

BALLINASLOELIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 4 Issue 5: Dec '14 - Jan '15

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BALLINASLOELIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 4 Issue 4: Oct-Nov 2014

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REAMHRÁ



Hard to believe the Yuletide is upon us again - it does come around too fast! A lovely nostalgic time but a tough time too for those families who 'll not have an emigrant back for the Turkey or worse will be coping with a bereavement - in all our feasting - lets spare a thought for them.

Some 35% of all retail activity is accounted for in this part of the trading year - moaning about the number of businesses closed in the town centre is not productive - Shopping and spending local whether it is the grocery shop, some gifts or indeed having the staff or team night out in a local establishment really helps keep the local economy and jobs afloat. It's our CHOICE!

Looking back on the past editions of Life this year - it is pleasing to see we have profiled at least one if not two new businesses to our locality - a marked contrast to the 2013 editions!

Whether you personally are experiencing any of the national green shoots of recovery or not - this time of year is also one where we traditionally GIVE. There a plethora of local and indeed not so local organisations like the SVDP, The Lions Club, the Social Services, to name but a few who will be faced with increasing demands this season and winter. IF you can give a little as the saying goes it might help a lot!

Locally the return of the flicks to the town Hall proved to be a another positive milestone in utilising a building that everyone seems endeared to.

The organisers for the opening launch night reviewed the events planner in this publication and saw that a 21st of Nov had only one significant attraction with Nathan Carter in the Shearwater. Little did we know that on the same night an entertainment bill that you wouldn't see at the Rose of Tralee in august was on offer - Mundy, in Society St. and An Tain in St. Michaels Square!

Our wish for 2015 is that we get better at informing each other and co - ordinating what we do as a community - it makes no sense to continue to work in isolation - our footfall catchment is too distracted.

Every Blessing for 2015,

Le Gach Dea Ghui

*Colm Croffy, Editor
Ballinasloe Life.*



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BEC

Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre
An initiative of Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd.

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As we approach Christmas with our 4th edition of Ballinasloe Life the message continues to be the same and that is give local Business your support particularly during this festive period.

We have had a lot of positive stories from our advertisers that new business has come their way as a result of promoting their business through our medium and on the other hand we very much appreciate their support to ensure we will continue to provide 6,500 editions bi-monthly of your local magazine for free.

We are always looking for interesting news stories and photographs, both new and old, so please continue to send items to ballinasloelife@hotmail.com.

Our Development Company is working closely with the Town Team to finalise an action plan to help reinvigorate and co-ordinate some positive initiatives for the hinterland to enhance and expand what we already have. It is great to see the Community Cinema up and running and you can expect to see more of this type initiative being developed over the next 12 months.

May I take this opportunity on behalf of the Board of Ballinasloe Area Community Development Limited to wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

*Seamus Duffy, Chairman,
Ballinasloe Area Community Development.*



From Cauliflowers To Duty Free Sales – A Lifetime of Retail- Colm McLoughlin

By Conor Finnerty

The honour of opening the Fair was bestowed on one of the town's most accomplished sons Colm McLoughlin, a cycle which came full circle as his famed Dad Tadhg - was an organiser of the Fair many years ago.

Born in 1943, Colm was educated in Garbally College and he learned the value of hard work from an early age. He attributes his morals of hard work, dedication and getting involved to his father. "I remember when I was 12 my father gave me permission and I saved a lorry load of turf and he sold it for me and we got 12 pounds and I bought a bicycle," Colm remarked fondly.

Colm's entrepreneurial streak continued from there and he began his retailing career in London in the 1960's working for the popular high street-chain of Woolworths, before moving back to Ireland to work for Shannon Duty Free. As general manager of Shannon Duty Free, Colm was one of a team of ten from Aer Rianta (the Irish Airport Authority) who moved to Dubai in 1983 to set up Dubai Duty Free.

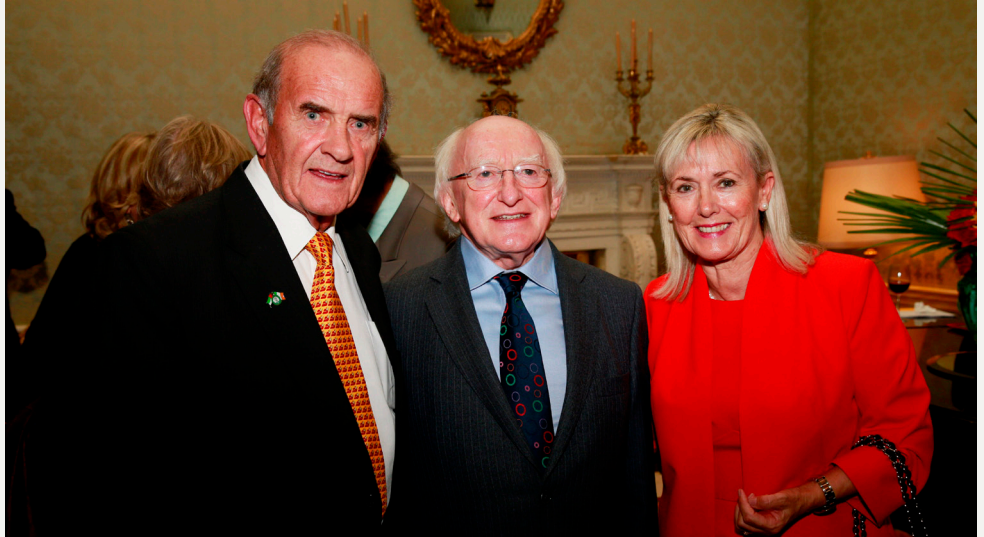
Under Colm's direction, Dubai Duty Free has become a retailing giant with sales expected to reach \$1.9 billion dollars in 2014. The amount of awards the duty free in Dubai has received is a testament to its success.

Colm's path into retail was obvious from a young age. Growing up in Derrymullen his main chore was looking after a little vegetable garden. "One of the sources of my pocket money was selling cauliflowers to Ernst Murray's shop, 6 pence a head for them and it was a big source of pocket money," said the now wealthy business man.

Colm believes that technology has overtaken the world and people need to keep in touch with core skills such as languages, the understanding of finances, and a knowledge of history.

"You see young people everywhere you go on ipads and blackberries and you know older guys like us, and I run a very big business, have a phone that's about ten years old and hope no one rings you," laughs the tycoon as he pulls out his old, reliable Nokia.

When asked about new possible destinations for the generation of Irish people who are willing to emigrate Colm cited England as being a great friend of Ireland from an emigration point of view for many years. He also pointed out that America is full of opportunities, and they're a very welcoming people.



There are also new places in the middle-east that have attracted attention. Colm travelled to Dubai in 1983 for a 6 month period and is still there 31 years on. During his time there he has seen the Irish population go from about 400 people to 6,500 and he's seen an embassy been opened there.

Looking at the Irish economy Colm places a lot of emphasis on the level of Corporation tax. "I think a lot has to depend on what the Government do, I know the taxation regime on foreign companies here is very beneficial and is lenient. They have to make sure they keep that and not allow Europe to force them out of it," according to the international business man.

With tourism being such an integral part of the Irish economy for so many years it is paramount that we continue to improve and expand this sector. Key to keeping the tourism sector improving is to ensure tourists are happy and to maintain services at a very high standard.

This is something that can be improved on according to Colm, "A lot of that might have been lost so I think county councils, schools, tourist boards, Enterprise Ireland all of these places are people who have to concentrate on things like value and customer service."

When asked about the future and prosperity of the town Colm believes retailers must focus on a niche rather than trying to provide a range of all goods.

"If you take a town like Ballinasloe which now you have roadways that pass it and all the rest, people aren't obliged to pass through, I think from a retail point of view there has to be specialist shops rather than everybody trying to sell everything, people have to find a niche and to concentrate and do that

niche very, very well".

With the loss of so many manufacturing jobs in the area over the past number of years with the closure of factories like Square D and AT Cross it is hard to see how the town can encourage another large employer to set up a base in the town.

"The development associations that are now operative in Ballinasloe should be knocking at the door of the IDA every single day, they should be harassing their senators, their TDs, the government to make sure this part of the world isn't forgotten," according to the proud town native.

Colm feels that availability and potential of the site at St. Brigid's could see its future in real estate or even the development of an out of town shopping centre. He also believes there is also huge potential to improve the waterways and parks in the area, and utilise them for walk-ways for tourists and visitors to the town.

Colm was also highly complementary of the different sporting facilities and organisations here in the town. The promotions of games and the improvement of facilities is something that is being done very well by the GAA, and both the soccer and rugby associations.

We must take better advantage of our environment to improve our economy and standard of living according to the international entrepreneur. "I think the River Suck could be used better for tours, fishing competitions etc. and maybe there could even be an area of it somehow designated and put kind of an artificial beach along beside it. But I'm not saying we can warm it up in the middle of December," joked McLoughlin.

Seventh Launch Of Annual BEST Competition

By Conor Finnerty



encouraged to focus on creativity for a new business idea. The Competition is open to students from 5 local Secondary Schools, Ardscoil Mhuire and St Joseph's College, St Cuan's in Castleblakeney and Holy Rosary & Colaiste an Creagain in Mountbellew.

The judges for the 2013 competition were Mr John Power, Mr Gerry Kelly and Mr Pat Ward, and all three are returning as judges this year.

The Enterprise Centre(BEC) & Credit Union have recently launched the seventh annual BEST Competition - Ballinasloe Entrepreneurial Skills Tournament.

The aim of BEST is to promote an entrepreneurial spirit in the local youth of the next generation of entrepreneurs. Michael Staunton, a previous chairperson of B.A.C.D. Ltd, came up with the idea of the competition where students are

The Judges and BEC Manager Lyn Donnelly visited each of the schools and did a presentation to the students and teachers outlining the competition and encouraging them to participate in this year's competition.

Lyn Donnelly said the launch was a huge success again this year with great enthusiasm shown from the teachers and students alike, and she noted that the Ard Scoil Mhuire students were very eager to hold on to the crown won last

year by Lara Clifford, and that they can expect the other schools will be very eager to wrestle the crown from them!

Application forms can be downloaded from www.ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie and must be emailed directly to bsloebest@gmail.com. Closing date for applications is the 17th of December 2014.

The judges will evaluate each application and choose a number of finalists to pitch their 'BEST Idea' to them in a Dragons Den style presentation during the final stage of the competition. All participants will be invited to an awards ceremony in March 2015 where the winners will be announced and a prominent entrepreneur will give a speech to the students and their parents.

The BEST Winner receives a Cash Prize of €1,000 with prizes totaling €1,500 for the Runners-up. The competition is sponsored by The Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre and The Ballinasloe Credit Union, Ballinasloe Livestock Mart, Ballinasloe Chamber of Commerce and Rothwell-Staunton Auctioneers.

For further information log on to www.ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie/BEST

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€1,000,000 Reward to Credit Union Members

By Conor Finnerty

A dividend of €774,000 on members' shares plus a loan interest rebate of €327,000 is the reward to the credit unions members at this year's AGM. A significant injection of €1,101,000 into the local economy this Christmas time.

The members pool of savings enables the credit union to lend to those who need to borrow. The borrowers pay interest on their borrowings. This interest is used to pay operating expenses and bolster credit union capital. The surplus is then returned to the members and this is what has occurred this year.

The credit union continues to offer members a very competitive loan rate (10.16% apr) for everyday things like education / third level, back to school, Christmas, car, holiday, home improvement etc. Since 2000 BCU has granted €290,000,000 in loans to members, a very significant sum of money that has circulated in the local economy in the past 14 years.

Social Responsibility is one of the ten Credit Union operating principles. Through this core principal the credit union is a supporter of local initiatives - it is more than just a financial institution. Together with you, our members, the credit union promotes business, education and positive community spirit. Through sponsorship of local

events, donations to community groups and grants from the Social Fund the credit union has assisted many local community groups and organisations and has since 2000 distributed in excess of €770,000 in grant aid.

With a membership of just over 17,000 your credit union is working hard to ensure that it is providing the best service to the members. Due to the economic crisis over the past few years the credit union has had to adapt to the challenges of implementing new legislative and regulatory requirements as set out by the Central Bank of Ireland. Credit unions remain vital and accessible providers of essential financial services to their members across the country. The ethos of the credit union remains the same today as when it was first opened for business in 1967 in Ballinasloe. Not for profit, Not for Charity, But FOR SERVICE, is its philosophy. The Board in making its decisions is cognisant of this ethos and philosophy always and its intention is at all times to serve the best interests of our members.

Nationally Credit Unions are undergoing significant change, with many credit unions exploring mergers, - to date nearly 20 Credit Unions have merged successfully. We in BCU will also explore this option to ensure sustainability into the future. An amalgamation may enable the credit union to become more

firmly rooted in its local community.

Credit Unions will continue to be democratically owned by members and run by the Board of Directors - elected by the members. Our attitude to our members will never change.

At our recent AGM, a comprehensive overview of the credit unions activities and financial statements for 2014 was presented to members. After 7 years the recession may have turned the corner but the impact continues to affect members, their families and the community in general. Throughout this period BCU has always tried to assist those who have encountered financial difficulties. As a result of the committed loyalty of the members BCU was in a position to offer members a 10% loan interest rebate in 2014. The net effect of the rebate is that €327,000 was given back to the borrowers. The credit union also delivered a share dividend of 1.25% on members share accounts. So all 17,000 members are getting something back!

The credit union recognises and appreciates the loyalty and support which has always existed between our members and the credit union. It's because of you the member that the credit union can continue to make a positive difference to the community. You - the member - make the difference.

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Positive Legacy of Former Town Council Unfolding

By Johnny Walsh Former Mayor of Ballinasloe



Prior to the Government inspired dissolution of the Town Council – approximately €1.2 million was made available to a variety of community organisations.

Projects such as the new Clubhouse/ Dressingrooms at the Curragh Grounds- Soccer Club, a new roof at Town Hall, new flood lighting at the Duggan Park, newly developed training pitch at the G.A.A. grounds, all weather facilities at Showgrounds, capital improvement works at the Social Services Centre, sewerage works at Golf Club, Dressingrooms at the Rugby Club, new bus for St. Teresas School, computers for Ard Scoil Mhuire and Learning Centre

at Emerald Ballroom, all-weather pitch at Creagh primary school to name but a few of the 29 local capital projects that our Town Councillors agreed to fund from a €1.18 million capital grant scheme which they set up and distributed before abolition.

This €1.18 million fund was allocated from the Council Landfill capital account which was the subject of recent media speculation. Reports suggested that the County Council had come in for a €20 million windfall from the landfill account following the abolition. This is misleading as a figure of €9,930,000 (€9.93 million) was ring fenced by the Former Town Councillors and Executive for Major Town Centre Projects including the redevelopment of the old Convent as a state of the art library, art exhibition centre and community use which is currently underway. The balance has been set aside and ring fenced for the aftercare and remediation costs at the Poolboy landfill site which the Council are legally obliged to finance until the year 2035.

The facts of the matter are that at 01/01/2013 the landfill account amounted to €20,054,040.12 (€20.05 million). Adding interest the figure would increase to €22,658,897.25 (€22.65 million). The projected aftercare and remediation costs for the landfill until the year 2035 amount to €15,313,662.32 which leaves a surplus balance of €7,345,234 (€7.34 million).

This surplus balance has all been

allocated and indeed exceeded by the former Town Councillors for the aforementioned Town Centre Projects (total cost €9.93 million) which consist of Town Park Relief Road (back of Gullanes), Town Park Relief Road amenity area (riverside walk), Town Centre Enhancement Scheme (to be developed in conjunction with water and sewage scheme and waiting for Irish Water to sign off on this aspects of scheme) and the Library.

It was always the intention that paid parking monies would be re-invested therefore the cost of the Town Enhancement scheme is ring fenced and will be initially paid from the Capital fund and repaid to that account on an annual basis from paid parking income. This enabled the Town Council to approve the €9.3 million worth of projects and in particular to include the 29 projects funded under the €1.18 million capital grant scheme for local community, voluntary and sporting organisations. These schemes are and will provide our Town with long term infrastructure and facilities and in the short term help to sustain local employment.

It is incumbent on the new Municipal District Councillors (County Councillors) to ensure on an annual basis that they scrutinise if the full projected costs for aftercare/remediation and any associated capital works at the landfill site are spent and if there is an under spend on any given year that such monies will be redirected and spent on other projects in the Town of Ballinasloe.



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Pyjama Day Provides Special Buggy!



The children & staff of Tiny Tots Crèche & preschool presenting the children & staff of St.Teresa's special school with a special needs buggy.

By Conor Finnerty

Tiny Tots Crèche used the proceeds of their annual fundraising Pyjama Day to purchase a special needs buggy for St. Teresa's special school.

"We feel that teaching the children about giving to charity is a valuable lesson, it is important that they learn at an early age to be considerate of others & show compassion. Involving the children in programmes that help other children is a perfect way to install a lifelong attitude of giving to charity & helping your community," stated Jennifer Sheridan, who runs the Crèche and educational preschool.

Tiny Tots Crèche & Educational preschool is in its 16th year in business and moved into a purpose built facility in the Enterprise Centre in 2003. They cater for babies & children up to 7 years of age and they are committed to providing quality childcare to all families in a warm, friendly & caring environment and provide a range of challenging & stimulating activities.

Tiny Tots also run the Free Preschool (ECCE) Scheme & the CETS Scheme (Free childcare for parents on a FAS/ Solas or VEC course). The crèche can be contacted via their website (www.tinytotscreche.com) and their facebook page. Alternatively call Jennifer 090 9644480 for more information.

St. Teresas Special School Fundraising Success

By Conor Finnerty

A total of €4,485 for St. Teresas Special school thanks to a clothes recycling fundraiser. The funds will be spent on some much needed equipment and resources for the children in the school.



Back row L- R Niall Jennings, Conor Harley, James Burke, Brian Burke, Rowan Harley, Daniel Grealley, Tom Fitzpatrick & Shane Fitzpatrick Front Row L-R Emma Mitchell, Ava McKeon, Aoibheann Fitzpatrick, Kayla McKeon & Ashlenn Arru.

€3770 from recycling clothes while €1115 was raised through cash donations, the organisers invited staff, parents, relation and friends to donate their used/unwanted clothing, footwear and bed linen for recycling.

The response they received to this appeal was huge, with over 980 bags dropped to the school in a short five week period. The bags were collected by Len Rec recycling Company Kilkenny and reusable items were sent to developing countries. Anything that was not suitable for re-wear was recycled using a special process to make items such as flocking for upholstery, underlay for carpets, soundproofing for cars and industrial wipes.

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New Motor Factors For Sarsfield Road

By Conor Finnerty

Brian Lynch has recently opened his new motor factors shop beside Barrett's Hardware.

The town native has close to 35 years' experience in the business and believes his network of contacts built up in that time will be of a huge benefit when trying to grow the enterprise.

Working with Liam Howley in the beginning and then spending 14 years in a partnership with Frank Kelly in Brackernagh, Brian is no stranger to the business.

"Hopefully it will grow, it will be just myself to begin with but then I will have to hire someone to do deliveries to the rural garages, it has the potential to employ 3 people," remarked the shop owner.

Asked why he chose now to go out on his own, Brian coyly replied: "It's like this, if I don't do it now, I never will."

The support of his closest family and friends when deciding to open the shop was a huge help added the father of three.

It took over a month of planning to

get the business opened officially once the premises had been secured. Brian's contact with suppliers aided his quick set-up as there was already a relationship of trust built up down through the years.

"It was always about getting the right premises with car parking spaces, it wouldn't be ideal to open a shop like this down the town. Here is safe and handy for people to call into," stated the former Garbally student.

His interest in the trade began at a young age when he got a part time job after school and on the weekends.

The store will offer a range of car parts and accessories to facilitate all major models at competitive prices. Customer service will be top quality with advice provided and small installation jobs such as windscreen wiper blades changed.



Years of experience has led Brian to encounter most possible problems, so a quick call could save you the cost of a mechanic, and if a part is not in stock it can be ordered in within a matter of days.

Brian is prepared to work long hours to get the business off the ground. The shop will be open from 7.30am to 6.00pm, Monday to Saturday. Brian can be contacted on 0909646950 or you can email bplynch63@gmail.com.

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A Gift with Real Meaning this Christmas

Rather than relying on the old faithful Christmas socks this year, why not give someone a gift with real meaning?

Ballinasloe native, Mike Mansfield, newly Appointed Marketing Manager of Plan Ireland said;

"I've seen at first hand the difference these Christmas gifts can make. On a recent overseas trip, I visited children and families who have been through turmoil and tragedy. Despite all they had endured, thanks to Plan Ireland's intervention, these families were in the process of rebuilding their lives."

Children's Development NGO, Plan Ireland has launched an

innovative range of ethical gifts modelled on the old faithful Christmas socks!

Plan Ireland is offering an array of items which will help some of the world's most vulnerable children. Ranging in price from €20-€250, you can make a real difference this Christmas by buying water sanitation kits, school furniture, tents for families in crisis or sending a girl to school for a year. With each purchase you receive a sock shaped token which you can hang on your tree or use as a decoration. For further info - www.plan.ie/christmas

Mike's Mother Margret held a Coffee Morning recently in their Cleaghmore home, for the Appeal for the Ebola Crisis and they gathered almost €1700 for the cause !

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Mart Manager

By Conor Finnerty



Martin Costelloe has been manager of the mart for over 5 years and has background of working in banking

Opened since 1959 the mart has a huge customer base with people travelling from all over Ireland to buy or sell animals, – it started off in the Fair Green at the back of the Mount steps before moving in the late sixties to it's present 15 acre Cleaghmore site.

Like most communities the mart has been a central hub of activity in the town over the decades. "This business will be like all others and will huge change in the next five years. We hope to be in the vanguard of that process and continue to provide a huge economic contribution to the town," stated an optimistic Martin.

With lambs and young cattle maturing the marts busiest time comes in the latter months of the year. It employs up to 26 people, mostly part-time with numbers increasing or decreasing depending on the levels of business activity.

"Ballinasloe Mart has seen enormous changes over the past decade. We have renovated our mart and farm operations and they are now to a high standard. We have also invested significantly in technology, bringing our sales and processing operations up to a very high standard," said Martin.

The mart holds sales every Wednesday morning for bullocks/heifers and dry cows, every Thursday evening for sheep and every Saturday morning for weanlings and suckler cows.

Martin Costello believes more research ought to be done

into the value chain of meat prices to identify the extent of the short change of farmers. He also believes that Northern Ireland should be opened for southern cattle and that more competition needs to be developed in the meat processing sector.

His comments come after farmers and the IFA have been in heated negotiations over the last few weeks with the processing plants over low prices. Farmers have been up in arms all around the country with many factories being blockaded and boycotted, including Kepak's factory in Athleague, by local farmers costing the processing giants millions in the process.



"If you go up to Tesco or any of the big supermarkets, the average price of meat is around €20, for example that's €8,000 euro for a 400kg animal, the farmer only receives around 1500 of that. Someone needs to outline practically where the other €6,500 is going," remarked the Ballymacward man.

The mart also played host to the Irish Livestock Winter Fair this October. It is thought that 10,000 plus attended the 2 day event. Visitors flocked to the fair from all over Ireland, with a significant portion travelling from Northern Ireland.

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The South Roscommon Vintage Club

The South Roscommon Vintage club hosted the annual Michael Lyons memorial road run in mid-September. The road run started at the Moycarn Lodge in Creagh prior to travelling to the town of Portumna. While in Portumna the group stopped to get a guided tour of the restored workhouse centre.

The 2014 Dinner Dance will take place in the

Shamrock Lodge in Athlone on December 13th. Meanwhile the clubs annual Auto Jumble will take place at the Taughmaconnell Community Centre on Sunday January 25th, 2015. A grand total of over 40 trade stands will exhibit on the day, an attractive event for all the family. Contact Liam Keogh on 0877565147 for more information.

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Town Team Advance Benchmarking Project

By Conor Finnerty



L-R; Colm Croffy, Aidan Donohue, Mike O'Brien, Val Colleran, Seamus Duffy, Ger Tully
Front Row: L-R Paula Harley, Lyn Donnelly, Tara Galvin, Jacinta Divilly, Carmel Greally,
Missing from photograph: Kate Murray, Tomasz Jedrzejowski & Pádraig Ó Ceithearnaigh

The members of the Town Team Group have been busy meeting since the Fair in an effort to map out the future development requirements for the next stage of the Town's Revitalisation project which is being conducted under the auspices of the Ballinasloe Area Community Development (BACD) Ltd.

To date Chris Wade, the UK based consultant with Towns Alive, and his consultants have undertaken an extensive street survey of both the town and shopping users as well as many of the business owners in the locality. These results will be combined with the extensive online survey that was undertaken in August to bench mark the town against similar size towns in the UK and it's competitor towns in Ireland.

After a series of briefings from the Board and Chris, the Team led by Co-ordinator Jacinta Divilly have workshopped their unique mission statement which will serve as a guide for the

activities that they hope to map, co-ordinate and promote.

The Teams vision is to revitalize the town and its hinterland, enabling it to achieve its true potential, by creating awareness of all the positive assets we currently have in the townland and identifying new initiatives that will enhance and expand on what we already have.

To encourage positive suggestions and interaction from all local sporting, cultural, voluntary, agricultural, educational and retail groups, along with local, regional and national agencies by progressing ideas and actions together and working in co-operation with one another.

They will prioritise attainable objectives that will rejuvenate the town and help it achieve its true potential, making Ballinasloe a better place in which to live and rear all our children - and foster a friendly competitive sustainable town to do business in and visit.

The group will receive the preliminary data from the Benchmarking Report over the coming weeks and will then feedback to the wider network of groups, clubs, organisations and businesses in the hinterland.

The Research Co-ordinator Owen Dunne has presented to the Team and Board of B.A.C.D. with a wealth of desk research and statistical analysis from the C.S.O. and a variety of Government Policy Reports which set out how towns similar to Ballinasloe can progress over the next few years.

Their plans are to seek out some early presentation meetings with key representatives from stakeholder groups and explain what the Benchmarking Report is signalling for the future prospects of the town and to seek out what combined activities that we might be able to undertake with better co-ordination and information flow between clubs and citizens.

In the early part of the new year - All the Benchmarking Analysis will be made freely available online to the wider community - as per the wishes of the project's funding partners - the Credit Union, The Chamber of Commerce, the B.A.C.D. and Galway County Council.

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Best Estate Winners

The Hillcrest Park Residents Association were awarded the "Best Estate" in the town for a third year in a row. The competition is judged every year by a County Council official and aided by one of the local Tidy Towns members.

The committee for the estate were presented with a cup and a cash prize which was reinvested in a lawnmower. A lot of effort goes into maintaining the area according to resident Mary Whelehan.

"You could easily spend a couple of hours a week doing a general tidy up or maintaining flowerbeds," remarked Mary, "We try and get the kids involved and teach them to pick up rubbish and do a bit of weeding."

The estate added another communal flowerbed and painted the walls in the area to improve the overall look. This type of recognition gives a sense of satisfaction and renewed enthusiasm to people who continue to work on the upkeep of the area.



Brenda Mulrennan GGC, Nancy Gregg Tidy Towns, Eddie Kelly Supervalu, Carmel Greally Tidy Towns, John Donoghue, Padraig Lawless, Billo Whelehan, Anne Donoghue, Nora Flaherty, Sinead Ryan, Patricia Lawless

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Paddy Keane Teams Up with Connacht Property Auction

By Conor Finnerty

As part of their commitment to providing the best service to their clients, Paddy Keane Auctioneers have now launched a new service offering both online and public auctions. In partnership with The Connacht Property Auction, property owners in the Ballinasloe area can now sell their property quickly, securing and at fair market value, and what's more, there are no costs to enter a property in the auction.

Each property is first marketed on a 45 day online auction and advertised locally with Paddy Keane Auctioneers while also being advertised both nationally and internationally with The Connacht Property Auction. This ensures maximum exposure is given to each property and gives the property the best chance of selling. Interested parties visit the property as normal and can bid on the property at any point during the 45 days online auction period. All bids are visible on the online auction website www.connachtpropertyauction.ie and bids are put forward to the property owner. The owner can decide to accept the highest bid on the online auction or put the property forward to the public auction events held in The Menlo Park Hotel, Galway City.

The public auctions have proved a huge success in 2014 with 4 public auction being held, each offering between 20 and 30 properties for sale at the event. The overall success rate for the year was 88% sold, making the auctions an extremely strong option for anyone looking to sell their property in 2015.

Auctioneer Paddy Keane stated "the auctions have been very successful in 2014 and we have successfully sold several properties in the local area. The auctions are suited to anyone looking to sell and we will agree a fair reserve price with the owner, which the property cannot sell below. Our auctions are used primarily by normal property owners looking to sell their asset at a fair price and receive maximum exposure for their property. And as the only auction in Ireland offering a no sale, no fee auction service, it's a win win position for the owners".



Paddy's enthusiasm (who is also a member of the Institute of Professional Auctioneers and Valuers for over 20 years) for this partnership is evident from his recent investment in new computer systems, the installation of LED Light panels window display together with his recent qualification - as a Recognised European Valuer and becoming a member of TEGOVA which represents members from 31 Countries and 70,000 Valuers in Europe.

The Connacht Property Auction will host five public auction events in 2015 with the first on February 26th. They are keen to speak to property owners looking to sell in early January to begin marketing the property for the February auction.

Contact The Connacht Property Auction on 091 882 121 or Paddy Keane Auctioneers on 0909 642 339 to arrange for a free auction valuation.

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New Head Chef Appointed to Carlton Shearwater

By Conor Finnerty



Gary Murphy has been appointed the new head chef at the Carlton Shearwater Hotel having worked his way up the ranks.

Gary originally hails from Dublin city, but moved to the West of Ireland at the tender age of 15. Gary's passion for working with food started when he was 16-years-old, where he held his first kitchen position as kitchen porter in Hayden's Hotel.

Gary then moved to Toher's in Dunlo St. where he spent three years in his first commis chef position, while simultaneously attending college for

Culinary Arts in Athlone Institute of Technology, which was then followed by a further three years of culinary arts study.

Gary spent a year after college in the Wineport Lodge, before becoming part of the Kitchen pre-opening team at the Carlton Shearwater Hotel back in August of 2007. Spending two years in the Shearwater, Gary then took flight and travelled to Australia for two years, holding numerous chef positions in various establishments.

It was during this time that Gary held a senior Chef position in the Award winning Perth Convention Centre (subsequently winning the highly regarded "Gold Plate Award"), which catered for high volume prestigious events ranging in size from 50 to 1500 guests. Moving on from this, Gary then held his first Head Chef Position in Pierre Roland's in Melbourne.

Gary's core values regarding his cooking ethics are very simple, with three main objectives i.e. fresh ingredients, maximising flavour from his ingredients and presenting all dishes in a clean, unpretentious manner: resulting in

dishes that have his guest's coming back time and again.

"It is great to be working with a Head Chef like Gary and his team, who take great pride in their offering and who have a great energy to progress and develop the standard of food. There has been a great amount achieved already in the few months that Gary has held the position, so there is great anticipation for progression and achievements in the coming year ahead," stated Garrett McGuinness, General Manager of the hotel.

Gary and his team have only recently introduced a new Canal Bar menu, which advocates all of the above. The bistro menu has a greater variety than your usual hotel bar menu, yet remains very competitive in price. The ethos of Gary's menu progressions is simple: "continuous improvement." This will see the all outlet menus in the Carlton Shearwater Hotel develop over the coming year.

For Gary, ensuring the end product is consistently excellent, means having the right team in place. Gary is fortunate to have a young, energetic and creative team, who all work with the same objective in mind: fresh ingredients combined correctly together, to ensure maximum flavour. 🌿

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Fire Staff Awarded for Long Service

By Conor Finnerty



Ballinasloe Fire service staff Tom O'Grady (20), Ann Coughlan (20), Michael Raftery (30), Noel Clinton (22) all received long service award for their work with the fire service at the biennial ceremony held in Dublin. The ceremony, held in the Red Cow Moran Hotel, awarded all staff who had completed 10, 20 or 30 years service since the last ceremony. Medals were awarded to fire staff from all across the country with the 4 from Ballinasloe, the largest contingent from county Galway.

National Organic Award for Beechlawn Farm

By Conor Finnerty

Beechlawn Organic Farm, have won the Best Organic New Product category at the National Organic Awards 2014 for their Sungold orange cherry tomatoes.

Now in their 8th year and organised by Bord Bia in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the 2014 Awards attracted over 170 entries.

The achievements and contributions of five Irish organic food and drink companies were recognised at the National Organic Awards.

Tom Hayes, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine was on hand to announce the category winners and also the inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award recipient.

"We are blown away by the sheer flavour of this product; we could eat them all day! They will especially appeal to children thanks to their delicious sweet taste," according to the judges.

To celebrate their victory Beechlawn Organic Farm are doing a special offer for new customers for December and January. If you purchase a veg box on their new webshop you will get 20% off your first box. To avail of this offer you must say "I read Ballinasloe Life Magazine" when you buy it, discount available upon delivery.

Established in 2002, Beechlawn Organic Farm grows over 30 different types of vegetables. Run by husband and wife, Padraig Fahy and Úna Ní Bhroin, they supply over 40 supermarkets and shops countrywide as well as operating veg box scheme.

"The Sungold cherry tomatoes are very new to Ireland, Some



Padraig Fahy of Beechlawn Organic Farm tasting the sungold orange cherry tomatoes

of our customers thought they weren't ripe because of the orange colour. The judges at the organic awards noticed the superior taste and since they won the award they are in huge demand," according to Úna.

Speaking at the awards, Minister Tom Hayes, T.D. stated "The value of annual retail sales of organic food in Ireland is at €99.1 million, up from €97 million last year. The National Organic Awards provide a great opportunity to salute those who excel in their respective industries and we hope to see this continued growth in the Irish organic food and drink sector in the years to come."

For further information on Beechlawn Organic Farm, please contact Úna Ní Bhroin and Padraig Fahy, on 086 1799007 or visit their website at www.beechlawnfarm.org.

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The Power to Surprise



Ballinasloe Town Hall Cinema Re-Opens After 30 Years

By Conor Finnerty



Film critic John Maguire from the Sunday Business Post cut the ribbon and opened the newly refurbished Town Hall Cinema for the first time in over a quarter of a century.

The Shawshank Redemption was the first film to be shown in the community owned and run venue and was preceded by a Gala opening. Guests of honour were all the volunteers, Community Employment Scheme and Tus operatives and representatives of the funders and user groups that provided over 1000 hours of labour to the refurbishment programme. Other guest speakers included were Bishop John Kirby, Leas Cathairleach of the Municipal Area Council Cllr Michael Finnerty and Chairperson of the local Credit Union William Duthie.

"We are delighted to have the opportunity to fund part of the costs of this facility, we hope the venture goes from success to success," said Mr Duthie.

The reopening of the cinema brought back many happy memories for some of its patrons, none more so than Mr Maguire.

"I have a very clear memory of watching Star Wars here, and I remember I had to use the little boy's room, and there is only one joke in the whole Star Wars catalogue and I missed it because I was in the loo, and every time I hear it since I am brought back to that memory," remarked the film critic.

The Cinema project is in direct response to the results of the online survey carried out by BACD - as part of the Town Benchmarking Exercise underway currently, which asked people what they would enjoy most in town. Run and managed by the Town Hall Theatre on a cost recovery basis, the proceeds from the first pilot phase will be re-invested in the ongoing refurbishment and minor works programme.

"There's something magical about cinema on a big screen, what you are going to do tonight you can't do at home, you can't do it on a laptop, you can't watch it on your phone, you can't watch a film, really, on a television. You have to watch it on the big screen, you have to watch it as a community," stated Mr Maguire.

The cinema will operate for 3 screenings each weekend (when there is no live show on stage) at designated times of Friday 9.15pm, Saturday Children's Matinee at 4pm and Saturday night show at 8.30pm. It is also planned to do special holiday time screenings.

Theatre Board Chair Mary O' Connell warmly welcomed the opening nights audience and thanked all the funders and partners to the Re- Roofing and Refurbishment works project which cost the guts of €175,000.

community cinema will be available to schools and other groups during mid-week times by prior appointment.

Movie choices will be made by the audience through social media polls and audience sampling. Friday nights flick will be from the back collection, the Saturday night time screening will be a recently released movie and the kids Matinee will be a blend of both.

The Cinema will run for the last weekend in November, a Christmas special weekend on Dec 19th/20th, during the Christmas Holidays 29th/30th and January 2nd/3rd. Full details of screenings will be on the Facebook page and published in Ballinasloe Life.

Fletcher Electrical are providers of the Technical Equipment which includes a full Stage Height screen and state of the art quality projector. The Fair and Festival Committee have graciously provided their sound system on a lease basis for the pilot season which will run to the early summer.

Further Details and advance credit card or laser booking call 090 9643780.

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Hospital Watch

By Conor Finnerty

In recent weeks more news reports surfaced that Portiuncula Hospital may be downgraded.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) West denies it plans to amalgamate Roscommon and Portiuncula Hospitals – currently.

There are no plans to amalgamate Roscommon Hospital and Portiuncula Hospital into one hospital according to Setanta Communications, the private public relations company employed by H.S.E. West.

The recently rebranded “Saolta University Health Care Group” includes several hospitals in the West of Ireland, including Portiuncula and Roscommon. Internal briefing documents from Management at the Saolta group - obtained by Independent Deputy Denis Naughten underline fears that the two hospitals will be downgraded through amalgamation.

The two hospitals will have their services amalgamated, rationalised by speciality and operate under one name while working across the two sites; Denis Naughten claims.

Fears of possible downgrading of Portiuncula are not being helped by the failure of the H.S.E. to fill a consultants post in the hospital. The role of a consultant geriatrician has been left vacant now for over a year-and-a-half, a fact that hasn't gone unnoticed by local politicians.

As a result of this there have been no stroke services at the hospital since March 2013

and patients now have to travel at least 40 minutes by ambulance to University Hospital Galway for life-saving treatment.

Meanwhile Portiuncula retained their position in the top ten acute public hospitals on the ratemyhospital.ie site.



The leader board continued to be topped by St. Johns Hospital Limerick, and sees Merlin slipping a spot to 19th and U.C.H.G. holding their own down in 43rd position.

With increased pressure on the hospital's emergency services since the closure of Roscommon's A&E, management teams in Portiuncula are working to tackle the increased pressure.

The winter months has seen the return of the vomiting bug in most hospitals and an overall increase in trolley usage across the

board for hospitals according to the Irish Nurses and Midwives Association.

And if any of the inferred changes to the 24 hour medical cover currently available come to pass that Portiuncula's emergency department is to be downgraded it will be increasing the already overflowing workload on U.C.H.G.'s department, who three times in the past few weeks have had to request the public not to present for “non emergency” admissions.

Hospital management have described their unit as ‘exceptionally busy’ and patients are being advised to present only in cases of emergency.

The Saolta hospital group says nursing staff shortages in the emergency department are being addressed with a number of nursing posts being processed for appointment at the moment in U.C.H.G.

Liam Doran of the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation was quoted as saying the matter must be addressed through emergency funding.

LIFE will update readers in every edition with a summary of key facts and media reportage on our local and regional hospital.

Trolley Watch Numbers Portiuncula	Average 2.8 per day for September	
Trolley Watch Numbers Portiuncula	Average 4.8 per day for November	71% Increase
Trolley Watch Numbers UCHG	Average 13.6 per day for September	
Trolley Watch Numbers UCHG	Average 19.8 per day for November	46% Increase

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Maisie Reynolds

By Conor Finnerty

Ninety Three summers is an appreciable amount of time, another of our Civil War Babies – Maisie Reynolds from Birchgrove reflects happily on her family, faith, career and some 58 years of Ballinasloe living.

Born in 1921, the second eldest girl of a family of nine Sherlocks in Tiaquinn, Colemanstown - she was christened Mary but from earliest memories was always referred to as Maisie. Her Mum was a homemaker and her father was a small farmer with a sawmill business in later years.

Her childhood – even at this distance was a happy but not necessarily idyllic time – down on the farm where life's pleasures were simple and those in the countryside during the 20's and 30's seemed to fair better than those in the towns – having access to home produced food and farm and woodland staples.

"I really loved school and my favourite subject was always English – from primary right through to secondary – we were all encouraged to read from a young age and I suppose that stood to us "says the sprightly 93 year old.

The first house she passed every morning and (in bare feet in the summer months) was Mick Gullanes house (Father of Tomas Gullane, the hotelier of Main Street) to traverse the walk to Tiaquinn National School which opened with her in attendance as a pupil in 1925 and was closed in 1977.

A scholarship girl –she frequently came first in her exams and won her place at Athenry Presentation Sisters just as the storm clouds of the Second World War were menacing over Europe in 1937.

Her summers were spent like most small holders families on the land – saving turf, bringing in the hay, tending the garden, picking spuds, rearing fowl and housekeeping filled long days. She recalls like many in the village – churning the butter and killing the pig as well as seeing rabbits regularly on the open fire oven.

"Archbishop Gilmartin confirmed us and we all enjoyed going to Ryans in Galway on the train for the style for communions, weddings, Christmas, Easter and all the big occasions. Christmas time was always special – a huge effort was made by everyone and Santa Claus would always bring something nice but always something useful", remarked Maisie.

During War or "The Emergency" as Dev called the '39 to '45 period – Maisie followed her elder Sister into a career in nursing. There was a huge demand for Irish girls with good references and education to enter the profession in the UK with the huge amount of casualties – both military and civilian.

For those used to the modern Ryanair "hop" to London town for a Show, soccer or shopping – the saga that was a West of Ireland student nurse heading to London in 1943 – was an ordeal; involving a four hour train journey to Dublin, train to

Dun Laoighre, Steam Boat (15 hours) to Holyhead followed by another 16 hour steam train run to Euston Station – after the obligatory change at CREWE.

She got a student post at the Brooke Hospital, Shooters Hill and commenced a life long commitment to the care of the sick which only ended formally in 1986.

They lived in the Nurses home and of course she was homesick but she recalls that at least 20% of the staff would have been Irish at the time. "For a rationed country we were very well fed and looked after – I can remember over 250 people in the huge staff dining room for three meals a day and you'd always hear an Irish accent over the clatter of the plates".

They socialised together but we were very conscious of our Christian faith and were keen to participate in the various devotions and ceremonies in what may well have been felt at the time a "Pagan" Britain.

It gave great support to both the emigrant and indeed to their families that observations of the rituals of faith provided a sense of community and support for so many.

To become a State Registered Nurse in the UK involved three years of training and Maisie completed her second year with the Woolwich Fever Hospital and third year of General Training in Hammersmith Hospital, Ducane Rd.

It was a common occurrence for Air Raid Sirens to go off. On these occasions staff were meant to go to the Air Raid Shelters. One particular night there was "a direct hit on the hospital". Maisie was on night duty. One of the jobs on night duty was to operate the telephone exchange, when she noticed sand falling from the ceiling on the table in front of her. There was complete silence and then a loud crash. A few more bombs rained down on a very industrial part of the city and the Monivea native leapt from the desk and moved to a corner of the room. The whole roof collapsed except for this particular area. In spite of this Maisie managed to pick up a telephone on the wall and alert the emergency services by stating the name of the Hospital. Maisie can still recall this night very clearly. Three men, one of them Irish, were killed as a result. When the Emergency Services arrived she was given hot tea with sugar for the shock. They advised her to go off duty but she insisted on staying on and helping her colleagues. The Medical Superintendent couldn't believe that anyone who was in that room could live to tell the tale.

It turned out to be one of her proudest moments as she and some other students



involved were recommended for the George Medal for bravery in assisting the patients of the hospital under the barrage that night. However, this never came to fruition but she did get highly recommended in a letter from Sir Allen Daly of County Hall for her courage and dedication to duty that night.

Having come home a bit earlier in June of her qualification year a certain F. Philbin called to her parents house for tea and recommend that she apply for a nursing post in Castlebar General Hospital – which she did and was duly appointed as a Staff Nurse in the male surgical ward.

Thus began her Irish nursing career which trundled along until her landlady in Mayo who had two sons priests in the missions introduced her to a Mary McEvitt of the post office who was of course friendly with a local Tony Byrne who knew the boys but more importantly had as a friend a young Ballinasloe Land Commission Officer – Jim Reynolds.

"I remember changing seats at mass, so Mary and I could get a better look at him but it was LENT in 1954 that my life took a very different turn. Jim took me out to Westport to Mrs. Rabbit's Cafe for tea, suffice it to say I was swept off my feet and we were married in the Church of Christ the King, Salthill with our reception afterwards at the Banba Hotel".

The couple honeymooned in West Kerry and then settled in Castlebar before Jim got a transfer to Athlone in 1956. Horribly for Maisie the marriage bar prevented her from continuing with her career and she settled into being "a disgruntled lady of leisure or housewife".

Four children were born to Maisie and Jim – Joe, Mary, Malachy and youngest Paul arriving in time for the decimalisation of the currency in 1969.

The couple set up home in Birchgrove in a rented house beside Johnny Johnstones late parents and remember fondly their days with the young toddlers out there. Some years into the 60's Jim and Maisie acquired a site from the Whelan family (Marina Downeys Grandfather) and built their family home there.

"My God but this side of town was a much quieter place back then – we had a few great neighbours, Collerans, Bolands,



Maisie and her late husband James on their wedding day 1955

Brocks, Dillons, Dolans, Wards, Whelans and Whytes just around the house and I remember fields being ploughed by horses where the Kilgarve Gardens Estate stands today".

After the birth of her youngest and getting him out to school and the lifting of the Marriage Bar for public posts - Maisie agreed to do some parttime time private nursing in Ballyduggan House before herself and Maura Kilduff decided to do the refresher course in Merlin Hospital in the early seventies - they shared the car down to Galway City. A year later she found herself back as a staff nurse in Merlin Park facing a gruelling hour or so drive before delivering a 12 hour shift.

She was encouraged to apply for a position in Portiuncula in 1974 and so

began the last phase of a career that spanned over four decades.

"It was a much smaller staff back then and much more demands were made of everyone", she recalls. "Back then whoever was on night shifts would be rostered to take ambulance duty turns and I can remember going out with the late Seamie Guider and Harry Reynolds, God be good to them, in all sorts of harrowing weather to traffic accidents quite often -

with only one ambulance man and myself. Back then the Gardai and the Firemen - everyone helped the medics - now it's all specialised and they have much better equipment".

She can recall when there was only one porter in the Hospital - Willie Devlin and she remembers joking with him when he retired that it took 12 to replace him when he retired! It was a great organisation to work in, the Nuns were exacting in their standards but the Medical team in the 70's and 80's were a pioneering bunch and

the hospital was very well regarded.

She stepped down from all in 1986 to live as an active (if not very active) retiree and enjoyed some wonderful years with her late husband Jim and the family until his death in 1999 - some time after they celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary.

She enjoys reading still, does all the crosswords, loves to knit, likes to get about but misses the driving since she stopped 7 years ago, goes as often as she can to Mass and is an active and loyal member of the Retired Nurses Organisation and indeed the Active Retirement Club in town.

(continued on page 35)



Maisie at her Retirement function from Portiuncula Hospital in 1986 with then then Night Sister Mary Naughton

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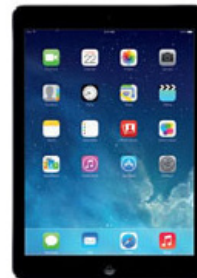
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New Local Alcohol Strategy

By Conor Finnerty

Ballinasloe Alcohol Strategy has been developed in order to help to prevent and reduce alcohol related harm in the town. It focuses on four key areas of: **Prevention - Screening, Treatment and**

and reviews and if it can be shown to be working at that time then efforts will be made to extend the period it covers.

The strategy has been prepared by the towns Alcohol Strategy Working Group which is made up of representatives from

An Garda Síochána, the HSE, Galway Simon Bridge Resource Centre, the Jobs Club, The Junction Project, Youth Work Ireland Galway, Mental Health Ireland, Substance Misuse Response Group, the GAA and the Western Region Drugs Task Force.

A wide range of agencies, groups and individuals participated in the consultation process used to

of principles including community development, partnership, collaboration and advocacy and seeks to recognise that alcohol is not an ordinary commodity, but one that contributes to a range of social and health problems, provide a community wide comprehensive approach as opposed to one that is targeted at individuals or high-risk groups only and mobilise local agencies to take action to prevent and reduce alcohol related harm.

The anticipated effect on implementation; is improving health, improving the well-being and quality of life for people living in Ballinasloe, reducing the harmful use of alcohol and incidents of alcohol related crime and anti-social behaviour and increasing access to support services for those affected by another's alcohol consumption and to alcohol treatment services.

The Alcohol Strategy Working Group will oversee the implementation of this strategy by meeting regularly and ensuring that actions are carried out. At the end of each year, a progress report will be compiled. Through maintaining and further developing this partnership approach, the working group is confident that it can make a real difference in preventing and reducing alcohol related harm in the area.



BAS Emmet Major, Gerry Roche, Conor Madden and Edel Kelly

Support Services - Supply, Access and Availability - Research, Monitoring and Evaluation.

The recently launched strategy will initially run from December 2014 through to the end of 2016 and incorporate annual actions

inform the strategy and the Working Group thanked everyone involved for their effort and support, in particular to Get Lippy, the Ballinasloe Comhairle na nÓg.

The strategy is based on a number



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Regatta and UTAH “For every adventure”

By Conor Finnerty

Val Colleran has been stocking the Regatta brand for 6 years in his Utah store. However he has decided to delve further and stock even more of the world renowned brand and has dedicated 50% of brand and window display space to the Brand.

Utah will be one of the very few retailers to sell Regatta clothing in all of East Galway. “There has been a good reaction, Regatta are the best brand out there performance wise. They are a top affordable brand,” said the local business man.

Regatta's store numbers have jumped from 12 in 1981 to million world wide. Regatta make great products that people could afford - clothing to get them outside and enjoying the fresh air without worrying what it would cost. That is still what counts for them.

Now UTAH has become a part of that family, with the store catering for mens, ladies, kids and footwear. Whether it is going to school, running along the beach or making a snowman our range your kids offers all you need to keep them protected from the elements and having fun in the outdoors. From waterproof and breathable styles with sporty shapes and bright colours to fashionable country and urban looks, great for creating a contemporary look without compromising comfort keeps kids looking great in Regatta.



Utah's heritage range lets you create that contemporary country look for the whole family enjoying the freedom of the outdoors doesn't mean dulling on style.

It means creating a look to suit you and family, with the added assurance of your comfort, warmth and weather proofing.

The stores outdoor classics range offers essential outdoor clothing to everyone.

Products that you can rely on day in, day out using trusted technologies to keep you warm, dry and comfortable. The classics range offer reliable quality and wearability the very definition of value.

Adventure tech's sporty range has been created using the brands specifically engineered active fit, creating garments that move with you when you need it most.

As well as the new Regatta store Utah have a whole range of top brand products over 3 floors at exceptional value. From curtains and blinds, giftware, mens fashion, ladies fashion, childrens wear and footwear Utah is your one stop shop for all your needs this Christmas.

Open 7 days a week, you can follow Utah on facebook for all their latest offers.

New Look to Family Restaurant

By Conor Finnerty



Families are in for a surprise when they visit the new look Supermac's restaurant on Sarsfield Road, Ballinasloe. Supermac's recently undertook a revamp and introduced a fresh image to the site and a tasty Ice Cream counter.

Supermac's was established in Ballinasloe in 1979, however has been serving Ballinasloe families for over 27 years at this particular

location. Prior to Supermac's, Burma Grill operated from this site.

Una McDonagh, Director of Supermac's, says “We are extremely pleased with how the new restaurant has turned out. It looks fantastic and I am confident that customers will enjoy the outstanding variety in food and welcoming family-friendly atmosphere.

Via, Gary, Ruth and all the team in Supermac's Sarsfield Road look forward to greeting you in their new look restaurant over the Christmas and New Year.”

Over the coming year Supermac's has plans to open a further number of restaurants. This in turn will generate employment on a national level adding to its existing 2,800 plus employees.



DECEMBER Events Guide

DECEMBER 1st		
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullane's Hotel	7.30pm
Line Dancing	Gullane's Hotel	8pm
DECEMBER 2nd		
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9pm
DECEMBER 3rd		
Active Retirement Monthly Meeting	Gullane's Hotel	3pm
Trad Session	An Táin	10pm
DECEMBER 4th		
Open Jam Session	Maud Millars	8pm
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullane's Hotel	11am
Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	10pm
DECEMBER 5th		
Sean Kean Concert	Town Hall Theatre	8pm
Dj Johnny F	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Beggars velvet	Maud Millars	8pm
Eamon O'Neill	The Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Joe Wynne	Pillar House	9.30pm
Circuit Classes	The Convent	8.30-9.30pm
Mike Regan	Canal Bar	9pm
DECEMBER 6th		
Kings of Connaught live	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj Chris Adamz	East Nightclub	12pm
The Hush	Maud Millars	8pm
Ann Marie McLoughlin	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Hickory Wind	Pillar House	10pm
The big lad	An Táin (downstairs bar)	9.30pm
Live Dj	An Táin (upstairs bar)	9.30pm
Black & White followed by Dj John	Haydens Hotel	10pm
Amy Brennan	Canal Bar	9pm
DECEMBER 7th		
Too Tall Paul live	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj Treasa D	East Nightclub	11.30pm
Macey South	Maud Millars	8pm
Streetwise	Joes Bar	10pm
Trad Session (musicians&singers welcome)	Pillar House	6pm
Her Down	An Táin	9.30pm
Live Dj	An Táin (upstairs bar)	9.30pm
Johnny Brady	Carlton Shearwater	9pm
DECEMBER 8th		
Puss in Boots Panto	Town Hall Theatre	7.30pm
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullane's Hotel	7.30pm
Line Dancing	Gullane's Hotel	8pm
DECEMBER 9th		
Puss in Boots Panto	Town Hall Theatre	7.30pm
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9pm
DECEMBER 10th		
Puss in Boots Panto	Town Hall Theatre	7.30pm
Active Retirement Monthly Meeting	Gullane's Hotel	3pm
Ballinasloe Flower & Garden Club	Gullane's Hotel	8pm
DECEMBER 11th		
Puss in Boots Panto	Town Hall Theatre	7.30pm
Open Jam Session	Maud Millars	8pm
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullane's Hotel	11am
Christmas Singers Circle	The Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Trad session (singing pubs competition)	An Táin (upstairs bar)	10pm
Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	10pm
DECEMBER 12th		
Puss in Boots Panto	Town Hall Theatre	7.30pm
Frank Nestor live	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Strange Brew	Maud Millars	8pm
Trad Night Christmas Special	The Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Joe Wynne	Pillar House	9.30pm
Circuit Classes	The Convent	8.30-9.30pm
Ray Dolan	Canal Bar	9pm
Country Market	Town Hall	9am
DECEMBER 13th		
Puss in Boots Panto	Town Hall Theatre	2.30pm
Puss in Boots Panto	Town Hall Theatre	7.30pm
The Woodbines live	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj Justiy	East Nightclub	12pm
Washout	Maud Millars	8pm
Ollie Rocks	Joes Bar	10pm
Chris & Tara	The Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Geagan Pagans	Pillar House	10pm
Fluffy truffles	An Táin (downstairs bar)	9.30pm
Live Dj	An Táin (upstairs bar)	9.30pm
Shane Moore followed by Dj John	Haydens Hotel	10pm
Hoppy Bar Stars	Canal Bar	9pm
DECEMBER 14th		
Puss in Boots Panto	Town Hall Theatre	2.30pm
Colin Galligan	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj Treasa D	East Nightclub	11.30pm
Loose rooster	Maud Millars	8pm
Anything goes	Joes Bar	10pm

Trad Session (musicians&singers welcome)	Pillar House	6pm
Trad Session	An Táin	7pm
Derek Ryan	Carlton Shearwater	9pm
DECEMBER 15th		
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullane's Hotel	7.30pm
Line Dancing	Gullane's Hotel	8pm
DECEMBER 16th		
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9pm
DECEMBER 17th		
Active Retirement	Gullane's Hotel	3pm
Trad Session	An Táin	10pm
DECEMBER 18th		
Open Jam Session	Maud Millars	8pm
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullane's Hotel	11am
Bruno Groening - Circle of Friends	Gullane's Hotel	7pm
Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	10pm
DECEMBER 19th		
Bad Santa	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	9.15pm
Tom Wolf	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Beggars Velvet	Maud Millars	8pm
Texas Holdem Final	Joes Bar	10pm
Buzz the Agent	The Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Ultan Conlon	Pillar House	9.30pm
Last Man Standing	Haydens Hotel	10pm
Circuit Classes	The Convent	8.30-9.30pm
Country Market	Town Hall	9am
DECEMBER 20th		
Frozen	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	4pm
The Inbetweeners 2	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	8.30pm
Nightowls live	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj Lee	East Nightclub	12pm
Good Ole Trusty	Maud Millars	8pm
Sliders	Joes Bar	10pm
Too Tall Paul	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Chillbillies	Pillar House	10pm
Madden Family Band	An Táin (downstairs bar)	9.30pm
Live Dj	An Táin (upstairs bar)	9.30pm
Last Man Standing followed by Dj John	Haydens Hotel	10pm
The Pink Panther Jazz Band	Carlton Shearwater Foyer	9pm
The High Reel	Canal Bar	9pm
DECEMBER 21st		
Pacifica live	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj Treasa D	East Nightclub	11.30pm
Washout	Maud Millars	8pm
N21	Joes Bar	10pm
The Livewires	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Trad Session (musicians&singers welcome)	Pillar House	6pm
Hickory Wind	Pillar House	9pm
Trade Session	An Táin	7pm
Shane Moore	Haydens Hotel	10pm
DECEMBER 22nd		
The nudie suits	Maud Millars	8pm
Xmas Draw with Sara O Kane	Joes Bar	10pm
Live Music	The Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Joe Wynne	Pillar House	9pm
DECEMBER 23rd		
Imposter	Maud Millars	8pm
Kensey 3	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Black & White	Haydens Hotel	10pm
DECEMBER 24th		
Xmas Eve Choir	Gullanes Hotel outside	1.30-4pm
Mass	Portiuncula hospital	7pm
Christmas Eve Mass	St. Michaels	7pm and Midnight
Christmas Eve Mass	Creagh	Midnight
DECEMBER 25th		
Mass	Portiuncula hospital	9.15pm
Christmas Day Mass	St. Michaels	9am, 11am and 12.15pm
Christmas Day Mass	Creagh	10.30am
DECEMBER 26th		
Rugby Club Tournament	Rugby Grounds	2pm
The Shakes live	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Driftwood	Joes Bar	10pm
The Gaegan Pagans	The Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Dj Keith Geraghty	Pillar House	9pm
Shtick her downy	An Táin (downstairs bar)	10pm
Dj Lee	An Táin (upstairs bar)	9pm
Shane Moore	Haydens Hotel	10pm
The High Reel	Canal Bar	9pm
Robert Mizzell	Carlton Shearwater	9pm
DECEMBER 27th		
Kings of Connaught	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Megabeat	East Nightclub	12pm
Red Tape	Maud Millars	8pm
Sara O Kane	Joes Bar	10pm
Live Music	The Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Chillbillies	Pillar House	10pm
The Mahoneys	An Táin (downstairs bar)	10pm

JANUARY Events Guide

Live Dj	An Táin (upstairs bar)	9pm
BoJangle followed by Dj John	Haydens Hotel	10pm
The Hoppy Bar Stars	Canal Bar	9pm
DECEMBER 28th		
Loose Rooster	Maud Millars	8pm
Nightowls live	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj Treasa D	East Nightclub	11pm
Neil Diamond Tribute	Joes Bar	10pm
Live Music	The Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Trad Session (musicians&singers welcome)	Pillar House	6pm
Ginger Biscuits	Pillar House	9pm
Mike Denver	Carlton Shearwater	9pm
DECEMBER 29th		
Home Alone	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	9.15pm
Martina P	The Auld Sod Bar	9pm
Live music	Maud Millars	8pm
Matt Keane	Pillar House	9pm
DECEMBER 30th		
The Muppets Christmas Carol	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	4pm
Elf	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	8.30pm
Sara O'Kane live	The Auld Sod Bar	9pm
Macey South	Maud Millars	8pm
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9pm
DECEMBER 31st		
New Years Eve blowout	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj Lee	East Nightclub	12pm
The Gaegan Pagans	Maud Millars	8pm
New Years Eve with Dave	Joes Bar	10pm
New Years Eve Party Night	The Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Dj Keith Geraghty	Pillar House	9pm
The Big Lad	An Táin (downstairs bar)	10pm
Dj John	An Táin (upstairs bar)	9pm
Shane Moore followed by Dj John	Haydens Hotel	10pm
Amy Brennan and Friends	Canal Bar	9.30pm
JANUARY 2nd		
22 Jump Street	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	9.15pm
Dj Johnny F	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Trad Session	The Dunlo Tavern	5.30pm
JANUARY 3rd		
Up	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	4pm
2001: A space odyssey	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	8.30pm
Nightowls live	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj	East Nightclub	12pm
Sara O Kane	Joes Bar	10pm
AnnMarie McLoughlin	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Ultan Conlon	Pillar House	10pm
Live Music	An Táin (downstairs bar)	9.30pm
Live Dj	An Táin (upstairs bar)	9.30pm
JANUARY 4th		
Sara O'Kane live	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj Treasa D	East Nightclub	11.30pm
Buzz the agent	Joes Bar	9.30pm
Trad Session (musicians&singers welcome)	Pillar House	6pm
Trad Session	An Táin	7pm
JANUARY 6th		
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9pm
JANUARY 7th		
Trad Session	An Táin	10pm
JANUARY 8th		
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullane's Hotel	11am
Singers Circle	The Dunlo Tavern	10pm
JANUARY 9th		
Dirty dancing	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	9.15pm
Frank Nestor	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Country Market	The Town Hall	9am
JANUARY 10th		
Happy Feet 2	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	4pm
Magic Mike	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	8.30pm
Tradstone	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj	East Nightclub	12pm
Slider	Joes Bar	10pm
Live Music	The Dunlo Tavern	10pm
G2	Pillar House	9.30pm
Mike and Dive	An Táin (downstairs bar)	9.30pm
Live Dj	An Táin (upstairs bar)	9.30pm
Foster and Allen Seated Concert	Carlton Shearwater	8pm
JANUARY 11th		
Pacifica	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj Treasa D	East Nightclub	11.30pm
Shane Moore	Joes Bar	10pm
Trad Session (musicians&singers welcome)	Pillar House	6pm
Trad Session	An Táin	7pm
JANUARY 12th		
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullane's Hotel	7.30pm
Line Dancing	Gullane's Hotel	8pm
JANUARY 13th		
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9pm

JANUARY 14th		
Trad Session	An Táin	10pm
JANUARY 15th		
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullane's Hotel	11am
JANUARY 16th		
Good Will Hunting	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	9.15pm
Dj Johnny F	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Buzz The Agent	The Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Country Market	Town Hall	9am
JANUARY 17th		
Ms Doubtfire	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	4pm
Jumanji	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	8.30pm
Colin Galligan live	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj Lee	East Nightclub	12pm
Too Tall Paul	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Chris Nash	Pillar House	10pm
The Mahoneys	An Táin (downstairs bar)	9.30pm
Live Dj	An Táin (upstairs bar)	9.30pm
JANUARY 18th		
Tom Wolf	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj Treasa D	East Nightclub	11.30pm
Trad Session (musicians&singers welcome)	Pillar House	6pm
Trad Session	An Táin	7pm
JANUARY 19th		
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullane's Hotel	7.30pm
Line Dancing	Gullane's Hotel	8pm
JANUARY 20th		
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9pm
JANUARY 21st		
Trad Session	An Táin	10pm
JANUARY 22nd		
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullane's Hotel	11am
JANUARY 23rd		
Ghostbusters	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	9.15pm
Frank Nestor	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Trad Session	The Dunlo Tavern	5.30pm
Declan O'Rourke (Tkts €20 limited availability)	Pillar House Folk Club	9pm
Country Market	Town Hall	9am
JANUARY 24th		
Ratatouille	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	4pm
Bad Neighbours	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	8.30pm
The Shakes live	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj Lee	East Nightclub	12pm
Sharon Shannon & Band	Gullane's Hotel	8.30pm
Anything goes	Joes Bar	10pm
Kensey 3	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Geagan Pagans	Pillar House	10pm
The Big Lad	An Táin (downstairs bar)	9.30pm
Live Dj	An Táin (upstairs bar)	9.30pm
JANUARY 25th		
Too Tall Paul live	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj Treasa D	East Nightclub	11.30pm
Sway	Joes Bar	10pm
Trad Session (musicians&singers welcome)	Pillar House	6pm
Trad Session	An Táin	7pm
JANUARY 26th		
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullane's Hotel	7.30pm
Line Dancing	Gullane's Hotel	8pm
JANUARY 27th		
Tea Dance	Gullane's Hotel	9pm
JANUARY 28th		
Trad Session	An Táin	10pm
Mike Denver Seated Concert	Carlton Shearwater	8pm
JANUARY 29th		
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullane's Hotel	11am
JANUARY 30th		
Casablanca	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	9.15pm
Dj Johnny F	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Clontuskert Tea Party	Gullane's Hotel	8pm
Trad Session	The Dunlo Tavern	5.30pm
Country Market	Town Hall	9am
JANUARY 31st		
Homeward bound	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	4pm
The two Faces of January	Town Hall Cinema Ballinasloe	8.30pm
The Crime	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm
Dj	East Nightclub	12pm
Fohenagh Tea Party	Gullane's Hotel	8pm
Race night fundraiser "In aid of u-10 soccer trip to Halewood Liverpool"	Joes Bar	10pm
JIG JAM	The Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Renowned Box Player:Johnny O'Halloran	Pillar House	10pm
Shctick her down	An Táin (downstairs bar)	9.30pm
FEBRUARY 1st		
Sara O'Kane live	The Auld Sod Bar	10pm

To advertise your events here, Contact: ballinasloelife@hotmail.com or Call **090 964 3779** or **085 148 1911**

New Art Studio Opens in Enterprise Centre

By Conor Finnerty



Local artist Lily Kelly has opened up an art studio in the enterprise centre. A graduate of Fine Art and Design in GMIT, Lily describes her space as a small studio with a big vision.


The artist places significant importance on Pablo Picasso's quote, "I am all my life trying to paint like a child." She believes that children have an innate creative ability that should be nurtured and encouraged. Lily has started her classes on Saturday mornings. The classes cost €8 an hour with all materials provided, they are more casual and fun based. However she will be starting more focused art programs in the New Year which will run for six weeks where we will deal with colour theory, look at different artists, and the use of different mediums etc.

Having worked in Youth Work Ireland in the area, Lily is experienced at working with young people in a creative way. She trained and worked with the project Teen Between. This is a support service for young people whose parents are experiencing separation. Her belief is that "Art is a great way of expressing the things that we may all struggle to put into words, I hope also to provide additional support and space for Junior/

Leaving Cert art students when needed," Lily remarked.

The G.M.I.T. graduate is an accomplished artist having held a few art exhibitions in the town this year. Her most recent exhibition was with the newly formed Art Link Collective a group of six artists from the area. She is also part of the midlands 6Art group and had an exhibition in Tullamore Civic Offices along with having some of her work selected for Birr Vintage Week this year.

A particular highlight for Lily this summer was working on a mural at the Aughrim Interpretative Centre. It was a most wonderful art project to be involved in, with children and young adults from Aughrim and Belarus.

The studio is also open to adults. The Ballinasloe Women's Group are starting a beginner's class at the Art Studio over the next six weeks. She can also work on a one to one basis either in the studio or in the person's home. As there is a lot of creative talent around Lily is open to co-operation on projects with other artists in her studio which is ideally located and wheelchair accessible. Lily can be contacted by phoning 0872042979 

A festive advertisement for Arrabawn Fresh Cream. The background is a snowy blue with white snowflakes. In the foreground, two 250ml bottles of Arrabawn Fresh Cream are shown, each with a Santa hat on top. The bottles are labeled '25% EXTRA FREE'. To the right of the bottles, a plate of Christmas puddings is displayed, one topped with a swirl of cream. A wooden signpost with a snow-covered top reads 'MADE IN GALWAY'. The text 'the perfect cream for Christmas' is written in a large, elegant script. At the bottom, a red banner contains the text '25% EXTRA FREE' and 'NEW 200ML BOTTLE WITH 25% EXTRA FREE'. The Arrabawn logo is in the bottom right corner.

the perfect cream for Christmas

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Arrabawn

Remembering my first Kiss...!

By Maureen Cahalan

In 1990 Ballinasloe & Ballycastle (Co. Antrim) formally ratified Memories created from precious moments will never fail to fill our lives with awe and wonder. Now, these moments are brief 'Kodak moments' in time; presents don't equal promises, or kisses are not contracts. However, each of us has the power to capture these happy, fleeting instants so that we can treasure them forever. Picture a sleepy five-year-old, as she drifts away by the turf fire on Christmas Eve. That was my first 'snapshot', just like a present or a kiss, frozen in time as my father lovingly whispered in my ear with a kiss "Merry Christmas!" I sailed off to the land of nod, floating on clouds of anticipation and excitement. Santa Claus was on his way, I could feel it. Legend has it that St. Nicholas was actually a bishop in Turkey. A parishioner there fell on hard times, struggling to support her two young daughters. One night, Bishop Nicholas arranged for some gold coins to be dropped down through their chimney. Nicholas ('Claus' being the German version of Nicholas) was granted Sainthood because of his kindness to the poor, and over the years we have learned to love the figure of 'Santa Claus'. And so, my first 'snapshot' was created in part because of the good deeds of a bishop in Myra, Turkey. His good deeds have passed down through generations because the world holds him tightly with much love. While history has a way of creating our reality, special moments linger throughout our lives. Merry Christmas....!



Santa is visiting Carlton Shearwater for Family Fun Filled Christmas on 7th Dec.

The Carlton Shearwater will welcome Santa Claus to the hotel, on their specially planned family Christmas Day. Visitors will enjoy modern dance performance from In Step Sage School, Carolling from Treble clef Choir and an Irish Dancing show from The Sarah Clogher School of Dancing & Dancing Stars.

Kicking off at 12 noon on December 7th, there will be Bouncy castles, Candy carts, Mini Manicure for Mother and daughter at a charge of €6 which will be fully donated to the Laura Lynn Foundation. Amount raised will be announced at the end of evening.

Garrett Mc Guinness General Manager and the Carlton Shearwater team really wanted to get into the spirit of Christmas this year and have already had the talented Treble clef Choir singing for the turning on of the Christmas lights in November with the hotel provided complimentary mulled wine and mince pies for all present on the night.



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Puss In Boots To Make Purrfect Panto

By Conor Finnerty

It's not Christmas in Ballinasloe without the Panto! Yes ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, it's almost that time of year again! It's hard to believe it's been almost a year since "Snow White and the Vertically Challenged Excavators" hit the Town Hall, and based on its success this year's show has very big boots to fill; both figuratively and literally!

"Puss in Boots" is B'sloe Panto's sixth production and promises to be the best yet. This classic Panto tale is about to get turned upside-down and inside-out with local talent putting their very unique stamp on it. The cast this year consists of, as always, both stage veterans and newbies from the ages of 6 to, well, we'd rather not say!

Over 140 school children from Ballinasloe and the surrounding areas have been busy since late September rehearsing dances and musical numbers that are sure to entertain everyone in the audience. "It's a big commitment and a lot of hard work for them, but they've all been doing exceptionally well; the amount of talented young dancers is unreal!" says Aoife O'Grady, choreographer for the Red and Green group.

This year sees Enda McGrath making a welcome return to Panto as Jack, the hero of our story. Dave Hardiman will be pulling on his knee high boots to play his side kick, Puss, who is much more than your average house cat.

This band of misfits is completed by Louise McEvoy who will be playing Jack's auntie, Dame Hettie Quette. This will be Louise's second show after having so much fun last year as the evil Queen she was more than happy to travel all the way from Tullamore again.

Jennifer Clogher will be playing the beautiful princess our hero has his heart set on, but she also attracts the unwanted attention of our villain Lord Rodger, played by Fergal D'Arcy. Of course no villain is complete without his henchmen, but unfortunately for Lord Rodger his henchmen for hire aren't exactly the brightest in the bunch. Pat Vaughan and Roisín Fahy take on the roles of this dastardly duo.



"It's great to get the opportunity to work with so many talented people, new and old" says Pat. He is also delighted to be working alongside Roisín, the youngest member of our principal cast. The 11 year old, from Scoil Uí Cheithearnaigh, shows great potential and is well able to hold her own up against the other larger than life characters; she is certainly a star in the making!

The poor hapless King, played by Mike O'Reilly, who is busy trying to find a suitor for his daughter Princess Alice, also has to contend with his wife, Queen Mildred played by Majella Flanagan, who has a touch of Lady Macbeth about her; she's the Queen of the Kingdom and everyone knows it, the King included! Our cast is rounded off by our Narrator, Brian Derrane, who leads us all, cast and audience, through the story, and not always from a distance!

B'sloe Panto's production of "Puss in Boots" will be running from December 8th to 14th in the Town Hall Theatre, the show begins nightly at 7.30pm with two fancy dress matinees on December 13th and 14th at 2.30pm, where both children and adults alike are invited to come in outfits fit for the Panto stage with prizes for the best dressed. Pre-booking is recommended. The booking office can be found at J&s Photos on Society Street, drop in or call (09096) 31566, or buy your tickets at the door.

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WE LOOK AT THINGS DIFFERENTLY

Transessiún Supporting Sharon Shannon

By Conor Finnerty



Local band Transessiún are the support act for Sharon Shannon when she plays in Gullanes in January. The six Garbally students came together last year to enter a competition and have continued from there.

The band comprises Eoghan Costello, Aodan Connaughton, Diarmuid Claffey, Eoin Gavin, Alan Madden and Paul Regan. The band were asked by "West Link Promotions" to support the talented musician and singer. "Anyone who appreciates music of any genre appreciates the talent of Sharon Shannon," remarked guitarist Alan Madden.

Prior to this event playing on the gig rig on Country Fair Day was their most notable performance. "Most of us have been playing traditional music since we were young, we love music in general, from De Dannan to Tiesto," according to the fifth year student.

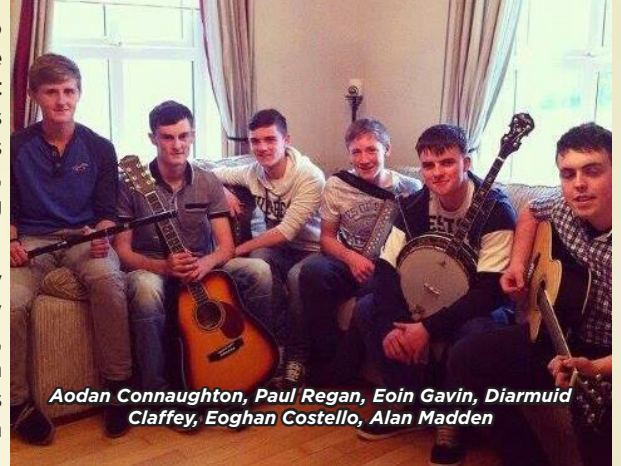
Eoghan Costello who plays banjo for the group can't wait for the 24th of January. "It's such a great opportunity and honour for us to play support to someone as talented as Sharon Shannon, hopefully it's the start of big things to come for us,".

The gig on the 24th of January will see Sharon Shannon play some of her most popular tunes, best known for her work with the accordion, she also plays the tin whistle and melodeon as well as the fiddle.

Her 1991 album, Sharon Shannon, is the best-selling album of traditional Irish music ever released in Ireland. Her collaboration with Mundy, who played in the town lately, for 'Galway Girl' became the most downloaded song of 2008 in Ireland, and has gone on to become the eighth highest selling single in Irish chart history.

It has been over ten years since Sharon has played a gig in the town but she was always eager to return. "When I first heard that there was a chance of playing a gig

in Ballinasloe, I leapt at the opportunity, there was something special about the night I played there some years ago. Of course this time it will be different, I'll be playing a mix of my new and old music so it's something the people of Ballinasloe will not have heard before," stated the



Aodan Connaughton, Paul Regan, Eoin Gavin, Diarmuid Claffey, Eoghan Costello, Alan Madden

accomplished musician.

Sharon will be joined on stage by band members Jim Murray on acoustic guitar, the multi-talented Alan Connor on electric guitar, piano, percussion and vocals and also by All-Britain and All-Ireland Champion Dezi Donnelly on fiddle.

Tickets for Sharon Shannon and Band are €25 and are available from Gullane's Hotel, support act Transessiún can be contacted on www.facebook.com/transessiun.

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Out and About in Ballinasloe



Jig Jam Album Launch for The Dunlo Tavern

By Conor Finnerty

This Dunlo Tavern run by Damien & Maeve Clarke is one of those venues that embraces Live Music and always tries to provide an enjoyable nights entertainment for its customers by offering top quality live music three nights a week with no cover charge.

The musical genre in The Dunlo is a fairly eclectic mix and goes from Traditional Irish Music to Folk, Rock and Country. The Singer's Circle, a unique event to Dunlo Tavern, takes place on the 2nd Thursday of the Month from September to June. This is a night where people sing whatever type of song they want without musical accompaniment and everyone joins in for the chorus if they know it.

This year The Dunlo Tavern won the Fair & Festival Singing Pub Competition for the 4th year running and this achievement shows a true dedication to providing great musical entertainment and more importantly getting the audience fully involved.

In The Dunlo they also try to showcase up and coming bands such as JIG JAM, a new and very popular Tullamore based band that will be launching their debut Album OH BOY! this side of the Shannon on Sat 31st of Jan. Jig Jam are a Multi



Instrumental three piece string band whose members are Jamie McKeogh, Daithi Melia and Cathal Guinan.

Indeed one of the band Members Cathal Guinan, is a very talented fiddle player and has won an All Ireland Fleadh Cheoil Title - is a first cousin of Maeve Clarke who is herself a Tullamore native.

This album OH BOY! is a unique fusion of Bluegrass, Traditional and Folk Music with contemporary influences and is delivered with fantastic musicianship and vocal harmonies from its 3 members who

between them play 6 different instruments including Banjo, Fiddle, Guitar, Double Bass, Mandolin and 5 string Banjo.

There's a great mix on this album from lively tunes with catchy foot tapping melodies, exhilarating banjo solos and upbeat songs including their own version of 'Riptide' by Vance Joy which will keep you humming away from the get go and through out the album.

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No Name Club To Celebrate 20 Years in 2015

By Conor Finnerty

The No Name club in Mountbellew is a positive example for other youth clubs in the area. Set up in 1995 the club will be celebrating their 20th anniversary in 2015.

The club was set up to provide youngsters in the area with activities to keep them occupied over the winter months without alcohol and since its foundation has grown to become one of the most successful clubs in the province and only one of two in the County.

The No Name club itself was originally founded in 1978 by three men in Kilkenny, the famous hurler Eddie Kerr, Fr. Tom Murphy and Eamon Doyle. Mountbellew and Gort are the only recognised No Name clubs in county Galway at present.

"The club is all about young people maturing and taking on responsibility, we have people who come in and train them in leadership qualities," said Ollie King, Treasurer of the club, who also spent a number of years on the National Executive.

The club currently has 10 adults and 34 youth members ranging in age from 15 to 17 and serves four secondary schools in the area, St. Cuans, Coláiste an Chreagáin, Holy Rosary College and Coláiste Mhuire Ballygar.

Mountbellew has been quite successful over the years with 3 winners of the Joyce Fitzgerald memorial award, which



recognises the achievements of a host and hostess who are put forward by their club to compete in regional events and the national youth awards in Kilkenny in April every year.

Stephanie Hannon, Joint Secretary - who came up through the ranks of the club to graduate to the adult team, says the experiences offered by the club are first class.

"You get to meet so many people, and grow as a person, you become much more confident and polished about talking in front of people and performing on stage, something I never thought I'd ever be really comfortable with," said the current G.T.I. (Galway Technical Institute) student.

The years season mirrors school term time with the busiest time October to April and typically includes club outings to places like Lilliput Adventure Centre, Riverside Golf, Ice Skating at Christmas time and five a side soccer tournaments and assisting the elderly of the parish with some Santa gifts.

Admittance to the Club involves a nationwide policy of selection by interview and progressing through different stages of club participation - involves further interviews and evaluation - all directed at developing the character and outlook of young leadership material.

The highlight of the year for the No Name Club is the National Youth awards held in Kilkenny, where up to 900 students get together and celebrate after the awards ceremony with a disco until the early hours.

On a local level the clubs organise outings for their members which are self-funded through youth discos. The No Name club also take great pride in giving back to the community. Mountbellew's most notable contribution was the creation of a CD which raised €10,000 for the Special Olympics.

Anyone interested in joining the club can contact their Facebook page or check out the No Name club website. Nonameclub.ie/clubs/mountbellew

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Social Services Review Demanding Year

By Conor Finnerty

Physiotherapy, Care & Repair, Pre-School and Therapeutic Learning Centre all reflect levels of care and support for those in the community needing help.



The Social Services reviews a staggering busy year – which saw unprecedented demands in their much needed services.

Special guest speaker on the night of their recently held AGM was; Bishop John Kirby spoke on the “Goodness and the Common Good”.

Bishop Kirby is President of the Social Services and has been a long-time supporter of the work that is carried out. He began by stating that Catholic social teaching is a hugely important part of the mission of the church.

The organisation is now over 40 years in existence, an initiative of Eamon Lally, Michael Lally, Stevie Connell, Margaret Mansfield and the late Dr. Joe Tarpey and Sr. John Scully.

Various difficulties have been overcome and the centre is still thriving despite the recession of the past few years. The Day Care, Meals on Wheels, Community

In 2013, the cost of running of services came to €375,000. Some €220,000 from government grants and the balance of €155,000 was raised through donations and fundraising (49%) and service charges (51%). This amount of money needs to be raised annually to keep the services going. In 2014, the grant from Tusla for our Therapeutic Learning Centre for children has been cut by 50% (from €19,000 to €9,500), which will put further pressure on our funding efforts. Also our Meals on Wheels van needs to be replaced, after the engine has been replaced twice. We need to fundraise a further €20,000 to replace it.

The work and commitment over a long period is inspiring and Bishop Kirby hopes that people will continue to serve in this type of work and that the community at large will realise the huge amount of good that make it possible.

In her opening address, Chairperson Annette Lynagh expressed gratitude to everyone who played their part in helping the Social Services provide the many services to the people of the town and surrounding areas.

Teresa Coughlan, Manager, in her report,

acknowledged the grant from the Town Council which enabled the upgrading of offices, heating system and kitchen appliances in the building.

Meals on Wheels Co-ordinator, Kay Cunningham stated that nearly 14,000 meals were delivered in 2013. The Care and Repair service, which has its office in the Social Services Centre, carries out small jobs and minor repairs for the elderly. This service can be contacted at 090 9630630 from Monday to Thursday, 9 am to 3 pm.

The Preschool and Therapeutic Learning Centre continue to grow under the stewardship of Childcare Manager, Elaine Murphy. This Childcare facility is the centre for early intervention in childcare in the Ballinasloe area and works in close partnership with statutory services. Unfortunately, in 2014, a severe cut in Tusla funding to the Therapeutic Learning Centre resulted in the cessation of the communication groups.

The Annual Christmas Card Game will be held on the 29th of December and plans are afoot to run a Pop Up Boutique in February which cater for branded clothes and will hopefully raise some funds for the replacement Meals on Wheels Van.

The committee for the coming year was also elected at the AGM, which is as follows
Chairperson: Annette Lynagh, Vice-Chairperson: Jenny O'Sullivan
Committee Members: Sr. Alacoque, Eamon Lally, Ann Kenny, Martina Staunton, Michael Lally, Margaret Oliver, Regina Power, Tess Raftery, Padraig O' Ceithearnaigh, Padraig Walsh.

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FINE GAEL

Positive Stories & New Strategies For Battling Turmoil

By Conor Finnerty

Ballinasloe Response Group were honoured to have former Cork hurler and Gaelic Players Association member Conor Cusack as a guest speaker at one of their public meetings recently.

Cusack was joined by Ballinasloe Response Group Chairman, Frank Hunt, former Galway hurler and addiction councillor Justin Campbell and Garda Emmet Major who is part of the Western Region Drugs Task force.

The talk, held in Gullanes ballroom, was well attended by young and old thanks to the appearance of Conor Cusack who rose to national prominence last year after publishing a blog detailing his battle with depression and his recovery.

Focusing on the subject of alcohol and its dangers, Emmet Major first outlined the town's new alcohol strategy which was co-written by a number of local groups and is being implemented in the coming weeks.

Justin Campbell, former Senior Galway hurler, was also on hand to speak about his role as an addiction councillor and the importance of the GAA when it comes to mental health.

"I am a Connacht rep for the National GAA Health and Well-Being Committee. It was only established last year as a follow on from the Substance Abuse Provincial

Programme," stated the Trinity graduate.

The GAA has plans in place to have a health and well-being club officer in every club in county Galway by early 2015, an initiative backed by Galway County Chairperson Noel Treacy and Secretary John Hynes who were both present on the night.

These officers will look to provide support



Frank Hunt, Conor Cusack, Justin Campbell, Emmet Major

and advice for players or members who are finding life difficult on or off the field, in a casual and friendly atmosphere.

Justin has previously worked with troubled adolescents in the Aislinn Centre in County Kilkenny, and has been working with the GPA (Gaelic Players Association) for the past two years. He has his own private practice in the locality.

Justin's history of performing at the highest level allows him to connect

and relate to players issues, despite the developments over time.

"There seems to be a lot more pressure around social media, and coverage of inter county players. These players are in the limelight and are put up on pedestals which they can be knocked from," stated the Kiltormer native.

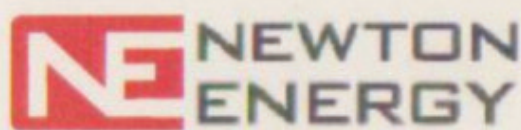
Conor Cusack, who now travels the country as a guest speaker for the GPA while maintaining a full time job with a medical device multinational outlined his struggles with depression, hiding his internal turmoil from his friends and family, his eventual breakdown and his journey towards recovery.

"The level of suicides in this country was on the rise and the tragic death of Galway Hurler Niall Donohue was the catalyst for me publishing my blogpost when I did," recalled the brother of former Cork goalkeeper Donal Og Cusack; who received

massive national media attention at the time.

The Ballinasloe Response Group are partially funded by the Western Region Drugs Task Force and open their guest speaker nights on a donation basis. Funds raised from the Conor Cusack event will go towards the printing of new literature.

Anyone looking to get involved with the Ballinasloe Response Group can phone 087 3521213 or email ballinasloeresponsegroup@gmail.com.



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Ballinasloe man Heads top Dublin School

By Ken Kelly

Ballinasloe-born John Rafter has been appointed Head of one of Ireland's oldest schools-The King's Hospital-in Palmerstown, Dublin. He becomes the 25th Headmaster in the school's 345 years history, which is one of the few Protestant boarding schools in the country to offer seven-day boarding for its 700 students.

The fifth eldest child born to the late Ivan and Debbie Rafter of Main Street in Ballinasloe, where his family were renowned grocers and general merchants, John attended the Brackernagh National School before moving onto The King's Hospital for his secondary education. A graduate of Trinity College and DIT, John was later appointed a co-ordinator of the mathematics department and a housemaster at his former Alma Mater.

During his 35 years there he has been heavily involved in the school's sporting successes, coaching rugby, athletics and

head of basketball. Mr. Rafter said "My approach in taking The King's Hospital forward is to provide a holistic education for our pupils, which combines high



academic standards with personal development. I will endeavour to ensure that each pupil recognises his/her own self-worth and that individually they have much to contribute to the overall

school community."

Mr. Rafter, who was Deputy Principal for two years prior to his appointment as Headmaster, was highly rated by many of his former students during his term as Mathematics Teacher. One described him as "an excellent teacher. If he taught me every subject I would be getting straight A's. If you were ever unclear about something he would go out of his way to ensure you understood it" while another stated "A great teacher who helped me greatly. He has plenty of time for those that have time for the subject. Thank you John." One ex-pupil even described John as "a legend. The best Maths teacher in the school, best man in the school."

John still finds time to visit his hometown where his late parents were such popular business people in the forties, fifties and sixties. His siblings Douglas and David live in Ballinasloe, sister Joyce (Whoriskey) now resides in Galway while Ivan is in Dublin and Stuart lives in London. 🌱

Maisie Reynolds (continued from page 21)

"We have become very, very materialistic in a short 80 years. You'd like to see people invest more time in discovering the religious or the spiritual dimension to their lives. I always saw my faith as a gift - it's an opportunity to take it and the saddest part is that often others can't or don't".

So what does she put the secret of her longevity to? "Well plenty of exercise, plenty of buttermilk in your youth, learn how to relax properly in later life and leave all the worrying to the LORD - he can do it for you", says a devout and faithful Christian who has seen 8 pontiffs in her lifetime.

She enjoys the company and the development of her wonderful grandchildren - James (14) Maria (8) and Vibuthi and Prenev who are part of Joe and Catherine's family but who like Paul reside Stateside but visit regularly. Malachy and Mary live locally.

And as for Town - "growing up in Monivea the joke was that only mad people went to Ballinasloe but it has been a wonderful community of people to raise a family in and it has progressed hugely in terms of houses, facilities and people in the five decades I've been living here".

Something Hitlers Luftwaffe or the man above can surely reflect on with some satisfaction! 🌱

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THURSDAY Sheep Sale from 5.30pm



SATURDAY Suckler Cows and Weanlings Sale from 11am



Rev. George Flynn - An Appreciation

By Conor Finnerty

Ballinasloe, Portiuncula Hospital and the wider community were deeply shocked and saddened by the death of Canon George Flynn, Rector of the Aughrim & Creagh Unions of parishes. George collapsed and died on Wednesday 17th September, just before a meeting in Ardahan.

George's funeral Eucharist took place in St. John's Church with Archdeacon Wayne Carney presiding. Rev. Lesley Robinson, George's sister-in-law and Rector of Clontarf, gave a very personal and heartfelt address on the life and qualities of the man.

George was a Dub, born in Glasnevin on 26th September 1945, the third child born to his parents William Angus and Maude. As a child, George suffered badly with acute asthma, which prevented him starting school until he was 8, and necessitated the family moving home to Dun Laoghaire, beside the sea and all its therapeutic benefits. After attending Kingstown Secondary School in Dun Laoghaire, he joined the staff of Irish Lights at age 18, where he spent the next twenty three and half years. In 1987 he left to pursue his vocation to the ordained ministry and was ordained Deacon in Armagh

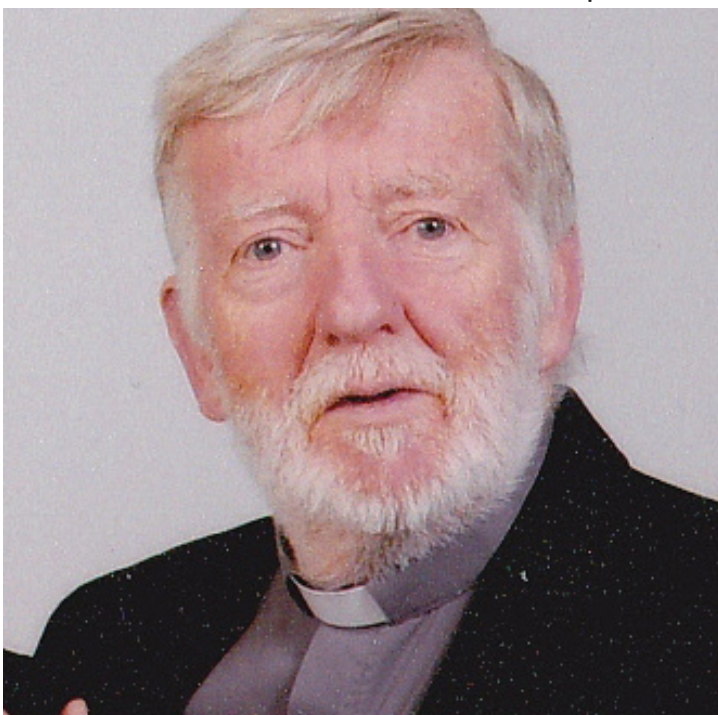
Cathedral on 24th June 1990.

He succeeded Rev. Trevor Sullivan as Rector in February 2008. His devotion to the sick was exemplary: he was committed to the Church's Ministry of Healing and to his role as Church of Ireland Chaplain in Portiuncula Hospital, as well as to his care of those who were recovering at home or in nursing homes.

He also had the rare gift of being able to relate and minister to people of all ages equally. He adored children (and they him), and put huge effort into children's ministry in his parishes, especially the Family Services. Who could forget when this pulpit was transformed into an ark which rapidly filled with children arriving up the church from the back, suitably disguised as animals of various sorts. Or the delight of the children at Easter to have newly hatched out chicks in church symbolising the new life that the resurrection of Jesus offers us all.

George's pastoral care and sensitivity during times of loss and bereavement was also incredible. His warmth, sincerity and deep spirituality always somehow managed to make even the darkest and most difficult of situations a little bit more bearable.

To George's wife Gwyn and the extended family in their loss we offer them our condolences and thoughts. 🌿



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Ballinasloe Horse and Agricultural Show Ltd have a lot going in 2015.

By Conor Finnerty



After a very successful October Show the Directors met to discuss 2015. Chairman of The Ballinasloe Horse & Agricultural Show, Fr. Christy McCormack, announced plans for a least 6 Major events that will be running in the Ballinasloe Showground's in 2015.

Starting in February the Show jumping League running for 10 weeks. In May the riding club are holding a show. One Day show jumping will be held on the June Bank holiday weekend. In July a major 2 day show jumping event is being held. In conjunction with the Irish Draught Society and Ballinasloe Horse and Agricultural Show a major 2 day

weekend is planned for July. This will bring people from the four corners of Ireland and will be a great boost to the Tourist industry in the Ballinasloe area.

Cathal Gibbons and Peter O'Connor spoke at length about the fine work that has been done on the second arena and thanked Ballinasloe Town Council for their grant. Cathal Concannon went through on behalf of the Equestrian committee of Padraic Ryan, Peter O'Connor, Robin Newtown, Cathal Gibbons and Gerry Stronge the new Show jumping fences design which the committee are buying at the moment thanks to a grant from the National Lottery. All the fences and work in Ballinasloe Showground's will be finished by end of December 2014.

John Harney Show Secretary said having been involved with Ballinasloe Horse and Agricultural show for over 50 years that he was very proud at the new look showground's and felt that 2015 was going to be one of the busiest years in the history of the Showground's. Anyone that wants to join Ballinasloe Horse and Agricultural Show Ltd can do so by contacting any Director of the Company.

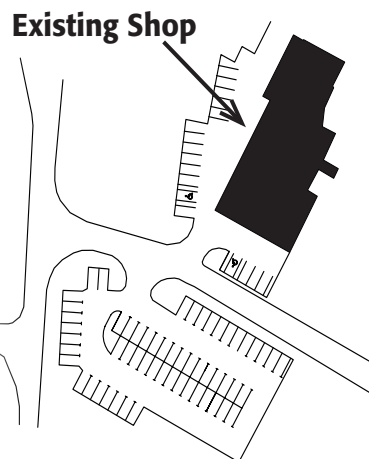


Photos by Gerry Stronge

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CHRISTMAS GREETING'S FROM MANAGEMENT & STAFF

On Yer Bike - New Cycling Club!

By Stephen Roche

The Ballinasloe GAA Croke Park cycle was a great success with many new riders out on the bike. It would be great to see this trend continue into the winter, cycling presently can be tough with the dark evenings and cooler temperatures. Winter however can also be the best time to start as it gives you a few months to get a good base before you head into the spring where the real fun starts.

The benefits of getting out regularly on the bike are huge; better muscle tone, stronger legs and think of all that fresh air. As an asthmatic it has improved my condition, as cycling is great for the cardio system, with a proper bike fit which is critical you can improve your overall fitness and health in no time.

The sport of cycling is not too hard on the body provided your bike fit is correct. With good exercise comes a change in lifestyle for many, diet is usually the main change as your diet directly affects your ability on the bike. A hunger for good nutrition will come when you start to feel better and stronger on the bike and for some "get more competitive".

Over the last couple of years anybody in the area looking to take up running had a great outlet in the form of "Running Against Cancer" to start out. Cycling now has a similar outlet; a new cycling



Emmet Malone, Cormac Killeen, Colm McCann, Stephen Roche, John Donnelly, Barry Taylor

club called "Ballinasloe Cycling Club" has been formed. I would advise anybody who is currently cycling or thinking of taking up the sport to join a club, this time last year myself and a few local guys joined Shannonside Cycling Club in Athlone and I can honestly say it was the best decision I made since taking up the sport two years ago.

The cycling club offers a medium for you to meet fellow riders and complete regular spins in the locality. Cycling as

a group takes the sting out of winter cycling along with gaining the skills of cycling in a group which is important for sportive cycling next spring/summer. Join up with the newly formed club for an exciting heart pumping 2015. The cycling club members are currently going out on morning/evening spins and welcome cyclists of all abilities especially beginners. The club can be contacted on ballinasloecyclingclub@gmail.com or on Facebook.

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Underage Motorcross Champion

By Conor Finnerty

Dylan Stynes, a 15-year-old town resident, has become the Irish Champion and the Southern Centre Champion in motocross in 2014. Competing in the 125cc class Dylan finished 8th in British Youth Championship, a huge achievement considering it was his first time to compete in the event.

Dylan has been ranked no lower than 5th in all the championships he has competed in since 2007. This has led to him being selected to represent Ireland in events in England and Belgium. "Belgium was an experience of a lifetime, so proud to be picked and what an experience to ride against some of the best riders from so many other countries," according to the talented youngster.

Travelling and competing in these events is not cheap however and Dylan is looking for sponsors for the upcoming season, to have your name or logo displayed on his kit contact Brenda Stynes on 086 3384083 or email brendastynes@gmail.com.



Bridge Club Player of The Year

By Connor Finnerty



At the A.G.M. of Ballinasloe Bridge Club a presentation was made to Pat Hughes, Annaghbeg, Ahascragh by outgoing President Fr. Michael Finneran for his great achievement as "Player of the Year" for 2014.

Pat is a very loyal member of the club, travelling to Bridge in all kinds of weather. He started his playing career in Ahascragh and was one of the founding members there 21 years ago.

Previous winners of the recent Club accolade include Frank Barrett 2013 and Nuala McDermott 2012. "I started playing with Pat years in St. Cuan's Hall Ahascragh and always found him to be a keen sporting player and a thorough gentleman to his finger tips" said current President Jeanne Naughton.

Pat has always been a welcoming and encouraging host for all our members - old and new and has contributed greatly to the success and atmosphere of our club - he is a truly deserving winner and all at the Club wish him well.

The Club runs Mon / Tue and Thursday in the Bridge Club Rooms, Sarsfield Road (above Barretts) 8.00 p.m sharp; new members welcome - for further information contact Angela Connolly 9643284 or Meta Cunningham 9642866.

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No Silverware for Junior and u21 Hurlers

By Conor Finnerty

The town's junior and u21 hurling team's years were capped with disappointment this season after both teams failed to capitalise on good form and win crucial games at the business end of the season.

The town's junior hurling team numbers were tight at the beginning: they relied heavily on the youthful minors and u21s to bulk up the panel. Their first game of the year proved pivotal as a loss of the year proved integral in their failure to qualify out of their group.

But increasing numbers as the year progressed saw a mirrored improvement in the team's performances. The team qualified for the shield knock out stages but were defeated by a more experienced Kilbeacanty side.

"The club is looking forward to building on another successful year. A big thanks must go to Tomás Fenton, Shane Brody and Seamus McHugh for taking the junior team this year and Ronan Lally, Donal Tully and Eoin Fenton for their expertise in training," remarked Donal Fenton.

The u21s, managed by Donal Tully and assisted by Seamus McHugh, Ronan Lally and Mike Fogarty, produced some memorable games on their run to the county final, with a great win over close neighbours Mountbellew/Moylough in



the semi-final.

Unfortunately the final were as far as they were going to reach, after narrowly being defeated by Kiltormer in the County Final in Duggan Park. Declan Dillon, a talented wing forward, believes a little extra effort from players to train earlier, could make the difference between success and failure next season.


"We started training too late in the year for me in junior, fitness and lack of hurling let us down a lot. In under 21 we hurled well in the first half of the final but we must be more clinical with our chance conversion," stated the town native.

The spine of the team will remain intact

next year, with just two player's overage next year. With the addition of some young hurlers there is an optimism among the squad that silverware could be a distinct possibility in both codes next season.


Declan's teammate and fellow University of Limerick student, Sean Connaughton is also full of optimism for the coming year. "We had a shaky start to the year but we grew into it. If we start next year the way we finished this year we'd be flying it," said the former Garbally student.

Despite not bringing home any trophies the teams were well supported throughout the year, especially towards the end of the campaigns, according to the two players.




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Ladies Underage Rugby Continues Successful Foundations

By Connor Finnerty

The ladies rugby bandwagon at Ballinasloe RFC mirrors that of the recent National side performances in that all the results are really positive.

The u15 girls team coached by Declan Murphy have continued from where they left off last season. They recently travelled to Westport and captured the Connacht Club Cup in the 7-a-side competition for their category.

The trend of success continued from club to school with the girls from the club helping their school, Ard Scoil Mhuire, to win the Connacht Schools U15 Cup for the first time in their history.

The u18 girls team, that came together for the first time this season, also took part in the competition for their age grade; coached by Richie Shepard and Dermot Tierney Jnr. They played some enterprising rugby and were unlucky to lose out for a place in the final, a pleasing performance so early in their development.

The growing popularity for women's rugby can be attributed to the ladies national team securing a remarkable grand slam in the Six Nations in 2013 and the rugby 7's team competing for honors in recent tournaments. The Under 12 ladies are being managed by Gearoid Finneran.

"It's a really good experience. It's great to play rugby because it's an alternative sport for girls and was something completely new for almost everyone who joined. It's really enjoyable and great for getting out during the winter, keeping fit and having fun at training," said Ellen Butler, a member of the u18 team.

The young player is adamant that the club offers great opportunities for new members to join and to learn some new skills in a fun and friendly environment.

"We have fairly regular games all around the province which are really good fun and great for getting to know each other better. We're still looking for more players for upcoming matches and

don't worry about not knowing how to play, it doesn't take too long to learn," enthused the 17-year-old Ard Scoil Mhuire student Ellen, who also plays with her secondary school team. Any ladies wishing to join - can contact Patricia Tierney, Secretary at 087 9176541 or call the clubhouse at their convenience.

The annual jamboree at the rugby club will take place on St. Stephen's Day according to club PRO Liam Courtney. The O'Flynn Cup game should be especially interesting this year when the President's XV take on the Exiles with the latter set to have a strong panel of former under age players from recent years.



U18 Women's Rugby Team

There will also be a fixture for the ladies to showcase their skills. A special wider family get together in the afternoon is being arranged for after the match with some light entertainment and fun being on offer in the clubhouse for the evening. Further details see www.facebook.com/ballinasloerugbyclub



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Athletics Haul Medals at Underage Level

By Conor Finnerty

The town's athletics club has garnered some success in outings to the Galway and Connacht Cross Country Championships. This form has transferred to national schools in the area where participants have continued to grow their passion for the sport.

These Championships are divided into even and uneven age events. The even age event saw the club complete the 1-2 at the u10 girls 1,000m with Ava McKeon and Aoibheann Fitzpatrick bringing home the medals. Performing with Kayla McKeon and Roisin Greally the four girls finished in 4th place in the team event.

At the uneven age event held in Tuam, Aoibheann Fitzpatrick continued her good run of form winning gold in the u9 girls 800m.

In the u11 boys 1,500m race club members Conor Harley & Shane Fitzpatrick battled for gold with Conor crossing the line just ahead of Shane.

Brian Burke who was running out of age in the U17 boys 5,000m race finished well ahead of his competitors coming in 1st place.

"The Connacht Championship's, even and uneven age events, were held in Loughrea and Westport House respectively, and the athletic club travelled with a small, but competitive contingents to both

events," according to Monica McKeon, club PRO.

Shane Fitzpatrick and Conor Harley, competitors in u11 Boys 1,500m, made it onto the Galway & Connacht Teams who will compete at the Nationals in Santry. They also represent these teams and competed in the u12 2,000m event in Dundalk IT.

Brian Burke, an u16 competitor in the 4,000m who came 5th in his category, automatically placing him on the County and Provincial team for the Nationals. Brian also ran in the U17 Boys 5,000m and he claimed bronze after narrowly missing out on second place. Veronica Burke ran in the U19 Girls 4,000m receiving a bronze medal.

Young Ava McKeon was crowned U11 Girls Connacht Champion in the 1,500m event, remarkable considering she was running against competitors that were a year older. On the back of this performance she made it onto the Galway County & Connacht Provincial Teams to compete at the National Cross Country Uneven Championships.

Creagh National School also competed in the Roscommon primary school cross country finals held in St. Joseph's



Back row L-R Niall Jennings, Conor Harley, James Burke, Brian Burke, Rowan Harley, Daniel Greally, Tom Fitzpatrick & Shane Fitzpatrick
Front Row L-R Emma Mitchell, Ava McKeon, Aoibheann Fitzpatrick, Kayla McKeon & Ashlinn Arru

College in Athlone. Most of the schools competitors are members of the towns athletics club.

The 3 A Teams from Creagh NS along with all individual medal winners went on to represent their school in the Connacht Primary School Finals which were held in Sligo. The Connacht Primary Schools Cross Country Championships provided very stiff competition with over 100 competitors in each race, with most athletes coming 4th or 5th – just outside of the medals! 🏆

Garbally View Nursing Home

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Rugby Association Appoints Local Sports Professional

By Conor Finnerty

The Irish Rugby Union Players' Association appointed local lass - Deirdre Lyons to its Players Services Advisor team. Deirdre joined them directly from the Institute of Sport where she was previously Head of Performance Support Services.

The IRUPA is the professional rugby players association and represents all of the professional rugby players playing in Ireland. The aim of the association is to protect the welfare of its members and to safeguard their futures, both on and off the pitch.

A native of Togher, Taughmaconnell, Deirdre was always very athletic. "As a child I spent all my free time at the local athletics club, St. Ronan's AC, a club that was founded by my father Jimmy and where he continued to coach up to his 70s," recalled the former student of Ard Scoil Mhuire.

Her family were also heavily involved with the town's rugby club with both of her brothers representing the club as players.

Upon reaching her Leaving Certificate Deirdre spotted a new degree in Sports Science being offered by the University of Limerick. After four years of study Deirdre decided to begin studying for a PhD in athlete welfare and lifestyle support.

During her time at the Institute of Sport, Deirdre managed the transition programme which was designed to support Olympic athletes through the process of qualification, competing and returning from the 2012 London Olympic Games.

"It was a very rewarding project and a role that I really enjoyed. After the London 2012 Games I was looking for a new challenge and applied for a role with IRUPA who were expanding their Player Development Programme," remarked the UL graduate.

Deirdre's time is spent working on many different projects,



from help with time management issues with the academy players, to individual need's analysis with the senior players, to career counselling and advice for players contemplating retirement and those that have just retired.

"The role is extremely rewarding and I feel privileged to have the opportunity to work in sport, in an area that I feel passionate about. From helping a player that has had to retire due to injury find a career path, or negotiating flexible study options with lecturers, or just lending an ear to a player who is going through a difficult time, the job is mostly a series of small victories," stated Deirdre.

Married to Mark Scannell of Scannell Financial Services in Main Street they have three children, Joe (5), Charile (3) and Dan (8 months). They moved to Portumna to set up home 10 years ago and have been heavily involved in the Rugby Club there also.

"Children should be encouraged to sample as many sports and activities as possible and Ballinasloe has a huge amount to offer children in that regard. It is up to the clubs and organisations to ensure that they facilitate this sampling, by working together to schedule training and mini-competitions around each other. When this is not possible clubs and organisations should not make children or their parents feel guilty for trying other sports" states Deirdre.

Schools can also help in this regard and offer young children and teenagers the chance to try out sports and activities that they may not have access to, including adventure activities, aquatics, dance, team sports, gymnastics and health related activities. Schools can also work with clubs and organisations to make sure that the scheduling of games is for the benefit of the students, not the school or the club.

Deirdre sees some of the complicated issues for teenagers in sport "While the issue for most clubs is the drop-out rate in the teenage years, clubs and schools also need to look out for the over-training and over-competing of the really talented players. We all know them, the ones that play Gaelic, rugby and football and can turn their hand to anything. These young players often enjoy competing in all of these pursuits, but at some point they will have to choose, and we, the parents, the coaches, the teachers, should respect that decision".

Her advice for anyone who is contemplating a career in professional sport, or who dedicates a lot of their time to amateur or recreational sport, is to set some goals about where you want to be in 3, 5, or 10 years' time.

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Take a Look at Some of Our Newer Sports Facilities

By Conor Finnerty

Surprisingly enough some 55% of people surveyed in the Town Benchmarking online space in August were not very enthused about the range of quality sports and recreational amenities, that the town has to offer.

As we head into the new year and think of exercise and maybe shedding those few pounds – cast your eye around to the over €22 million of public and private investment that our clubs and private operators have pumped into making the locality a mecca for the tracksuit brigade!

Next edition we will profile the Kingfisher, Pearses, The Running Track, The Showgrounds, The Handball Alley, The Driving Range, The Shooting Range and The Tennis Club.

The Carlton Shearwater hotel has a brilliant leisure centre with fully equipped gym, swimming pool, sauna, steam room and jacuzzi. Opening times Monday – Friday: 7am – 9.45pm and Saturday, Sunday & Bank holidays are 8am – 8.45pm. Contact reception at 0909630400 or check out www.shearwaterhotel.com/leisure for more details.



Shearwater Leisure Centre

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Ballinasloe Rugby Club membership costs €80 euro for an adult and €40 for a student or child. The clubhouse can be booked for functions by contacting any of the officers. €100,000 was spent on the facilities in the last few years building new dressing rooms to accomodate growing numbers. The club has recently started a series of women's team and are recruiting members. Contact Patricia on 0879176541. The rugby club can be found on www.facebook.com/BALLINASLOERUGBYCLUB or www.ballinasloerfc.com.

Ballinasloe GAA club, in Brackernagh offers 1 full size pitch along with 2 training pitches. A ball wall will also be built in the future thanks to an investment by the outgoing town council, who gave in the region of €130,000 for the club house to be renovated. Membership forms can be picked up in the clubhouse by ringing Conor Ryan on

0872444344. The club house can be booked for functions by sending an email to secretary.ballinasloe.galway@gaa.ie. The club offers men's football, hurling and ladies football.

Ballinasloe Golf Club costs just over €600 euro for membership for the year. Non-members are required to pay green fees which are €15 Monday-Friday, and €20 on the weekend. Membership forms can be picked up in the clubhouse or you can call the office on 0909642126. A buggy can be hired out at a cost of €20, which needs to be organised beforehand. The rental of a trolley cost is €3. The club can be found at www.ballinasloegolfclub.ie.

The Curragh grounds, Brackernagh is the home of soccer in the town. The clubhouse enjoyed an injection of funds into the renovation of their clubhouse and the construction of two small astro turf pitches. Membership for adults cost €120 and €60 for a junior. The astro turf pitches can be booked by calling Brendan McNally on 0877936535. Anyone looking to join the club can visit the website at www.ballinasloetownafc.webs.com and or visit the www.facebook.com/ballinasloe.townafc.



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Together - Music, Photography & Food at Christmas

By Connor Finnerty



Sometime in the mid-'90's, Donal Scannell (Jnr.), from Ballinasloe, then working in the Music & Media worlds in Dublin, began running a yearly St. Stephens Night Event in Hynes' Bar in Aughrim. Bands, DJ's and a right old 'Hoolie', these were legendary Nights.

The likes of Bronagh Gallagher, Mundy, David Kitt, Lisa Hannigan, Red Setta just some of the Folk who turned up, for the craic, to play out tunes for fun. It became a real highlight of Christmas every year, the chance to catch up with

old friends and have a really super Night. The money raised on the night was donated by Donal to a different worthy Charity every year.

Around 2004 Darragh Purcell (Kilgarave) began getting involved in the night with Donal and following the closure of Hynes', they moved the Event into town, the first one was held in Saoirse on Dunlo Street before Egans Bar on Main Street, home to the most recent instalments. In recessionary times, they have donated the Proceeds to the local SVDP to support their sterling work in our Community.

"I also wanted to try and integrate a few different elements too, to hopefully make for a really special Event, for all Ages. Looking through many old Photographs of the town I thought it would be nice to collate a display of images of this place we call home, to give the night a sense of 'Roots' and in appreciation of the many beautiful vista's, buildings, parks, monuments, countryside and Art in, and around Ballinasloe, past and present" said Darragh.

He has been struck over the past year by the sheer quality of musicianship of many of our local musicians, particularly as enjoyed on a Thursday Night in 'Maud Millars' Bar. And as many of these talented

people are coming together on the night to provide the Live Entertainment.

Gary Connolly, a local Chef in Kariba's Restaurant, is doing a really nice Buffet, Sean Fletcher for agreeing to Sponsor the PA, Colm Murphy for the beautiful Artwork he has designed, and his Company ID3, for agreeing to Sponsor the Poster Print, Declan & Mary Egan for agreeing to host the night, the local SVDP, Gary Connolly and Mike O'Reilly M.C. There is no cover charge but patrons are expected to donate to the cause on the night.



They have a dedicated Facebook Page which will be updated regularly with more details on the Artistes Performing, Food Menu, Sponsors etc. over the coming weeks.

They're particularly asking for small Gift Donations from local Businesses for a Raffle on the night, please do get in touch. humireland@gmail.com / Darragh Purcell



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2nd 3rd Jan	22 Jump street	Up	2001: A space odyssey
9th 10th Jan (Chick Flick/Dancing weekend)	Dirty Dancing	Happy Feet two	Magic Mike
16th 17th Jan (Robin Williams Weekend)	Good Will Hunting	Ms Doubtfire	Jumanji
23rd 24th Jan	Ghostbusters	Ratatouille	Bad Neighbours
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Ballinasloe's Love Hate Connection!

By Connor Finnerty



Town native, Philip Blake, was one of the men behind the camera shooting the gritty Irish drama Love/Hate. Growing up in Creagh, Philip graduated from the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology to become a Freelance Camera Assistant and Cinematographer.

It was a natural progression for the movie lover. "I was a big movie fan growing up. Not so much the filming side of things but more the entertainment. My mother found it very difficult to pry my eyes away from the telly when I was a child, and still does," said the former Garbally student.

Philip took a lot of inspiration from

growing up in the town and a lot of his artwork and film ideas are inspired by fields to the back of his home and Garbally woods where he enjoyed playing as a child.

Like most young children, Philips older sister Emma dominated the control of the remote and choice of DVD rentals. "We had a lot of DVD nights when I was younger. Usually this meant I saw every chick flick going because my older sister Emma got to choose. But, sometimes, I would annoy my parents enough that I could get different films like horrors, psychological thrillers," said the film buff.

Studying film production wasn't always on the cards for Philip who thought studying Art was best possible path for him. "I never really thought you could learn filmmaking at college. It wasn't until I started an art portfolio course with Stephanie Cuddy in Roscommon that I began to combine my art, photography and interest in films. Stephanie began to point me in the direction of film. She and my art teacher, Ms Madden in Garbally, helped me choose the right course," remarked Philip.

Philips course in Dun Laoghaire was a continuous assessment and project based. The course itself was challenging with a lot of emphasis being put on essay writing something that Philip found difficult due to being dyslexic. But

thanks to the help of friends and tutor this hurdle was overcome.

Over the last few years Philip has been privileged enough to work on some very exciting projects and has included travelling to Libya, Tunisia, India, Paris and some other cities in Europe.

Philip was honored to work on Ireland's current most popular drama and it has helped him to develop his career. "Working on Love/Hate has opened up a lot of other opportunities for me. When I finished up work on Love/Hate series 2 the director, David Caffrey, brought me with him to help on his next project, Line of Duty. This took me to Birmingham for five weeks which was great fun. After that I went to Libya to make a documentary on the city of Zawiya and its involvement in the revolution," said the well-travelled camera man.

His most rewarding and enjoyable project however was filming a documentary in India which followed a group of transition year students to the Sunder Bans to teach English. It was there Philip realized his true calling.

The ambitious and talented young man hopes to be working as a Director of Photography and would one day like to develop a small film company with my friends so as to write and produce their own films.



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Breda Larkin - Profile

By Conor Finnerty

Aughrim comedian Breda Larkin is preparing to end her All-Ireland tour with a Christmas performance locally.

This determined performer threw off the shackles of 9 to 5 job to follow her dream of performing on stage. Her one woman show about coming out in rural Ireland was a huge success at the 2013 Dublin Gay Theatre Festival.

Never fully knowing what she wanted to do with her life while growing up she studied Arts in Maynooth College but the lure of the stage was always too strong. The talented musician and songwriter, skills she incorporates into her performances, finally took the dive into live comedy and decided life was too short for any insecurity after the death of a friend.

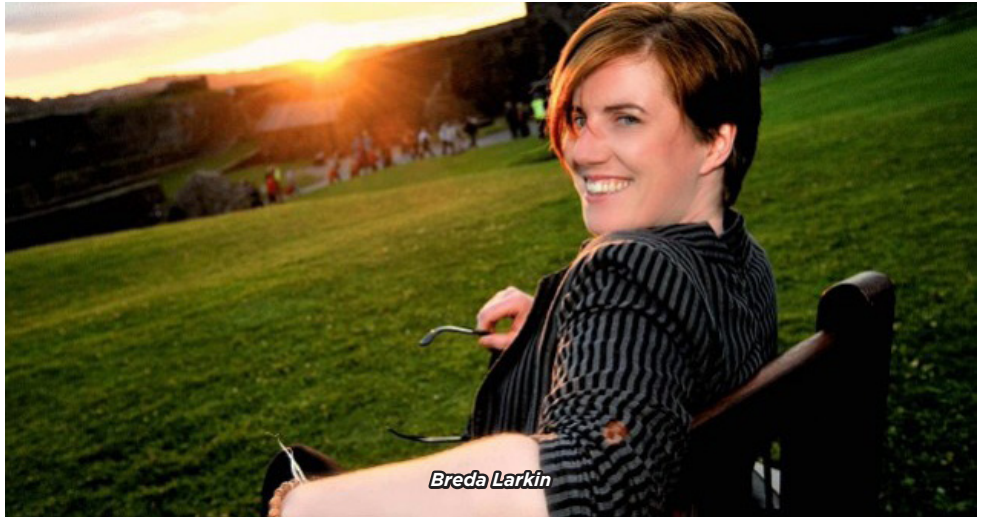
Her comedy tour has led her on a wonderful adventure of Ireland. Travelling the width and the breath of the country, with only a statue of the Virgin Mary for company.

Concentrating on the smaller towns in the country, this pet project of hers she hopes will help her to find the “beating



heart” of each town she visits and to meet the characters that make the town unique.

Even the engine blowing on her beloved van cannot dampen the enthusiasm



oozing from this infectious performer. The green-thumbed comedian's heart is set out settling in the countryside.

“I would love just to do a bit of farming and gardening at home during the day and then be a comedian at night,” said the young 30 something Aughrim native.

This adventure has helped her to find out who she really. Having studied social anthropology in Maynooth she plans to document her experiences in a book to be published next year.

With parents from Clontuskert and Kiltormer, Breda, a past pupil of Ardscoil Mhuire has incorporated Ballinasloe into some of her performances, especially its most famous event, the annual horse fair.

Breda is also an aspiring actor and has just auditioned for a new soap on TV3. Completing drama classes she found hugely improved her confidence and skills in becoming a stand-up comedian.

But this pilgrimage has not been without its difficulties. Breda believes that most arts centres are not offering enough of support to performers such as her. The cover charge to use their facilities is crippling any chance a performer has of prospering.

During her pilgrimage she found it hard at times to entice people to come along to her shows, especially when there was the World Cup to compete with.

This comedian operates by donations wherever she can rather than a cover charge as she feels that a fee on the

door discourages people from coming along just for a look without having to commit to the event by spending their hard earned cash.

This up and coming performer on the national stage believes you have to go with your gut when making life choices and most importantly stick with your decisions. “You just have to put in the hours and keep chipping away until you achieve your goals,” said Breda.

But the highlight of this nationwide pilgrimage for this humble comedian was when an American couple in Dingle sat in on her show and put an eternal smile on her face by saying people in America would thoroughly enjoy her style and material.

Having already established a comedy night in Athlone once a month, which has been steadily gaining support, Breda hopes that this gig will ignite a fresh appetite for stand-up comedy and that she can help others in the area to realise their dream of performing.

A performance in front of any crowd is undeniably going to make you nervous but Breda is relishing the chance to perform in front of her family, friends, neighbours and whoever else cares to join her at the gig, with the Gaegan Pagans a local act supporting her beforehand.

Shows are Egan's Pub on the 27th and 28th of December at 8.30pm. Tickets cost €10 and can be booked by ringing Egan's Pub or you can pay on the door.

Paddy Finn

Town native, Paddy Finn, was named Limerick's Best Young Entrepreneur at a function hosted in the Castletroy Park Hotel. The University of Limerick graduate won €20,000 after being named the overall winner as well as the winner of the Best Start-Up Business category of the competition, which was organised by the Limerick Local Enterprise Office (LEO).

Paddy holds an honours bachelor degree in Electronic Engineering and a Ph.D. on “The facilitation of wind generated electricity in Ireland's electricity market using demand response”. He set up Electricity Exchange with the help of Duncan O'Toole, a graduate of Economics & Public Affairs from UL.



New Inn Prepares for Mummers Festival 2015

By Conor Finnerty

Lovers of Traditional entertainment will be pleased to learn that plans are being finalised for the hosting of the Annual New Inn Mummers Festival in the local Leisure Centre.

This will be the 37th annual staging of this unique Festival of music, song, dance and storytelling - on Saturday night 3rd of January and Sunday afternoon 4th of January 2015, and attracts competitors and patrons from across the county and the midlands.

Last year, the festival was revamped to include a competition for under 13's on the Sunday afternoon, in conjunction with the Junior event for the under 18's, and this proved to be huge success. The Festival Committee hope to build on this further, and make the Sunday afternoon a big family event which showcases the depth of young talent that is emerging in the region, that will ensure the future of the Mummers Festival.

The senior section of the festival as usual will be staged on Saturday night, and the winning Group will be presented with the Peter J Donohue Perpetual Trophy.

While confirming the dates for Festival 2015, the Chairman of the Organising Committee, Michael Mullins paid tribute to the sponsors who have supported and encouraged the event for over three decades.

"Thanks to their generosity, there will be cash prizes and trophies for winning Groups, and many individual awards to recognise talented musicians, singers, dancers and storytellers," stated the Fine Gael Senator.

There will also be "The Most Outstanding Entertainer" award across all categories. The festival provides the perfect event to wind down the Christmas season.

The Mummers Festival is a real community effort organised under the auspices of New Inn Community Council, and over the years has contributed funds for the development of local facilities, as well as supporting many charities.



The Committee look forward to welcoming you to New Inn, and guarantee the best of traditional entertainment in a pleasant and comfortable venue. What better way to close the Christmas festivities, and get the New Year off to a good start, than a visit to the Mummers Festival.

The Festival Chair - Michael Finnerty is now accepting entries and he can be contacted at 087 3828281. 



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Ballinasloe World War One Heritage Group Ballinasloe Clergy in the Great War



By Declan Kelly

As it is exactly 100 years to the month that the first of the priests of Clonfert diocese volunteered to act as Chaplains to the Forces abroad, perhaps it is apt to reflect on the lives and experiences of two of these men, Fr Dan McHugh and Fr Tom O'Connor. Coincidentally, both had served as curates in Ballinasloe.

*"Under the level winter sky
I saw a thousand Christs go by
They sang an idle song and free
As they went up to Calvary"*

*(From Marjorie Pickthall's
Marching Men)*



Fr. Dan McHugh

Fr Dan's ordination photograph depicts a bespectacled and what one would imagine was a bookish and unassuming man. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

The Headford born priest was the first to volunteer his services in December, 1914, while he was still curate in Ballinasloe and would go on to receive the OBE for fearlessly jumping from the trenches to minister to dying men on the battlefields of France as shells burst about him.

The catalyst for his decision to put his name forward was his desire to bring spiritual comfort to the many men from Ballinasloe who were joining up at the time. His letters to Bishop Thomas Gilmartin of Clonfert make for stark reading. In May, 1915, he wrote: "To see and look at the mangled remains or remnants of what was left of those killed, made me stand aghast. They - some - were flittered to pieces - others were horribly torn and blackened. It was a most awful and repugnant thing to pick one's steps through pools of blood ..." Six months later, he described the horrors of the trenches stating that "What shells, rifle and machine-gun fire have failed to do, rain has succeeded (sic.). It has made ... the deep trenches ... miniature rivers and lagoons in places ...".

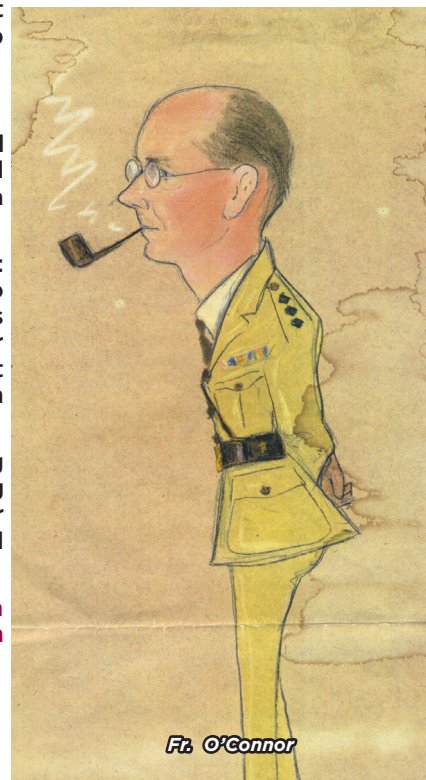
Fr McHugh survived the Great War, served in Iraq from 1919-1920 and also in World War II. This plucky little man's calling as an army chaplain only ended after he fell from a train platform during an air-raid blackout and broke a leg. He died peacefully in his sleep at the age of 81 in 1961.

Fr Tom O'Connor was a curate in Ballinasloe from 1904-1910 and also responded generously to Bishop Gilmartin's appeal for volunteer chaplains. Fr O'Connor served at Gallipoli with the ANZAC's (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) and became a hugely popular figure.

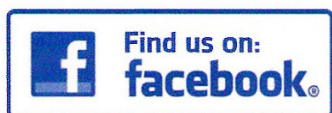
Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Jordain would later attest to this popularity when he wrote: "His services to the battalion had been beyond all praise". Fr O'Connor also wrote to Dr Gilmartin of his experiences and of the constant dangers. In one letter, he describes how "One man came in to our dosing station yesterday completely deaf and dumb after being blown up by a shell. The steel helmets we wear are excellent protection against ordinary shrapnel that does not burst too low but of course a bullet goes through them like paper".

Fr O'Connor also went through some punishing physical illnesses including malaria and dysentery and never forgot the horrible injustice of witnessing the execution of a soldier who had fallen asleep on duty. Shortly after returning to Clonfert diocese, he became Parish Priest of Mullagh and Killoran where he remained until his death in 1951, aged 70.

The memory of these two courageous men is kept alive locally through the O'Connor/McHugh Perpetual Trophy which is played for each year in Ballinasloe Golf Club.



Fr. O'Connor



**Ballinasloe World War One
Heritage Group**

Ballinasloe & District Vintage Club Planning For 2015

By Conor Finnerty

The season just gone has been one of the most successful year to date in it's five years! So much has happened throughout this year with members, on a collective and individual level.

Anthony Grenham won the special exhibit award at this year's national ploughing championships at Stradbally, Co. Laois and John McGann won the best of show at the Newark County show grounds last month in the UK.

With almost 100 members within the club from both far and wide, it is not surprising that recognised success has followed. The Michael Highland inspired classic car sprint professionally run by club member Shane Burns has achieved national acclaim, with a waiting list for the next edition to be held in February 2015.

It has brought the best out of their members with the quality of restorations that came forward throughout the year, one example being Mathew Hughes's E36 BMW restored by local man Paul Cobban.

Another successful event to be held again next year, (of the now usual date) of the last Sunday in April, is the jumble and craft fair, kindly supported by Sean and Damian Carey at their Creagh Equestrian Centre. The artisan craft workshops will be expanded this time due last year's success and fabulous local support it received, and also the interest of regional crafts people in promoting the Club and not to mention the full page review by the Connaught Tribune with photographs by local photographer from Evelyn Donnellan to whom they are most grateful.

The behind the scenes work that goes into such events in visiting the shows and fairs throughout Ireland and bringing the best to town is chiefly done by club PRO Anthony Grenham.

The heavy lifting team behind the clubs success not already mentioned includes, Ronnie Cobban, Michael 'Hessy' O'Hehir, Pat Glynn, Michael Glynn, John McDevitt and Peter Enright Moony. "There would be no club without this team but it is its members that drive them, on behalf of the Ballinasloe and District Vintage Club we wish you, the readers of this publication, a very happy Christmas and look forward to seeing some of you at our events in the coming year" said Chairman Ivan Mullen. The club can be contacted by e-mailing Mick at bdvcvintage@gmail.com.



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Photo: Robbie Riddell

Portrait Of A Revolutionary

By Conor Finnerty

Ada English: Patriot And Psychiatrist

by Dr. Brendan Kelly.

Published by Irish Academic Press.

It has lately been remarked that among the beneficial effects of the present decade of centenary commemorations is the incentive it gives historians to produce biographies of some of the minor players in the events that led to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. Ada English was one such player, and in Dr. Brendan Kelly she has found a biographer whose present work is scholarly and meticulously referenced yet eminently readable.

Born in Caherciveen, County Kerry, in 1875, English grew up in Mullingar where she attended the Loreto Convent Secondary School. A 1903 graduate of the Catholic University School of Medicine, Dublin, she was appointed the following year to the post of second assistant medical officer in Ballinasloe Lunatic Asylum, as the Mental Hospital was then known. Having development advanced nationalist view, she was instrumental in setting up a branch of Arthur Griffith's Sinn Féin in the town in 1910. Later she joined both Irish Volunteers and Cumann na mBan,



and may have acted as a medical officer to the Volunteers during 1916 Rising in County Galway.

Arrested in 1921, she was sentenced to a term of imprisonment in Galway Jail for possession of criminating documents. Following her release, she was elected unopposed to the Second Dáil where she spoke eloquently and forcefully against the adoption of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. It would seem that she played at least a peripheral role in the ranks of the

Irregulars during the fighting in Dublin when the Four Courts were attacked by the Free State Army at the start of the Civil War. She was not, however, among the over 400 Republican women later interned for militant opposition to the Government. Thereafter her political involvement was marginal or non-existent.

English is credited with introducing occupational therapy in the Mental Hospital, and soon came to be regarded as a doctor with enlightened views on

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of Ballinasloe Municipal
District a Happy Christmas
and a Prosperous New
year.

 **FIANNA FÁIL**
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY




the treatment of psychiatric illness. In the late 1930s she is said to have promoted Cardiazol therapy for schizophrenia whereby patients were subjected to chemically-induced convulsions. This method was quickly superseded by electroconvulsive therapy. Eventually appointed resident medical superintendent in June 1941, she retired in August of the following year and died in 1944.

Any potential biographer of Ada English would be confronted with formidable difficulties. She never wrote her memoirs nor, as far as is known, kept a diary. Her personal papers have disappeared. Contemporaries who would have known her well are no longer with us. Like so many of her generation, she was revolutionary rather than a politician, and never attained public office through a popular vote. Her brief term as a T.D. ended in electoral defeat after just twelve months. Consequently she didn't have

to undergo the constant scrutiny that people who make a career in the hurly-burly of parliamentary life are forced to endure. Given these circumstances, it is understandable that the Ada English who emerges from these pages remains, unfortunately, a shadowy figure. All too often the writer is obliged to resort to conjecture or to rely on uncorroborated assertions whose veracity cannot be tested. The result is that significant events in the subject's life, as well as aspects of her character, are frequently shrouded in obscurity. One episode, not related by Dr. Kelly, will suffice to illustrate this point.

Facilitated by the absence of a statutory police force, combined with a dearth of responsible leadership at local level, the anti-Treaty I.R.A. conducted a campaign of ethnic cleansing against members of the Protestant community in Ballinasloe during May and June of 1922, in the course of which many were hounded from their

homes and businesses, some never to return. Political figures on both sides of the Treaty debate roundly condemned this outbreak of criminality, yet English, who at the time was a sitting T.D. hoping to retain her seat in the Pact Election, remained tight-lipped about what was happening, and never subsequently repudiated the sectarian thuggery, of her associates. It would be futile to speculate on the reasons for her silence, a silence that, on the face of it, reflects little credit on a woman described in this biography as a persona of "human and compassionate spirit".

The author has fleshed out his narrative with fascinating short biographies of four of Ada English's coevals, all female medical doctors, whose careers and preoccupations ran parallel in many ways to those of his main subject. 



LDF Parade passing Market Square, June 1940.

Led by Joe Mills, followed by Jack Larkin (front left) and John Madden (behind Mills).

2nd row L-R was Frank Mc Loughlin, Paddy Ryan Brackernagh, Thomas Finn, Sean Griffin and Martin Tully. The man visible behind Frank Mc Loughlin is John Leonard from Killmalaw.

In the picture you can see the Central Bar which was run by the Brackens and was known later as Dicks Bar. The premises is now occupied by the Good Taste Chinese restaurant.



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