to Manchester United. "Part of the deal was that Man Utd. brought over a team to play against us. We drew 0-0," he said.

Des has had a long career in football. He played for Athlone Football Club for nine years, then played for Longford Town for three seasons. "I always wanted to come back and play with the lads in



Ballinasloe. There are great facilities in the area. There are indoor and outdoor pitches and two astro-turfs. It's a great bonus that if it's raining and the pitch is flooded, you can just walk straight onto the astro-turf and train there," he said. The club also offers an excellent structure for younger players. "There are excellent people involved with the coaching and management of the younger teams," he said. "There is a bit of a gap at around Under 16 level up, due to the fact that other sports clubs and school work put great demands on people's time."

Des would like to see the football club expand. "I know a few guys who live around here and I'm trying to get them involved with the team," He said. "I know



some of them would be handy enough and I'm trying to get them out playing!"

Des signed halfway through the season and has played in two games already. They are five points below the current leaders in the league and are still in the Connacht Cup and are very positive about their chances. "Our main goals now are to keep the pressure on in the league and focus on the Connacht Cup. There are still a lot of very good teams in the Cup, so we're going to take it round by round."

Des works as a Distributor for Herbalise, who specialise in Health foods and are present in 93 countries. He has recently finished a course with the National Training Centre in Dublin and is now a qualified Personal Fitness Trainer. 🐸

An advertisement for Thomas Barber. On the left, a photograph shows a woman named Iwona and a man named Thomas standing in front of the shop entrance. The shop sign reads "Thomas Barber" with four stars above it. A banner above the entrance says "Old Crew in NEW Barber Shop". A window sign lists opening hours: Monday-Thursday 9am-6pm, Friday 9am-8pm, Saturday 9am-6pm. On the right, a red and white striped background contains the text: "Dunlo Street Ballinasloe", "Opening Hours Monday-Thursday 9am-6pm Friday 9am-8pm Saturday 9am-6pm".

History of Poolboy's Teampaillin

By Barry Lally

If you stand on Poolboy Bridge and look towards the town, you'll see the ivy-covered remains of a medieval church a few hundred yards away, near the right bank of the Grand Canal. Known locally as "The Teampaillin" (little temple), it was used as a burial place for unbaptised children up until the 1950s. One of four such sites in the parish, it is only one associated with an ecclesiastical ruin.

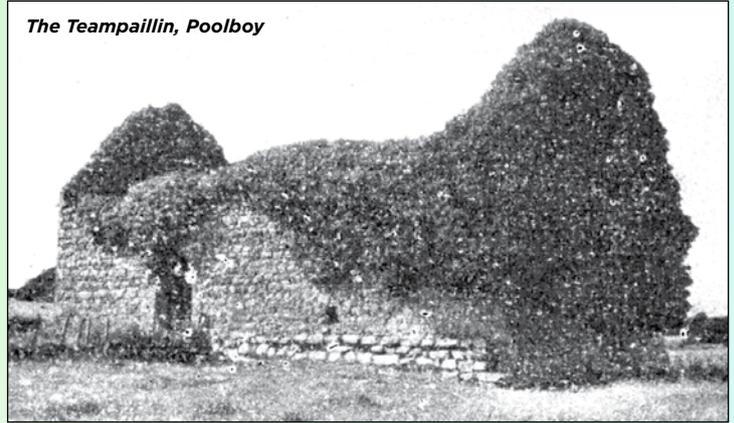
The Teampaillin's former use as an infants' interment location is not, however, its main point of interest. Writing in 1960, Fr. P.K. Egan identified the ruins as those of an early thirteenth century building with features linking it to Clontuskert Priory some three miles distant to the south. A gable window of sixteenth century date suggested that the church had been in use for divine worship over several centuries, very likely up to Penal time.

Priests are said to have traversed the bog by means of a 'togher' or causeway to this church from Clontuskert to conduct religious services. Credence was apparently lent to this particular piece of folklore by a discovery made at Kellysgrove during Land Commission drainage operations in 1946 when a portion of the 'togher' was uncovered and recorded by the National Museum.

If clergymen served the Teampaillin from Clontuskert they would undoubtedly have been members of the Order of Canons Regular St. Augustine founded on the Continent about the middle of the eleventh century and introduced into Ireland by St. Malachy a hundred years later. Here the earlier Celtic monasteries eventually submitted to their rule, so that at one stage over two hundred Irish Augustinian foundations were listed and they became the numerically dominant religious order in the country. In this diocese, in addition to Clontuskert, they had three other houses: Abbeygormican in Mullagh parish, Aughrim and Clonfert.

Augustinian Canons were not monks but secular clergy who had come together to live a communal life and to serve the churches of the parishes adjacent to their houses. Unlike the

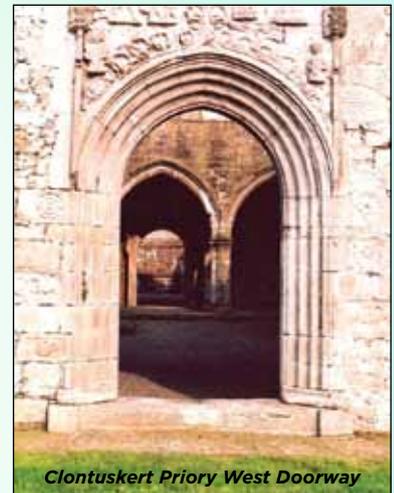
The Teampaillin, Poolboy



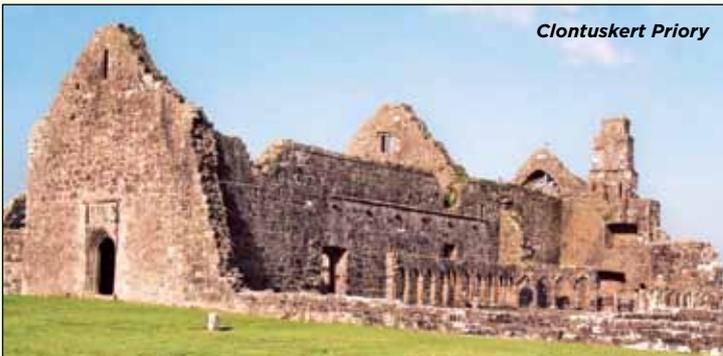
other religious congregations, they had no central governing body and were answerable to local bishops. The order went into decline in the sixteenth century and had become extinct in Ireland by the dawn of the following century. The Canons, however, though greatly reduced in numbers, remained active on the Continent where some of their houses are still be found, particularly in Austria and Switzerland.

Sometime in the latter half of the twelfth century St. Mary's Priory of the Canons Regular was established in Clontuskert by the O'Kelly family, Lords of Hy Many, probably on or near the site on an earlier monastic foundation. Situated as it was within the territory directly occupied by the O'Kellys, it was natural that it should have received its initial endowment from them and that through their patronage it should have attained in time a position of great wealth. Indeed, it was ruled almost exclusively by O'Kelly priors up to its official dissolution in 1551. The importance they accorded the Priory is evident from the fact that the inauguration mound of the Lords of Hy Many was located just outside the monastic precincts.

The community of Canons Regular may have contrived to remain on in Clontuskert for some decades following the Dissolution of all the Monasteries by King Henry VIII. However, they were eventually dispersed and the Priory fell into ruin. The 1630s saw its reoccupation and partial restoration by Augustinian Friars, who seemingly did continue to reside there up to the end of the Williamite Wars, when St. Mary's was finally abandoned.



Clontuskert Priory



Clontuskert Priory West Doorway

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Ballinasloe Runners had great success winning 35 Medals recently, at the Galway Indoor Track and Field Championships held at Athlone IT International Arena.

Left: U11 Boys 4x100 Relay: Shane Fitzpatrick, Charlie Naughton, Conor Harley and Mark Kilkenny



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