

# BALLINASLOE LIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 5 Issue 5: Dec '15 - Jan '16

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# BALLINASLOE LIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 5 Issue 5: Dec 15-Jan 2016

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## REAMHRÁ



I naturally want to wish compliments of the season to all our readers near and far. Please do try and spare a thought for those who don't have the emigrant coming home or a loved one present – especially for the first time. Behind all that tinsel there are quite a few tears at this time of year.

As we got this edition to bed – it was 6 years to the week that the town was almost submerged in the Floods of 2009. Hasn't time flown? – we will profile a piece on the Great Flood in the next edition but a few short months after all that calamity this journal arrived to chronicle our ebbs and flows.

From time to time we will, as part of the Town Action Team initiative, be circulating 14,000 copies of the new Business LIFE to all the homes in the Postal District – the first was highlighting Retail and Sports facilities – quite a few THOUGHT it actually was the MAG! Sorry for the confusion.

The Heritage Council produced a report in early summer on the current state of Irish Towns. It found that organisations that supported a successful town the most; are Voluntary Groups 61%, Tidy Towns 57% and Sports Clubs 44%. We are blessed with an abundance of them in this locality and some had their efforts rightly recognised in the new look Community Awards.

Their stories and activities are what make up the back bone of this publication. Our Chalkboard Chronicles starting in this edition will also give a chance for the next generation of writers, through their schools, to participate too in this effort to amplify and record all the positives that we have under our feet but sometimes take for granted.

In an increasingly febrile and hostile world to basic humanity, as witnessed in the fundamentalist terrorist attacks in Paris, Beirut, Brussels and elsewhere, our hope for 2016 is that the "dream born in a herdsman's shed" might serve to illuminate all that is possible and achievable if we try to out love the haters!

Le Gach De Ghui  
COLM CROFFY, Editor



*We have just come through two hectic months of activity in the Town, all well supported, generating a positive mood as we move into the Christmas season.*

*Huge numbers of people attended the Show and Fair & Festival events in October as well as the Fashion Show organised by the Town Team.*

*We had a very successful "Zombie" walk through Garbally Woods over two nights at Halloween which saw 2,250 Men, Women & Children experience a memorable ramble through the darkness in excellent weather conditions. How to cope with even greater numbers next year is a nice problem to have for the organising Committee.*

*We also saw 400 people attend the Ballinasloe "People of the Year" awards which was a hugely successful night. It acknowledged outstanding people and organisations, who through their commitment to participating in community and voluntary activities, have had a positive and significant impact on the quality of life in their communities in Ballinasloe. I congratulate all nominees.*

*As we enter the time of year when we spend the biggest percentage of our income it is important to consider supporting the local economy. As without a vibrant, profitable local business community we face an uncertain future. What we want to promote and encourage is both old and new attractive businesses offering a wider range of products to give people a reason to visit the town and with your support this will happen.*

*Wishing all our readers a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.*

SEAMUS DUFFY, Chairman,  
Ballinasloe Area Community Development.

**Disclaimer:** The opinions and views in this publication are those of the contributors. In the compilation of this publication, every care is taken to ensure accuracy. Any errors or omissions should be brought to the attention of the Editor. Ballinasloe Life does not accept any liability to any person for loss or damage arising from anything contained in this publication or for any error or omission in it. All material is copyright.

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# WHERE ARE THEY NOW? PARAIC GULLANE.



BY KEN KELLY

**A Ballinasloe-born doctor is now regarded as a national and international leader in Head and Neck Surgery in Canada and the USA and has delivered keynote presentations to the medical profession in over 83 countries, lecturing on all aspects of Head and Neck Oncology.**

Padraic Gullane is the eldest of four children born to the late Michael and Bridget Gullane, Main St., Ballinasloe, in 1945. He received his primary education in the local St. Grellan's NS before attending Garbally College, as a dayboy, for his secondary studies. Padraic helped out in the family business at the weekends and during school holidays with his brothers Eamon, now residing in Galway but formerly the owner of Harry's in Kinnegad; Tomas, the current proprietor of Gullane's Hotel and sister Anna, now a GP in Portlaoise.

Dr. Padraic Gullane received his Medical Degree from Galway University in 1970 and then embarked on a surgical career, obtaining his Fellowship in Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery from the Royal College of Surgeons of Canada in 1975 and the following year was selected as the McLaughlin Fellow before pursuing advanced training in Head and Neck Oncology with Dr. Sebastian Arena in Pittsburgh and Drs. John Conley and Marquis Converse in New York.

The Ballinasloe man has received numerous honours and awards during his career including the "Harris P. Mosher Award" in 1990 for his

Thesis submission for membership in the Triological Society and was awarded "The Commemorative Medal for the 125th Anniversary of Canadian Confederation" in 1992. In 2004 he received the Millennium Society Award from the American Academy of Otolaryngology; the following year he was presented with a Distinguished Award by the Academy before receiving the "George Davey Howells Prize" from the University of London in 2005. In May of 2006 he travelled to Sydney

to accept the "Royal Australasian College of Surgeons Honorary Fellowship" and a year later came to Ireland where he was presented with the Medtronic Alumni Award from the National University of Ireland, in Galway for his contribution to "Health Care and Medical Science."

**In recognition of his distinguished achievements, Dr. Gullane has also been honoured with Honorary Membership of the Royal College of Surgeons in England in 2010, and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland in 2012. He was also elected to Fellowship of the Canadian Academy of Health Services and was appointed as a Member to the Order of Canada by the Governor General of Canada, cited for his inspiration of young surgeons and his contributions to the field of Head and Neck Surgery.**

In 2014, to recognise his outstanding contributions, an endowed Chair was named in his honour at the University Health Network/University of Toronto and in February last was appointed as a Member to the Order of Ontario by the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario for his achievements. He has also facilitated the establishment of four University Hospital Chairs (Head and Neck Surgery, Reconstruction, Radiation Oncology and Basic science) from private funding donations in excess of \$14.5 million.



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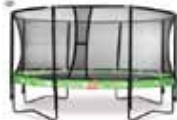
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Dr. Pat, as he is affectionately known by his peers, has published 337 papers in peer-reviewed journals and 92 chapters in textbooks as well as 10 books on various aspects of Head and Neck Surgery. He is currently a member on the Editorial Board of ten journals and has served as president of the American Head and Neck Society, the North American Skull Base Society as well as the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology. He has been invited as a visiting professor to over 83 countries, delivering more than 830 keynote presentations on all aspects of Head and Neck Surgery.

Padraic Gullane has lived in Toronto for the past forty years and still resides there with his wife, Dr. Barbara Cruickshank. He has two children Kira, who recently graduated from Limerick University with a post grad in medicine and John. The world-renowned medical specialist still keeps in touch with his siblings and his home town. "I love getting back to Ballinasloe, whenever I can. I have so many friends there and memories of growing up in Main St., the Old Log Cabin and playing by the River Suck" he said.

*The young Gullanes pictured outside their Main St. Pub in the late 50's.  
From left: Eamon, Anna and Tomas with big brother Padraic.*



## WEILY'S NURSERY 25th ANNIVERSARY.

A Ballinasloe couple are celebrating the silver jubilee of their Garden Nursery business this year after deciding to change over from dairy farming. For Charlie and Irene Weily it's a labour of love at their Nursery Centre in Mackney, which was started as a sideline by Irene. Now operating six days a week, it caters for hanging baskets, containers and grave pots as well as growing plants, flowers, shrubs and trees.

Charlie's late father Harry, was a gamekeeper on the Major McCalmont Estate in Kilkenny, which is now the Mount Juliet golf course. His love of nature attracted him to the hundreds of species of shrubs, plants and flowers on the Estate and he passed on his passion to his son Charlie who underwent a horticulture course in Portumna before expanding

Weily's Nursery on its current site. Now with the help of his wife Irene, the couple cater for all garden plant needs, roses, bedding and potted plants, shrubs and trees. For the festive season the Nursery will carry a huge stock of Christmas Trees, wreaths and containers.

To mark their Silver Jubilee, Weily's will hold a Novelty Christmas Event at their Mackney Nursery, on Saturday 5th Dec., between 2 and 7 pm, with the proceeds going to Portiuncula Hospital Children's Ward. Santa and Mrs. Claus will be in attendance with goodies for the kids who can also enjoy colouring and story-telling. The couple hope their charitable fund-raising venture will be well supported.

By Ken Kelly

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# MAURA HOPKINS RUNS FOR FINE GAE

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**A 31-year-old Occupational Therapist from Ballaghaderreen in Co. Roscommon is the Fine Gael candidate in the General Election for the Roscommon/Galway constituency. On a directive from HQ for a one candidate strategy, Sen. Michael Mullins withdrew in favour of Cllr. Maura Hopkins who was then unanimously selected to contest the new three-seater.**

The only daughter of Michael and Kitty Hopkins, Maura has taken a career break to campaign vigorously in the new constituency, which sees Ballinasloe town in particular, moved away from the traditional Galway East stamping ground. Maura's first venture into politics was last year when she was elected to Roscommon Co. Council, having won a seat on the Boyle Municipal District Council in the local elections. Then she was the Fine Gael flag-bearer in the Roscommon-South Leitrim by-election following the departure of Luke "Ming" Flanagan to Europe. Here she achieved over 5,500 first preference votes-finishing a creditable third out of ten candidates.

**A regular visitor to many parts of East Galway through her involvement with Macra na Feirme where she attended agricultural shows and ploughing matches, Maura said "I come from a farming background, I drive a tractor and I have a green cert. I am well aware of the problems small farmers on Suckside are experiencing and am very concerned with the increasing number of rural burglaries which are terrifying the elderly and those living alone. I only hope the new initiatives announced by Minister Fitzgerald will help to allay the fears of many people in the fight against organised gang robberies."**

For the past nine years, Maura Hopkins has been working with stroke patients in St. James' Hospital, Dublin as an occupational therapist. "I welcome the new stroke machine at Portiuncula Hospital but not enough is being done for those affected, after hospitalisation. I have always been an advocate of stroke care but I have witnessed the lack of proper rehabilitation services for these people afterwards. I will fight for better after-care and I also want a stroke machine in every hospital in the country" she added.

Maura has the backing of Dr. John Barton, who is playing a major role in her campaign, with both pledging to maintain the services at Portiuncula Hospital which they say are paramount to the people of East Galway and Roscommon. "I know mothers from my home town and different areas of Roscommon who have had their babies born in Portiuncula. It has a magnificent tradition and we now want to ensure the vacant consultant and nursing posts there are filled without delay. Travelling to UCHG in Galway is not practical for many people in this region, that's why Portiuncula and Roscommon Hospitals are so important. I also want the Mental Health services to be properly resourced throughout the region" she said.

**Welcoming the upgrading of the new water and sewerage scheme in Ballinasloe, Maura says the inconvenience caused for many during the works will be well worth it in the long run. "Thanks to the Government initiative through Irish Water, it means we will now have clean, healthy water to drink. During my by-election campaign there were over 22,000 people in my constituency on a 'boil water notice' which was totally unacceptable in this day and age. Thankfully that has been largely rectified with only a small number now affected" she added.**

Fully aware of the huge job losses in Ballinasloe town over the years, which affected most of the areas in her constituency including Ahascragh, Ballygar, Creggs, Caltra, Castleblakeney, Glenamaddy, Clontuskert, Moore and Lawrencetown, Cllr. Maura complimented the BACD on their initiative in creating over 170 jobs at the centre in

Creagh, through small enterprises as well as the varied businesses in the Poolboy Industrial Estate. "The recent publication of their Town Action Plan is a positive way of communicating with the wider public and could help smaller towns to progress. I have been encouraged with the number of new shops that have opened in the region and I would appeal to everyone to Shop Local for Christmas and the coming year. The quality of life in this area is very good and while it is only natural for our young to travel, we welcome their return and hope they put their skills to the best use for the local community. We are now crying out for nurses, construction workers and people in the hospitality sector and tourism-surely a positive indication we are on the way back" she explained.

**Maura, who is also a speech and drama teacher, says it is very important for this new constituency to have a full-time Government TD and if elected she will open a constituency office in Ballinasloe town. "Though I have only been on the campaign trail for a few weeks, I am impressed with the people I have met and the support I have received. With the help of Sen. Michael Mullins, Co. Cllrs. Michael Finnerty, Aidan Donohue and Peter Keaveney I have had meetings with groups in Newbridge, Caltra, Glenamaddy and Clontuskert and listened to their concerns. I am a positive and hard-working public representative who would love to be elected as Fine Gael TD for this constituency when the General Election comes around. Despite being a Roscommon woman, I would also pledge my allegiance to the electorate west of the River Suck in Dail Eireann" said the aspiring Maura.**

Concluding she added "As a young woman passionate about the region, I believe the next five years offer huge potential for our rural communities. The economy is moving in the right direction. With more people back at work, we will have extra resources for essential public services like Gardai and healthcare, to invest in creating more employment in the West and support our rural towns and villages."

**Maura Hopkins can be contacted at:  
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**On a visit to Ballinasloe Maura Hopkins meets up with Fine Gael's Sean Óg Hurley, Tommy Dolan, Ivan Mullen and Senator Michael Mullins.**



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Whilst the pay parking issue seems to be resolved with a decision of the members of Galway County Council voting to agree to give two hours FREE parking in the centre of all the principal towns of Galway - Ballinasloe Town Centre has quite an array of parking.

The Executive Staff of the Council are preparing the bye law changes to give effect to the Councillors decision and it is hoped as we go to press that the usual Free Christmas / December Parking arrangements which has greatly helped commerce in the centre will continue.

There are over 650 immediate town centre FREE car parking spaces in the centre - not take into account the additional 500 plus car parking spaces at the Dunlo Shopping Centre, or the new 120 spaces at Supervalu in Brackernagh.

Further updates will be to hand on local radio, press and of course Ballinasloe LIFE Fbook page and Ballinasloe.ie



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# WESTERN AUTOMATION RECRUITING STAFF



BY CIARA BERESFORD

**Pat Ward, an East Galway native, explains both his achievements and downfalls through the journey of setting up his own business, Western Automation Research & Development and his plan to further develop his success.**

Pat was raised in Galway and moved to England in 1963 at the age of 16. He worked as a labourer in a steelworks factory for two years. He then joined the Royal Navy with a dream of becoming an electronics engineer. "I managed to convince my superiors that I could make the grade as an electronics engineer, and they sent me to the Royal Navy Electronical College in Hampshire", he mentioned. Pat duly qualified and stayed in the Royal Navy for eleven years.

In December 1976, Pat left the navy and worked with Thorn EMI for three years. "I was very unhappy in my work there, but in 1979 I saw an advertisement in a UK trade magazine for electronic engineers", he stated. The advert was placed by a Square D Company, based in Ballinasloe. Pat was successful in applying to Square D and he joined the company in October 1979, initially as an industrial automation engineer. The automation project was completed in two years, and he was then moved to research development and product development. Pat became familiar with a new technology at Square D for Residual Current Devices (RCDs), which is a technology used to remove electrical power from a circuit or load

when a dangerous electrical current is detected flowing through equipment or a person's body. Essentially, RCD technology provides protection against electric shock.

Pat enjoyed work at Square D, but unfortunately the American owners decided to shut down the R&D operations at Ballinasloe in 1984. "I missed the challenge and joy of product development, and over the next six months I pondered my future, and finally came to the conclusion that I had to move on from Square D. I was offered several jobs, but they would have required me to move home again", added Pat. In late 1984, he decided to start his own business as an independent provider of RCD technology to switchgear companies in the UK.

**In January 1985, Pat started work in his own company, Western Automation Research & Development Ltd in Ballinasloe. The name of the company comes from his surname; Ward and from the fact that he was based in the West of Ireland, he had worked in automation research and development. "I was lucky my name wasn't Shaughnessy", added Pat.**

For the first 10 years, Western Automation struggled to survive and on several occasions, came close to shutting down completely. From 1991 to 1994, Pat studied for and was awarded a Diploma in Professional Management by the Open University, and a Master's Degree in Management Practise by Trinity College Dublin. In 1995, the tide started to turn for Western Automation and they have made great progress since then.



The company celebrated their 30th anniversary earlier this year, with good cause. Western Automation is now recognised as a world leader in RCD technology, with customers in ten countries worldwide. They currently employ 35 people in Ireland, Spain and the USA.

**Today the company is mainly involved in product design and development with a relatively large number of engineers.**

Currently, their biggest problem is recruiting skilled people. "We have engineers from Ireland, Spain, Poland, Romania, Ukraine and the UK, who all do wonderful jobs for WA, but we really would like to see more Irish engineers apply to work here" stated Pat. "We are virtually unknown in Ireland, and in fact we are hardly known in Ballinasloe." The company currently have vacancies for electronic engineers, mechanical design engineers, quality technicians and engineers, Supply Chain Management, R&D management and more.



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# JOSEPH HESSION – A MAN OF MANY TRADES

BY CIARA BERESFORD



In 2015, Joseph Hession set up his own business, Hession Electrical Services in New Inn. The business specialises in the repair of all starter motors and alternators, which includes agricultural, automotive, marine, commercial, quads and lawnmowers. Along with this

service, Hession Electrical Services also supply new and reconditioned units.

Joseph originally started his business because he received numerous enquiries about the repair of starters and alternators. "I took it upon myself to research this line of work, only to find that there was no one providing this service in the local area. I felt that it was a genuine opportunity for me to open a business", he expressed.

Joseph grew up on Station Road, Ballinasloe and attended St Michaels Vocational School, where he completed his Leaving Cert in 1995. His achievements include a four year FÁS qualification in construction plant fitter, as well as receiving a certificate as a mechanical technician and an auto electrician.

Joseph started working in Domac Plant and Tool hire in Ballinasloe, where he served an apprenticeship as a Construction Plant Fitter and qualified in 2001. He gained 17 years of experience in repair of a wide variety of construction equipment.

"I always had a keen interest in the electromechanical side of my work and is a sector which I have good knowledge of, with the relevant electrical and mechanical qualifications", he added.

Joseph, now married, has been living in New Inn, Ballinasloe for the past 13 years. Along with running his own business, he is also employed locally in a second job, as a light commercial vehicle tester in Peter Donohue's Ltd.

Since Joseph started his business in March, the feedback has been very positive from the customers. "Due to the fact that I work a full time job as a light commercial vehicle tester, Hession Electrical Services strives to keep down time, be it agricultural, automotive or commercial to a minimum", mentioned Joseph.

Josephs plan for the future is to grow his business and eventually give it his full attention because at the moment, he works full time.



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# LOCAL JEWELLER'S RUBY CELEBRATIONS WITH A ROYAL TWIST! BY CIARA BERESFORD



**Maureen Cahalan hails from Loughisle in the parish of Killimor. She remembers an eventful and happy childhood with her two younger brothers Francis & Gerard. She was the first born in the household in 73 years and attended Raheen N.S., continuing to the Mercy Secondary School in Callan, then went on to a secretarial**

**school in Loughrea, and recently she enjoyed life in University College Maynooth as a mature student.**

She gained her wings in retail at Curley Bros Kiltormer. On her late Mother's urgings she applied for a Jewellers retail and secretarial position on a traineeship basis.

After being made permanent she studied Jewellery making, design, and finishing through the National Association of Goldsmiths in the UK. Maureen's ambition and drive brought out her creative side and combined with her retail and organisational skills, she found her career niche.

In 1975, Maureen purchased her business from retiring jewellers where she has spent the past four decades and she continued studying every other year of her business life. She is a Member of the National Association of Goldsmiths of Ireland & UK (NAG), a member of Registered Jewellers of Ireland (RJI), studied valuations and became a Registered Valuer.

Maureen was the first lady to be appointed RJI President of Ireland and during her 30 months in office, she brought two national conferences to Ballinasloe and a major golf tournament.

Looking back at stand out memories - The John Paul II's visit to Ireland in 1979 was magical and electrifying for Ballinasloe, "Most of the Youth were

camped in the Fair Green the night before and we had to engrave every possible medal, disc and piece of Jewellery for them with the date and their initials. It was such an exciting day, we were open until 10.30pm that night supplying and engraving" before over 300,000 young people got to the track in Ballybrit to see the Polish Pontiff.

Whilst the country suffered a deep recession in the 80's, Ballinasloe was used to almost full employment, factories setting up, schools, and two hospitals with training colleges. "You would not get a bed such was the demands from the commercial and medical sectors. Ballinasloe doing very well and we all appreciated this wonderful bonus which we had never experienced before" commented Maureen.

For Maureen, the 80's was a mixture of many things apart from business, her daughter was born in 1983, her Dad passed away in 1984 and her mother later that same year. Suffering from bereavement is a major shock and Maureen will testify in losing both her parents whom she adored and learned a lot from, left a huge distance in her life.

However, the arrival of her daughter Máire kept her happy and busy. Her son Andrew was born in 1985, so the 80's for Maureen were busy and memorable in the circle of life.

It was easy to cope as she had her best friend and wonderful late husband Andy by her side to support in every aspect of their lives. Andy also trained in the jewellery business and was very successful in jewellery repair and manufacturing. They won the contract for the Eurovision Contest the year of Celine Dion's win, followed by winning the design and manufacture of the Awards for the College of Art and Design in Dublin. Cahalan Jewellers enjoyed business on a very private basis with Government Agencies and RTE.

The current downturn and the "Experts" who encouraged large retail stores outside the town, which has hollowed out the town along with the abolishment of the UDC, leaving all decisions now coming from Galway City, through the County Council; worries Maureen.

"The fact we are treated as a border town with no one officially or specifically interested in the progress and good of the town centre, is very worrying and disturbing. Our town however has made good progress in the very

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recent past with shops beginning to fill up again with new business, and hopefully this will continue but it will need all our collective support. There are a cohort who continually and constantly push the town for all the right reasons, We have many benefits to our town but at times we find it difficult to hit the right note when we are promoting and telling people what we have to offer."

**Maureen set up Community Hearts in 2001 as a result of the kindness she received from her neighbours, customers and friends after the sudden death of her beloved husband Andy. Through Community Hearts, Maureen organises events and activities which support Ballinasloe's local charities. In better times she was able to help fund the major charities but now she concentrates on supporting those nearer to home.**

Maureen believes online shopping has a mixed effect on core retail activity in the town. Her research in this area, shows that couriers seem to deliver in one week and collect 95% of the parcels for return in the following weeks.

"Ballinasloe Owner Retailers will usually put items aside for their customers who can pay off by week or by month and this is something they cannot do online. Our town's Retailers have supported this business model for years, our customers appreciate flexibility and show this through their loyalty", says Maureen.

Specialist shops like Cahalan Jewellers will always thrive by creating and embracing trends and being prepared to keep up with the times, according to this seasoned Jeweller.

**"We built a private engagement ring room and went into partnership with an Antwerp Diamond Company, which allows us to sell diamonds at better**

**prices than nationally. We also offer personalised service from our established network partnership customer repairs - be it watches, rings, bracelets or necklaces. We repair any jewellery new or antique. We also carry a large range of antique jewellery, silverware and china. One of our specialities is sourcing any item our customers' requests, at very competitive prices. We uniquely design a range of jewellery pieces and special gifts with our in-house express engraving service."**

Cahalan's stock sports awards and sports medals in unbelievable quality & at excellent prices. Due to demand, we now offer wedding packages for couples, helping them with their arrangements with a very special touch!

Maureen was invited to London recently to learn the art of pearl stringing by the Pearl Maker to the Queen for over 45 years. "It was a truly wonderful experience to have been honoured to learn this precious and wonderful skill!"

Maureen wrote a successful book some time ago titled "A Note to Self" which deals with changing lives. As well as training as a bereavement facilitator, she also facilitates youth groups with her main inspiration stemming from continuous learning and serving her community.

"After 40 years I have always allocated time to retrain myself in a new skill, looking out for my supportive staff and keeping a positive outlook. I also try to help others in our community and be nice to people because this is important to me. Ballinasloe and its surrounding communities are welcoming and friendly, by building on this gifted tradition of looking out for each other and harvesting positive relationships, we can, as a people overcome any obstacle", concludes Maureen.

For a more extensive read of this - see our

**[www.ballinasloe.ie](http://www.ballinasloe.ie)**



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# M6 MOTORS-HEADING FOR FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**M6 Motors is a car dealership based in Ballinasloe. The company deals up to 30 quality, used vehicles in many different makes and models – from Audi and BMW to Toyota, Kia and more.**

Local man, Alan Naughton started the company in 2011 after completing a Bachelors Degree of Business Studies at the University of Limerick. Although the company was set up during the worst years the motor industry has seen to date, it has grown to be one of the household names for second hand cars in the west of Ireland.

**“What started as a two man team has now grown to employ six people in Ballinasloe, with a combined 40 years’ experience in the motor industry including two qualified mechanics”, added Alan.**

M6 Motors has come a long way since opening an office in Croffy’s Court on Main Street, with only a handful of vehicles. After the first year, the company started to grow very quickly, which resulted in M6 Motors moving to a larger premises at Dolans Service Station in Creagh.

The dealership offers finance, accepts trade-in’s and provides warranty on all vehicles under 10 years old. “Everything you expect from any dealership, without the high price tags”, stated Alan. M6 Motors works on large volumes and small margins - meaning that it is very difficult for anyone to compete with their prices.

M6 Motors car sourcing service has proved to be a huge success with 60% of all sales achieved through this particular service.

“If you have a particular make or

model or even a spec of car that you would like, just let M6 Motors know and we will be sure to find the ideal car for you through our contacts in the motor industry”, mentioned Alan.

For further details please visit their website at [www.m6motors.ie](http://www.m6motors.ie) or give them a call on 090 964 5801.



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# MODERN MEDIA - INTERNATIONAL MUSIC PROMOTION FROM THE HEART OF SOCIETY ST.

BY CIARA BERESFORD



When Sean Fletcher isn't busy running Fletchers Expert, he is involved with a second business; Modern Media, which is a specialist promotion of the 2FM Roadcaster, of live music events and now some of the biggest names in UK soaps.

Modern Media was established in 2007 and runs from Fletchers Expert's office, with most work taking place in Dublin. One of the main focuses of the company is running a variety of concerts and festivals, which host acts such as Ocean Colour Scene, From the Jam, Secret Affair, The Lambrettas and The Boomtown Rats.

In 2011, Modern Media held a two night festival in Dublin called Modfest, which hosted four acts including From the Jam, Secret Affair, Purple Hearts and The Lambrettas. Their biggest event to date; Modrophenia, was held in London in 2012. The festival was ideal for those interested in the mod scene and culture, with artists such as From the Jam, the Purple Hearts, the Lambrettas and also The Truth, who hadn't played a gig as a band in 30 years.

"It was the most difficult, but the most rewarding event. We landed on the tarmac of Gatwick Airport the day before the festival – I will never experience anything as nerve wracking again in my life", added Sean. Modern Media's upcoming events include KT Tunstall, Gaz Coombes and also future work with Paul Weller and Steven Seagal.



Another aspect of Modern Media is the 2fm Roadcaster, which is available to book by clients for events they wish to promote. The incredibly recognised broadcasting system, has hosted many famous artists such as Ed Sheeran and One Direction. Popular events include festivals, Christmas lights, new retail stores opening and retail promotions, which are available through Sean. Each client gets 30 half minute adverts on National Radio over the period of a week, followed by a three hour live show from their premises or event.

The high point of the Roadcaster's career in Ballinasloe was when Ocean Colour Scene played in the town square in July 1997. The band were signing autographs for hours with over 1,500 people queueing up to see them.

The third element of Modern Media is representing actors, such as Alison King, Samia Ghadie and Antony Cotton, all from Coronation Street, along with many more actors to come next year.

In 2013, Sean auctioned an autographed Paul Weller guitar to raise funds for St Michael's Restoration Fund. "From the Jam band haven't been together in 32 years but I'm hoping to get a guitar signed by Paul Weller, a bass guitar signed by Bruce Foxton and a drum signed by Rick Butler, and hopefully auction them off to raise funds for a variety of charities", stated Sean.

Visit their website on [www.modernmedia.ie](http://www.modernmedia.ie) for more information.

# HOSPITAL WATCH

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**Cleaning staff at Portiuncula Hospital embarked on industrial action, in a dispute over the hiring of private contractors.**

The staff, who are members of the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU), say hospital management is in clear breach of established agreements and is showing a total disregard for their objections.

**The union recently staged a two-hour work stoppage in protest at the decision to extend a contract cleaning arrangement to the hospital's emergency department.**

While there is a mix of staff and contract cleaners at the hospital, SIPTU says its members have always been rostered to cover clinical areas.

"This shows total disregard by management of its obligations under the Lansdowne Road Agreement and has happened without any engagement or agreement. The hospital had sanction to fill three vacancies directly. This approval was secured in December 2014 but the posts were never filled", Pat Flannery, Regional SIPTU Industrial Organiser.

The union says it served three weeks' notice of its intention to stage a work stoppage and that it will escalate its action if necessary.

The Saolta Hospital Group, which oversees the management of Portiuncula, says every effort will be made to minimise disruption to patient services.

**Following the two-hour work stoppage protest, "We have confirmed a meeting with the Workplace Relations Commission on December 4th, in the hope of coming to an agreement with hospital management, as they are in clear breach of established agreements for hiring of private contractors", stated Pat Flannery.**

Nurses working in Emergency Departments around the country are to be balloted on industrial action, the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) has confirmed.

The move is in response to the "persistent and deepening levels of overcrowding" in Emergency Departments nationwide, which has led to "significant risks" for patients and staff, the INMO insisted.

It pointed out that overcrowding is continuing, with last month recording the highest number of patients on trolleys to date.

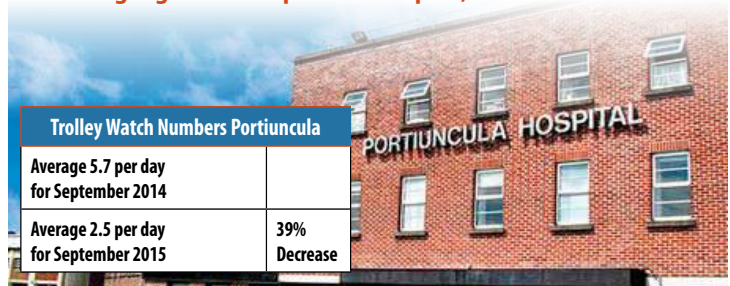
**According to the Trolley Watch figures, 7,971 patients were left waiting on trolleys for a hospital bed during October, with the worst effected hospitals being Beaumont in Dublin (803) and University Hospital Limerick (763). Portiuncula Hospital hosted 101 patients on trolleys in the past month.**

The number of patients waiting on trolleys last month nationally was 14% higher than the same period in 2014 and 53% higher than the same period in 2013 but Portciuncula saw a decrease!

This figure of almost 80,000 patients on trolleys between January and October is 26% higher than the same period in 2014 and 36% higher than the same period in 2013.

"Our members have had enough and we believe patients have had more than enough. The latest figures confirm the measures taken to date have not, are not and will not, alleviate the problem, leaving patients and staff continually exposed to totally unacceptable care and working environments," commented INMO general secretary, Liam Doran.

**Responding to the news, the Minister for Health, Leo Varadkar, said that he was "disappointed" with the decision to ballot nurses. "Industrial action won't get a single patient off a trolley. We have a plan to address ED overcrowding which is currently being implemented and which is supported by the INMO. I ask that all efforts be focused on working together to implement the plan," he said.**





# OVER 400 FLOCK TO INAUGURAL PEOPLE OF THE YEAR AWARDS

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**Over 400 guests and community organisations packed into the Shearwater Hotel last month to be part of a historic People of the Year Awards run under the auspices of the Ballinasloe Area Community Development – through the Town Action Team.**

Some 45 individual nominations for people and organisations were received by the organisers of the Gala Supper Event which was sponsored by the Credit Union and hosted by RTE's Sports Journalist – Laurence Town local, Darren Frehill.

The night was kicked off with a surprise speech from the GAA President Aogan O Fearghail, C.E.O. Of Galway County Council, Kevin Kelly and BACD Chair Seamus Duffy warmly welcomed the representative crowd and congratulated the nominees. He also outlined the work of the Town Team since its inception after the Town Benchmarking Survey in summer of 2014 and the welcome boost that as a result of their efforts and application – Ballinasloe was one of the REDZ towns in County Galway.

He went through the short term and medium term actions that the Team are attempting to put in place and welcomed any new ideas or new people to come and assist their work. He mentioned the huge success of the Garbally Halloween Zombie walk where over 8 groups worked together in delivering a family event to over 2000 attendees in a unique and convivial way – "a great example to us all on how to pull together."

**Ballinasloe Credit Union Chairman William Duthie praised the Town Action Team for re-organising the Awards and ensuring the recognition of those who give and have given so much; towards making a vibrant community of the one we live in.**

Jactina Duffy Town Team Co – ordinator thanked those nominated and

congratulated the winners and also recognised the huge contribution of the Credit Union in sponsoring the Awards which it is hoped will happen every two years.

**After all the nominees had received their individual certificates of merit, a musical interlude was provided by solists David Kennedy and Kylie Dunican to tremendous acclaim and then the winners were announced.**

• **Community Group Special Recognition - East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support Centre**

• **Civic Pride went to a worthy winner - Pat McGovern**

• **Young Person of the Year Award - Veronica Burke**

• **Joint place for Sports Team Award - the u11 Boys Relay Team & u12 Boys Rugby Team**

• **Winner of the Sports Volunteer Award – Willie Ward**

• **Sports Person Award - Karen Dolphin**

• **Arts, Culture & Heritage Award - Larry Reynolds Memorial Committee**

• **Social & Community Support Award went to Arthur Carr**

• **Hall of Fame - Tom Quinn**

Darren Frehill, interviewed each winner live on stage and a video montage was made which is available online on the Ballinasloe.ie page.

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AND THE AWARD GOES TO!

Joint Winners of the Sports Team Awards - Under 11 Boys Relay Team and the under 12 Boys Rugby Team.

Veronica Burke - Winner of Young Person of the Year Award.

Larry Reynolds Memorial - Winner of Arts, Culture & Heritage Award.

Wille Ward Receiving his Award for Best Sports Volunteer from William Duthie Chair of BCU.

Arthur Carr - Winner of Social & Community Support Award

Pat McGovern - Winner of Civic Pride Award.

Karen Dolphin - Winner of the Sports Person Award.

East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support Centre

Tom Quinn winner of the Hall of Fame award with BCU Chairman William Duthie.

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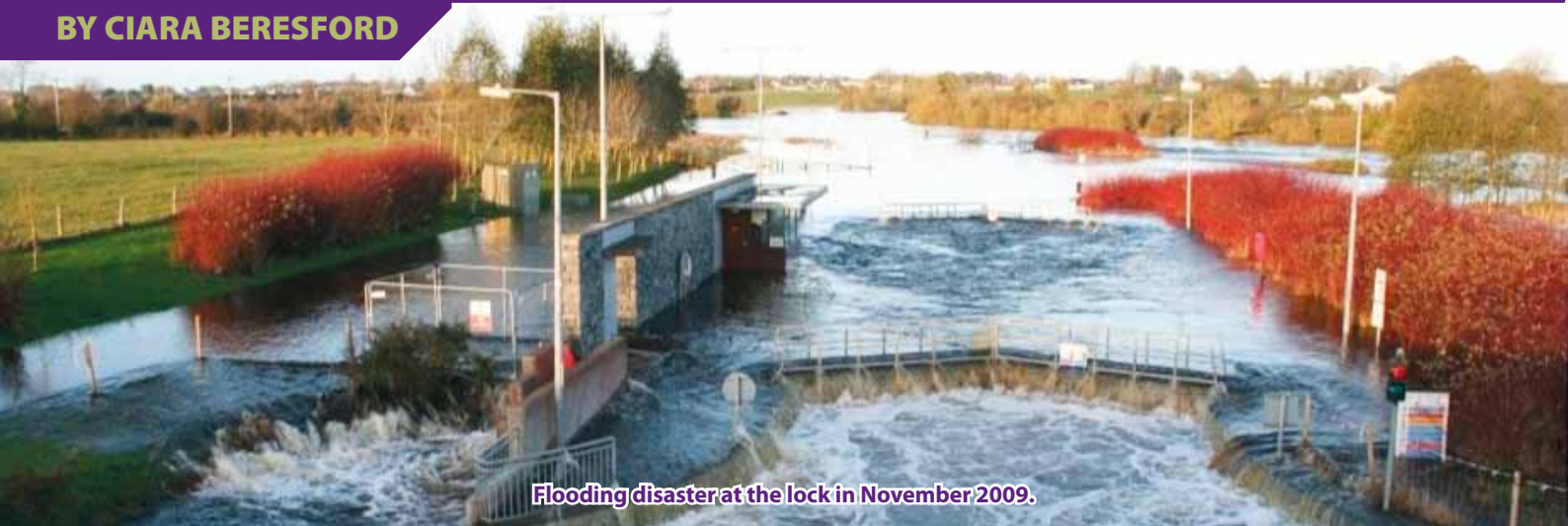


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# DAVID COYNE – LOCK KEEPER

BY CIARA BERESFORD



Flooding disaster at the lock in November 2009.

Ballinasloe's Lock Keeper, David Coyne has been in charge since May 18th 2001, when the lock officially opened. He speaks passionately about his job at the lock and how he runs a tight ship with health and safety being the main priority, "I love my job, and there is no such thing as hard work." He also expresses his worries for the future of the lock, due to plans to automise the facility.

David returned home from England in 1979. He bought a site very near to the lock, where he built a house with his wife. David began work with Waterways Ireland, initially as a general operator both at the lock and the marina. When the interview for a job opportunity as Lock Keeper arose, David took the interview and thankfully, was rewarded the job. Due to living so close to the Lock, David is on hand at all times for emergency situations.

The lock was originally built because of the island that lies across from it. It boasts an eight foot drop from one side to the other,

therefore a lock was put in place to cater the drop. Prior to the lock being built, the land held an old mill. The current wall entrance to the lock consists of stone from the old mill, as there was no stone wastage throughout the building process.

It is one of the newest and best maintained locks within Waterways Ireland, "It is absolutely spotless. There's a lot of work done, such as power washing to keep the lock at its pristine standard", mentioned David. It is very much an advanced lock for the simple reason that there are four ladders available to help any boaters, who have fallen overboard.

During the winter months, David works a short day from 9am to 12.30pm, as the volume of boats is down due to the short days and dull weather. The hours are then made up during the long bright summer days when he works from 9am to 8.30pm.

"Every morning I come in, I have six different charts to fill out – from water levels on both sides, to rainfall for the MET office. All of that is going to be missing", added David. He has a special unit in his office looking out over the lock, which allows him to open and close the sluices and gates and let water levels up and down.

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**"As many of us know, work has begun to operate the Lock automatically", added David. Although two sluices have been removed, along with property cut out to fit electrical panels, it will take a long time to fully develop the automatic functions, therefore an official open date has yet to be confirmed. "I don't think they understand the size of the lock in question. The lock is 96ft in length, 28ft wide and 20ft deep, where I can fit six 30ft boats at one time", he stated. It is completely different to a canal, where boats travel through a stream one by one, which is much more manageable.**

The automatic system would require boaters to travel through the lock manually, by getting off their boats to use a card and a machine to open the gates. "I don't think people are going to come up if they know the lock is automatic, because it entails a lot of work for them and people don't like having to get off their boats, especially when you have elderly people", mentioned David. "They like me being there to turn on the lights, open the gates, give them the ropes, tie them up and help them up out of the boats and send them on their way into Ballinasloe."

"I've had people falling into the lock and have had to try get them out. Two incidents occurred slightly down the lock, where someone fell getting off their boat. Another person miss-judged the water level and jumped off the boat, landing face first into the rocks and an ambulance had to be called", added David. "Simple little things like that shows a machine can't replace the work a lock keeper does."

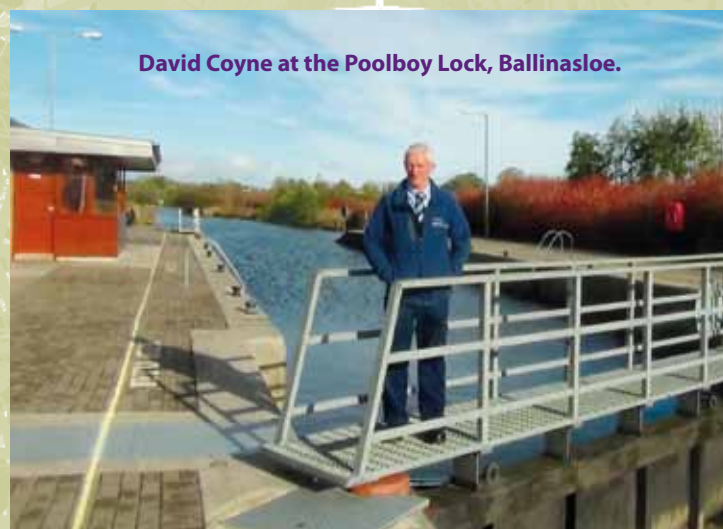
**David puts a huge emphasis on health and safety within the Lock. "The most important aspect is that boaters get through the lock in a safe manner", he stated. David takes note of all complaints coming through the lock and over the past few years, has noticed a frequently recurring complaint from boaters coming down from the Marina, about the anti-social behaviour it beholds. "I think it has affected the boat trade, as a lot of people are afraid to leave their boats for fear of damage", mentioned David.**

"Anybody who comes through, even the fishermen, are told no drinking on the premises", added David, as he is afraid with the new automatic machines there will be no-one to control the anti-social behaviour at the lock, "they come in over the closed gates, in particular on Friday or Saturday nights." David ensures that everyone who comes to the lock signs an indemnity form, which essentially covers the lock of any damage or accidents.

Flooding has proven to be a huge problem at the lock. From November 9th to the 16th 2009, the lock saw 155mm of rainfall, which would put 18ft of water into any river. "I had the sluices fully open at the time, which was relieving the water from the town. The town was very badly flooded, the worst I've ever seen", he said. "That is where you need somebody at the lock for the likings of letting off water in emergency conditions to bring it back to a safe environment."

**Due to the Bord na Mona water bridge being 7ft and 2Inch lower than the motor way bridge at the lock, they are governed with the amount of boats which can get through. David is constantly getting calls from the higher companies, asking what the air draft of the burning water bridge is because if the water goes too high, they can't get under the bridge, which is a huge deterrent.**

"I have had 27,600 boats traverse through the lock and on average nearly 60,000 people, who are all visiting and spending money in Ballinasloe", stated David, who has noticed a slight drop in boating in recent years. "I've gotten to know nearly all of the private boats that have come through the lock. They love coming to the town and they love the traditional music available here." David has been assured he will not be out of work, as he will be given an alternative job elsewhere, possibly Portumna, but it won't be as a lock keeper. "I don't know what will happen to this place when I'm gone", he wonders.



David Coyne at the Poolboy Lock, Ballinasloe.

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# POETRY BOOK LAUNCH IN HONOUR OF KILCONNELL'S SEAN O'BRIEN

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**After the recent and sudden passing of Mr Sean O'Brien, locals decided to pay tribute to the popular man by putting together a book celebrating his life and his poetry.**

Sean was born in 1941 to Thomas and Mellie, in the townland of Ellagh, Kilconnell. Being an only child, Sean left school to work on the farm as finding secondary education was not for him. He was a highly intelligent man, who used his quick wit and calm manner to help enhance the lives of others.

Having never married, Sean set about making Kilconnell community his family. Over the years he was involved with many groups and schemes including FACT week, Tidy Towns, Lough Acalla Development, Hall committee, the school board, the singing circle, Marca and Kilconnell Development Company, to name but a few.

In the past few years, he was involved with the setting up of Kilconnell Community Park in the village. In the early 1960's, Sean became involved with St Gabriel's GAA Club and was elected as secretary. When Sean was the chairman in 1970, it was decided the club needed to raise money to buy the land known as the Cow Plot, the Land Commission giving the club five years to pay for it. Sean, being an innovative man, suggested a Carnival, which became the first of many. In all, Sean was involved with St Gabriel's GAA for over 40 years.

"While Sean was alive many of us were aware he was fond of poetry and had become the subject of his witty verses! He wrote about topical issues of the day such as NAMA, Ming Flanagan, The Gathering and farm life", mentioned Liza Taylor, assistant PRO of Kilconnell Community Development Company.

After his passing, much more of his writing was discovered – mostly written on scraps of foolscap paper, the backs of bingo books and old copy books. So we decided to share the amusing rhetoric of "Sean Sure."

"Being important to many different people for many different reasons, we asked Sean's friends and neighbours to contribute to the book. Martin Gormally, Eugene Hession, Brendan Hogan and myself consolidated all the information and photographs for Kilconnell Print & Design to transform into a book", added Liza. The book contains some of Sean's poems, memories and tales from people who knew him, along with a beautiful pencil portrait of Sean by Michelle Callanan.

The Sacred Heart Funeral Home, Kilconnell and Kilconnell Hall Committee sponsored the book, which means all profits made are donated to the Heart Foundation - a charity Sean supported during his lifetime.

Recently, a launch event was held after Sean's month's mind mass in Kilconnell Hall, where many were invited to obtain a copy of the book for themselves. Among the hundreds of attendees was past TD, long-time friend and contributor to the book, Joe Callanan; Sen Michael Mullins and Cllr Tim Broderick. A cousin of Sean's, Pádraig O'Ceithearnaigh made a heartfelt speech before receiving a book along with Fr Hugh Briody, who kindly blessed the book.

So far, over 500 copies of the book have been sold, with another run on. At only €5 available from Kilconnell shops, the Hall committee members and from Kilconnell Bingo – it makes an ideal stocking filler.

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# ACTIVE RETIREMENT ACHIEVE RUNNERS UP IN NATIONAL PRIDE OF PLACE BY CIARA BERESFORD

**Pride of Place is an all-island competition that acknowledges the work that communities are doing all over the island of Ireland. The main focus is about people coming together to shape, change and improve daily lives in their communities.**

The annual awards ceremony, in Association with Co-Operation Ireland, recently took place in Treacys West County Hotel, Ennis and was hosted by Clare County Council. With over 800 guests in attendance representing 30 communities across the Island of Ireland the awards were a huge success.

**Ballinasloe Active Retirement Association, who entered for the first time this year, was founded in 2002 with 33 members. With a current membership of 238 people, the association aims to improve the quality of life for the community, particularly its older people.**

In 2013, the town was chosen to take part in a pilot initiative for Age Friendly Towns. The Active Retirement Association, working with Age Friendly Cities & Counties Programme, initiated the production of an Age Friendly Business Directory for the local area, highlighting local businesses best practises in addressing the needs of local older shoppers. The association works closely with the Local Authority, HSE, the Gardai and its local community groups.

As a result of their involvement, the association were nominated by Galway County Council to enter the Pride of Place 2015 Competition in the Age Friendly Community Initiative Category. The local association was represented by Douglas Rafter, Gabriel Rohan, Margaret Brennan, Deirdre Hogan and Charles Doherty at the Gala Awards night who graciously received second place in the competition with Wicklow Town receiving first place out of over 35 contestants.

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# DAMIEN HYLAND-FROM BRACKERNAGH TO BOND

BY CIARA BERESFORD



**Damien Hyland, son of Mary and Kevin Hyland, Brackernagh, Ballinasloe, is a model maker living in London. He works with props and special effects for films and television, such as Cadburys, Star Wars, Batman and the Avengers and kindly shares his wise advice for anyone interested in the film making industry.**

Damien grew up and was schooled locally but moved away a long time ago for work purposes. "My parents are still living in Brackernagh, so I still find myself back home a few times a year", he added.

**"I always loved movies. I was a teenager when Terminator 2 and Jurassic Park came out, so I was a perfect age to be influenced by what I saw", states Damien. In 2004, he got involved in the industry when he heard of a model making job happening in Elstree studios, just outside London.**

The project turned out to be a massive model of Gotham city for 'Batman Begins', which was one of the last times anyone used models and miniatures. "Computer graphics really took over in the years since, which is sad but I'm lucky enough to have worked in that

department before it bowed out", added Damien. "Since then, a lot of the people who were classed as model makers, turned into prop makers, including myself."

In 2006, Damien graduated from the London South Bank University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Special Effects Design, which was by a guy who ran the special effects department for BBC in the 90's. "He was really good at getting us to achieve impressive results for very little money", mentioned Damien. "There really isn't anything you can learn in a classroom that can replace just doing the job. I learned more in six months in a workshop than the entirety of the four year course."

**At present, Damien is still based in London, but is hoping to focus more on working in Bray, Co. Wicklow in the coming years, as his**



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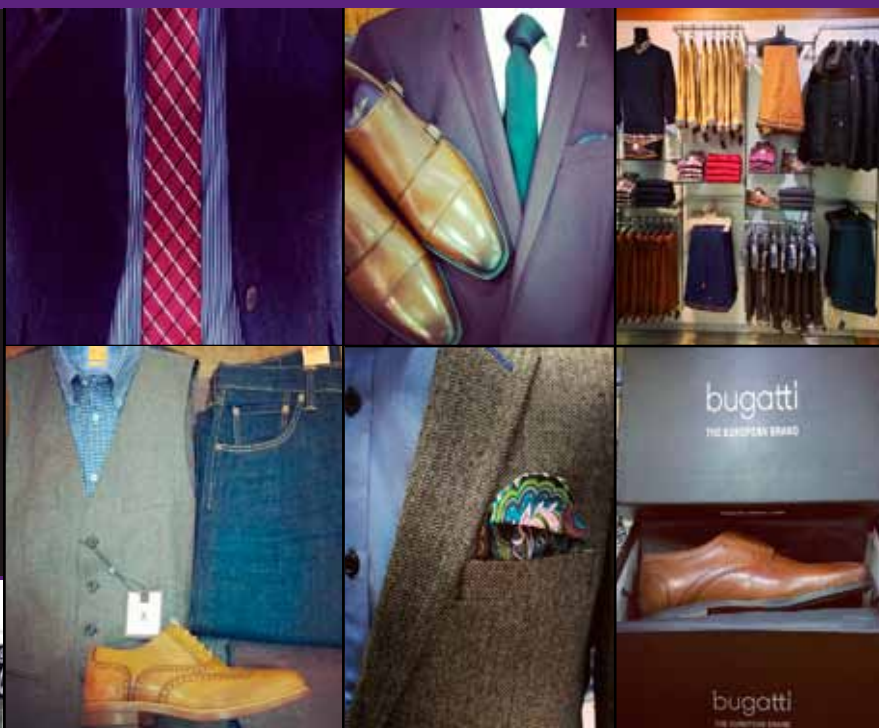
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fiancée, Michelle and step daughter are currently living there. "Ireland is gradually opening up to the world of film making and with new studios in Wicklow and Limerick, there's never been a better time for anyone seeking out a career in film and television", he mentioned.

For the most part of Damien's business, he's a prop maker. "In a lot of film work, the worlds they are looking to create, are fantasy based. Any object handled by the actors, whether it's a specialised vehicle or a piece of furniture, it nearly always has to be made from scratch" stated Damien. "That's where someone like me comes in handy, to build whatever the production designer, concept artist or director may need - they can be really odd and random ideas too."

**"Last year, I made a couch for a 'Go Compare' television advert that had a lot of gizmos and mechanisms in it. It had to raise up in the air and turn into a bed, as well as drive on the road" expressed Damien. "I was only given two weeks to make and test everything - so there was a lot of late nights and early mornings... and a lot of empty pizza boxes."**



Cadburys Stunt 2011



A few years ago, Damien and his team made an amphibious ice cream van for Cadburys and took it to sea from the beach in Blackpool. They then brought it down for a spin in the Thames the following week. "It was a really unique moment in my career; watching people gather on London's bridges, trying to get a look at what we were up to" he added.

To date, Damien has gained many achievements throughout his career. He worked for the prop making and special effects team for 'Avengers: Age of Ultron', where he was awarded a credit at the end of the film. "It was a big moment for me. You can work in huge crews on a movie for years and only five or six people from your department may get a mention" stated Damien.

A major highlight for Damien was getting to work with Ridley Scott on 'The Martian', which recently aired in cinemas. "I've been a big fan of his for years, so it was amazing to see how he worked. He could come up with a random idea and we'd have to scramble around and make it, so it could be filmed the same day. A lot of running around but it was good craic" shared Damien.

**Damien has spent the last six months working on 'Star Wars: Rogue One', which will be out at the end of 2016 and is just about to start working on 'Star Wars Episode VIII'. "You can spend ages inside a workshop building something and not really seeing its context. When it gets to the set and is lit up properly with the actors and creatures in their costumes - it all comes to life and is definitely the best part of my job" he expressed.**

Damien is really keen to get working back in Ireland again, "As much as I love working in the UK, my life is back in Bray. It's hard being away from my fiancée all the time - she is an incredibly patient woman" he shared. Damien hopes that things will get busy enough over the next few years, for Ireland to really prove itself in the film industry. "The potential is definitely there and the infrastructure is growing. I'd like to see us making an impact on the film world, which I'm really looking forward to" added Damien.

**Damien's advice would be to "Keep making stuff. Any skill from sculpting or painting to woodwork, metalwork or fabrics. I'm trying really hard to get to the stage where I finish any job I start, even if it's just making a shelf at home. It can be tricky to find the time but I do think it is good advice to pass on - keep making stuff and always finish what you start."**

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING YOUR VIRTUAL SHOP WINDOW ON THE WEB

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**It's no secret that the marketing landscape has changed drastically over the past few years, with social media and mobile technologies quickly becoming mainstream essentials. .**

With 77% of Ireland's population (3.6 million) using the internet every day, and some 86% of those using it to research a product or a service, not many people go to the Golden Pages anymore to find a business. They just Google it. Therefore by not having a website, you're at a huge disadvantage as a small business or organisation trying to communicate with your customers.

**Ballinasloe.ie is a project which was set up to provide users, living both locally and internationally, with the latest news, local events and a directory of 208 services and organisations in the surrounding area. Developed by Sinead Colleran under the auspices of the B.A.C.D. with over 11,000 page views in the past month, it is a prime example of how a website can be used to promote your brand, but still a significant percentage of local firms & organisations are not using its FREE capabilities to promote their own online presence !**

Imagine having a marketing campaign that works 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, for free? Your website markets your business/organisation for you while you sleep. Leaving a contact form on your site, allows potential customers to reach you at their convenience, and for you to get back to them at yours.

You can track potential or existing clients who visit your page on a daily basis. By using analytical tools, you can monitor how many visitors view your site per day, what pages they were most interested in and how long they spent looking at those pages. The same can't be said for print or television advertising, especially with the introduction of Netflix and other websites taking over.

**By using a website, you are no longer tied to a limited geographic area, which means customers can view your business/organisation from all over the world without the need of a brochure or marketing material. International customers are also simple to track by using analytical tools. Over 20% of the views on Ballinasloe.ie are coming from cities such as London, New York, Dubai and Sydney.**

A website address is simply easier to remember than a phone number or a physical address. Even if a viewer is unsure of your website name, they can search a relative term for what their looking for; 'Ballinasloe News', and the website link will pop up.

Last but not least, it's cheap! Most small businesses or organisations don't realise how easy it is to get value from their website. Studies have proven that inbound marketing costs 62% less than traditional, outbound marketing, including brochures and television adverts. Most websites are inexpensive, and hosts like 'GoDaddy' offer services to help you get going, with prices ranging from €11 to €45 per year.

"Basically, if you're not online, you don't exist. If you can't be Google'd, you're missing out on marketing

opportunities. New customers in particular, use the website as 'window shopping', which brings them to the shop itself", Dermot Salmon, Manager of Salmons.

**"Having a website is an extension of your shop front. Customers can view and purchase your services and products online from any place, at any time", Pierce Keller, Manager of Keller Travel.**

"A well designed and regularly updated site will be the first and best impression of your business viewed worldwide. It reduces the cost of print as you can direct customers to your site to view product information. At the end of any local paper or radio add leave your website address, as it is the main piece of information the viewer or listener will remember", Sean Fletcher, Manager of Fletchers Expert.



**Project co-ordinator of Ballinasloe.ie, Sinead Colleran receiving recognition for her hard work setting up the website**

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# INAUGURAL HALLOWEEN ZOMBIE WALK SUCCESS

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**Over 2,200 people of all ages descended on the woods and nature trails of Garbally Park for two nights on the lead up to the Halloween Weekend for the towns first ever Zombie Walk.**

Set in the Parkland of the historic Clancarty Mansion, complete with it's own resident Ghost – the White Lady – the 3.5 km walk was bedecked with a cast of over 40 witches, zombies, goblins, pixies and Garbally House staff of the 18th Century who had left their tombs to haunt the walk.

**Organised as one of the actions by the Town Team Action Group and co – ordained by Ballinasloe Area Community Development in response to the Town Benchmarking Plan – to incorporate more family activities into our annual calendar of events – the event was branded a huge success by attendees and organisers alike.**

After parking in the Ard Scoil Mhuire Grounds – patrons went to the handball alleys to queue for their walk – where groups of 25 to 30 were taken by Zombie Costumed Guides (All past Staff members of Lady Clancarty's Household).

**The walk weaved it's way under a strong moon, into the woodland out by the boundary tree, back down a dimly lit avenue - to the Zombie Training Compound and the Witches Coven before releasing the frightened ones for a cuppa or some snack food – provided by caterers on site.**

Over a third of the attendees – were all dressed up in their own Witches, Goblins, Devil and Ghost outfits - which added greatly to

the spookiness of the occasion.

Chairman of the local Development Company Seamus Duffy was thrilled with the pilot " This was a huge project that involved the cast and crew of over 90 people on both nights! – we had over 12 groups co – operating in the delivery of the event and the feedback and publicity that the event got for the town and our Mid Term Break was massive. A lot of families have stated that it was one of the nicest events – with great fun out doors, and no alcohol to be had and would be looking at having the cousins come and stay for it next year. People came from North Tipp, South Roscommon and well into South Galway". He paid special tribute to the volunteers from the Vintage, Rugby, Soccer and GAA Clubs who assisted with the huge logistics of the production.



**Town Team Co – ordinator Jacinta Divilly thanked the Boards of Management of the two schools – Garbally and Scoil Mhuire for their huge assistance in providing their grounds, all the volunteers who helped and in particular " the casts and crews of the towns performing groups – principally – the Musical Society, The Panto, Relays and The**

**Town Hall Theatre for the make up, costumes, props and sets over the two nights ".**

" At €3 admission this event was never obviously about making money but really about bringing our community together for a traditional celebratory time of year and being able to create with huge co – operation – a memorable and worthwhile event" stated Jacinta.

The event net of costs raised a small surplus for the performing groups – who produce annual shows and performances in the Town Hall Theatre.

It is hoped to make the event an annual fixture on the Towns calendar for the Halloween Mid Term Break.

## MORE FUNDRAISING SUCCESS FOR TROUBLE CLEFS CHOIR

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**Triona Waters set up the Trouble Clefs Choir over a year ago, with a friend, Sarah Corcoran. Since then, the choir has performed in local events and held many charity concerts, raising hundred's for charities such as 'Join our Boys' and Cystic Fibrosis, Ireland.**

"There is no denying that Ballinasloe has received its fair share of negativity in the media and you can truly recognise its affect, in particular, on the younger generation. It's one of the leading reasons why I teach music, to help the kids and teenagers grow to have a little faith in themselves", shared Triona.

The choir also performed in the Navan Choral Festival which is an international choral competition, where they received very high marks. The choir recently got professionally recorded by Ben Parker and John Mulvihill, where a YouTube video was made of the Trouble Clef's covering Coldplay's 'Fix You', which was also used as an audition for the Late Late Toy Show.

Eabha McCann, 11, is a talented piano student of Triona's, who composes many of her own works. "She creates these pieces that would be perfect for movie soundtracks completely on her own. It really is incredible to watch", added Triona.

When Eabha heard of Mark Dolan's disability, she decided to write a song for him. Eabha wrote the melody whilst she and her little sister Blaitthin, who is eight years old and also a student of Triona, helped with some of the lyrics.

"They came to me with a verse and chorus completed, so the three of us, along with another student of mine, Megan, 13 – completed the song", mentioned Triona, who has since taught it to the choir.

The song, called 'Dream' is going to be released as a charity single on iTunes, YouTube and on CD's under the kind sponsorship of Fletcher's Expert, with all proceeds going to the Mark's Wish to Walk Foundation. The single will officially launch on iTunes and CD on December 6th, in the Shearwater Hotel.

Along with this tremendous success, the Trouble Clef's received an audition for the famous Britain's Got Talent, which hopefully we will hear more of in the future.



**The Trouble Clef Choir performing 'Dream' at the Mark's Wish to Walk Homecoming Dance in the Shearwater Hotel.**



# GIVING LOCALLY AT CHRISTMAS

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**Having a think about giving locally at this Christmas time? – here are a few opportunities among the myriad of good causes that you can support over the Yuletide season.**

The East Galway Cancer Support Centre are selling Christmas cards, which are of original paintings by the service users themselves. The cards will also be sold in Salmons at a price of €5 per pack of eight. The committee have also organised a Super Supper Dance in the Aughrim Community Hall on November 29th at 6pm.

Saint Vincent de Paul local church gate collections will be held on December 5th and 6th. Also that weekend, Fr Bernie Costello will take up a donation collection instead of a food collection this year at the Saturday evening mass at 7pm and at the Sunday morning mass at 9.12am in Portiuncula Chapel.

SVP has also been chosen by SuperValu to benefit from their food appeal campaign. The store will have a box on display for customers to donate items such as food or toys, which will be running from November 23rd until December 20th.

Nationally, Aldi will be promoting the 'Give a Gift for SVP with Aldi' campaign on RTE 2fm and RTE Radio 1. Donations and toys are also welcome in Vincent's Shop on Jubilee Street.

The Brothers of Charity, Deepark are hosting their annual Christmas Sales on the 8th from 10.30 a.m to lunchtime.

Mags Connerty, along with some friends are organising an event in aid of Ballinasloe Social Services, Brackernagh. 'I'm Hypnotised, Get Me Out of Here' fundraising event is taking place in Hayden's Hotel on Monday, December 28th at 9pm sharp. Early bird tickets are available from December 5th at a price of €15, which includes a disco afterwards. Full price tickets are €20 and will be sold from December 23rd onwards.

It is an over 18's only event with a full bar available on the night. It promises to be a night of entertainment, with great spot prizes and some of Ballinasloe's local 'celebs' bravely volunteering to be hypnotised on the night, in front of a live audience. Follow their Facebook page, "I'm Hypnotised, Get Me out of Here" for more information.

The Lions Club Tesco Christmas food appeal will be held on November 27th and 28th. Local church gate collections will take place on December 11th

and 12th. "On behalf of the Ballinasloe Lions Club, I would like to remember those who are most needy at this time of year, and would encourage families, neighbours and friends to be aware of those about you and to extend the hand of friendship and support where and when it is needed", added Brian Derrane, President of Ballinasloe Lions Club.

And if you still have something left on Christmas Eve outside Gullanes Hotel the St. Michael's Church Folk Choir will be serenading us with Christmas Carols in aid of the Meals on Wheels and other local needy groups with Santa helpers collecting at various points around town.

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# MARK'S WISH RAISES OVER €226,000.

BY KEN KELLY

The patter of tiny feet across the ballroom of the Shearwater Hotel in Ballinasloe brought a few tears to many of the 400 people who turned up to welcome home 3-year-old Mark Dolan following his successful surgery in the USA. And as his mother Fidelma led the Ahascragh toddler across the floor they received a standing ovation from the attendance that included neighbours, fund-raisers, sponsors and benefactors.

A local committee was set up, 15 weeks ago, to raise funds so that "Mark's Wish to Walk" would be achieved. The boy has now returned from successful surgery in St. Louis, USA which hopefully will give him a better and normal lifestyle. Chairman Seamus Concannon told those present "What has happened in the past 15 weeks is just phenomenal and I would imagine record-breaking, because with the help of you, the people, not alone have we achieved the goal of getting Mark to the USA and back, we have also guaranteed that he will get the best follow-up treatment available and his future for the coming three years is now secured."



"Thumbs Up" - Mark Dolan with his parents Fidelma and Kevin



Eileen Egan with Joan and Gerry O'Neill who raised €3400 from a bog walk.

Mr. Concannon added "Little Mark Dolan and his journey has stolen the heart of the nation and beyond, and the one thing that has struck me most over the past three months has been the fantastic community spirit and coming together of communities that is unique to the country of Ireland. Our community is small but by pooling our resources and embracing this community spirit, this campaign has surpassed all expectations and as we head into tonight's function together we have raised the incredible sum of €226,300.00."

Thanking all who helped in any way in the campaign, Chairman Concannon concluded by saying "Tonight's event is about welcoming home Mark, and a celebration of what we have achieved to date, but Mark's journey goes on for him and his parents, Fidelma and Kevin. Our Trustees will remain in place for the next three years, at least, and the Committee will reconvene every six months to keep the public up to date and to assure everyone the funds are being well managed."

Photos by Gerry Stronge

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# OUT AND ABOUT IN BALLINASLOE



*"Members of the Bethany Bereavement Group who took part in the November Memorial Walk in Ballinasloe"*



*"Town Team Co-ordinating Group Front Row L to R - Kate Murray, Tara Galvin, Paula Harley, Carmel Greally, Lyn Donnelly. Back Row Jacinta Divilly, Co ordinator, Val Colleran, Cllr. Aiden O Donaghue, Mike O'Brien, Seamus Duffy Chair BACD, Ger Tully. Absent from photo Padraig O Ceithearnaigh, Colm Croffy"*



*Former Ballinasloe under age player Shane McInerney from Creagh is on a soccer scholarship, attending Keiser University, Florida. He was recently awarded best defender in the Sun Conference and on the Leagues first eleven this season!*



*Bryan Mulry, Abuzar Jawad, Andrew Doyle and Conor Rice, from Garbally College in Ballinasloe, participated in the Soapbox Public Speaking competition, recently held in the newly renovated Library, organised by Europe Direct.*



*U8 Ballinasloe footballers and 21 parents who recently traveled to Croke Park for a stadium tour to mark the end of a successful season.*



*Marks "Wish to Walk" committee left to right. Joe Finnerty (ADA), Karen Dolan (P.R.O.), Seamus Concannon (Chairman), Elaine Loughnane (Asst Secretary), Mary Lynch (Secretary and Trustee) and Joe Keenan (Treasurer and Trustee).*



*(Back Row L to R) Mr. Tom Burke (Business Studies Teacher, Garbally College), Aaron McGreal, Christopher Feeney and Brian Burke (Front Row L to R) Colm Reilly, Mr. Seamus Robinson (Past President of the Business Studies Teachers Association) & Saqib Zardari, who received an A in their Junior Certificate Business Studies exam and were awarded with a certificate in NUIG.*



*Both students and parents recently took part in the Garbally College Fun Run fundraising event which was an extremely enjoyable and worthwhile event and raised approximately €5,800 for school-based projects.*



*The staff of Marina House Medical Centre, Ballinasloe who raised €900 in support of breast Cancer Awareness for Pink Ribbon Day.*



# OUT AND ABOUT IN BALLINASLOE



**CU Factor National Winner Andrea Glennon receiving her winners cheque from Kieran McDonald, ILCU.**



**Egnima members, Aaron Senior, Erika Stobie, Jordan Stobie & Theo Rush who finished 2nd at the CU Factor National Final**



**Blossom Harp members, Alannah Downey, Mary Cuddy, Eva Ryan & Clodagh O'Brien, who took 3rd place at this year CU National final, with Margaret Heffernan ILCU Director, Adrian Ahern BCU Director & Ollie Turner MC.**



**Tidy Towns Committee: Breda Mulrennan (Senior Staff Officer from the Community Enterprise section of Galway CC), Johnny Walsh Tidy Towns, William Duthie Chairman Tidy Towns, Eddie Kelly, manager of Supervalu, Bracknagh. Patricia Tierney Tidy Towns, Carmel Greally Tidy Towns, Carmel Greally, Tidy Towns, Cllr Michael Finnerty Chairman Ballinasloe Municipal.**



**Ballinasloe Golf Club Committee have won the B.A.G.S (Ballinasloe, Athlone & Glasson) Competition for the second time in succession this year. Back Row L-R: Anne Greene, Jaci Cunningham, Eilish Brennan, Aideen Berigan, Rita Spellman, Bernie Lally. Front Row L-R: Peggy Wong, Teresa Coughlan, Celine Grennan, Margaret Killeen.**



**Photographed is the Garbally Convent Reunion which recently took place at the Shearwater Hotel**



**At the recent annual get together of members of the the Ballinasloe Senior Football County Champions, Years 1979 and 1980: Back row L-R: Sean Brennan, John Manton, Willie Devlin, John Creavin, Colm Loftus, Noel Jennings, Sean Riddle. Front row L-R: Christopher Waters. Pat Cunningham. Barry Brennan. Joe Kelly. Tom Brennan. Mike Cunningham. Paul McGettigan.**



# DECEMBER EVENTS GUIDE

<b>December 1st</b>		
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30 pm
Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9.00 pm
SVP Food Appeal - 1st-20th	Super Valu	All day
Give a Gift for SVP - 1st-4th	Aldi	All day

<b>December 2nd</b>		
French Group	Gullanes Hotel	12.00 pm
Active Retirement	Gullanes Hotel	3.00 pm
Disc- Gender Based Violence	Shearwater Hotel	7.30pm
Christmas Hamper Giveaway	The Countryman	9.30 pm
Trad	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm

<b>December 3rd</b>		
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullanes Hotel	11.00 am
Retired Portialc Nurse	Gullanes Hotel	3.00 pm
Christmast Dinner	Gullanes Hotel	3.00 pm
Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Open Music Session	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm
B. Kilkenny F. Hession	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm

<b>December 4th</b>		
Christmas Concert	St Catherine's, Ahascragh	7.30pm
Country Market	Town Hall Theatre	9.30 am
Ceili Session	The Countryman	6.30 pm
Live Music	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Texas Holdem Poker	Joes Bar	9.30 pm
Imposter	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm
Evan Blake	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
Bobby Kikenny	The Countryman	10.00 pm
Fundraiser Music P. Hardiman	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Trad Session	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30 pm
DJ E. Noone & D.Purcell upstairs	An Tain Bar	10.30 pm
Ken and Steve	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9.30 pm

<b>December 5th</b>		
Santa	Cuckoo Hill Bootcamp	5.00 pm
Donation Collection	Portiuncula Chapel	7.00 pm
Christmas Party Special	An Tain Bar	9.00 pm
DJ John	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Decades f Youth	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
DJ upstairs	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
Treble Makers	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
Nial Rutledge	Killeen's Bar	10.00 pm
Pub Fiction	Joes Bar	10.00 pm
Birthday Party - DJ J. Finnerty	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
DJ John	The Countryman	10.00 pm
Pacifica	Gibbons' Pillar House	10.00 pm
Lynum Up	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30 pm
SVP Church Gate Collections	St. Michael's & Creagh	All Day
Live Music	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9.30 pm

<b>December 6th</b>		
Lions Club - Donation Collection	Portiuncula Chapel	9.15 am
Santa	Cuckoo Hill Bootcamp	5.00 pm
Pillar House Trad Session	Gibbons' Pillar House	6.00 pm
Martina Flannary	The Countryman	6.30 pm
Music Session	The Countryman	6.30 pm
Texas Hold'Em	The Countryman	6.30 pm
Anchormen	Maud Millar's	8.00 pm
Live Dancing	Plaza Room, Shearwater	9.00 pm
David Maguire	Downeys Bar	9.00 pm
StreetWise	Joes Bar	9.30 pm
Session with Davy & the Boys	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Liam's Country Road Show	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
SVP Church Gate Collections	St. Michael's & Creagh	All Day

<b>December 7th</b>		
Yoga	Gullanes Hotel	6.30 pm
B'sloe Panto-Hansel & Gretel	Town Hall Theatre	7.30 pm
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8.30 pm

<b>December 8th</b>		
Annual Ex Sail Work	Brothers of Charity	10.30 am - 1.00 pm
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30 pm
B'sloe Panto-Hansel & Gretel	Town Hall Theatre	7.30 pm
Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9.00 pm

<b>December 9th</b>		
B'sloe Panto-Hansel & Gretel	Town Hall Theatre	7.30 pm
Ballinasloe Flower Club	Gullanes Hotel	8.00 pm
Christmas Hamper Giveaway	The Countryman	9.30 pm
Trad	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
French Group	Gullanes Hotel	12.00 pm

<b>December 10th</b>		
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullanes Hotel	11.00 am
B'sloe Panto-Hansel & Gretel	Town Hall Theatre	7.30 pm
Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Open Music Session	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm
Christmas Singers Circle	The Dunlo Tavern	10.00 pm

<b>December 11th</b>		
Country Market	Town Hall Theatre	9.30 am
Ceili Session	The Countryman	6.30 pm
B'sloe Panto-Hansel & Gretel	Town Hall Theatre	7.30 pm
Pillar House Folk Club – Mundy	Gibbons' Pillar House	9.00 pm
Texas Holdem Poker	Joes Bar	9.30 pm
Hoppy Bar Stars	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm
DJ Johnny F	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
Bobby Kikenny	The Countryman	10.00 pm

Trad Session	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30 pm
DJ E. Noone & D.Purcell upstairs	An Tain Bar	10.30 pm
Lions Club - Church Gate Col.	St Michael's & Creagh	All Day
Disco Party Night	Shearwater Hotel	10.00 pm
Live Music	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9.30 pm

<b>December 12th</b>		
B'sloe Panto-Hansel & Gretel	Town Hall Theatre	2.30 pm
B'sloe Panto-Hansel & Gretel	Town Hall Theatre	7.30 pm
Christmas Party Special	An Tain Bar	9.00 pm
Xmas Party Night Live	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Red Tape	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
DJ upstairs	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
Tradstone	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
Martina Flaherty	Joes Bar	10.00 pm
Jock and Davy	Killeen's Bar	10.00 pm
M. Keane & C.Naughton	Gibbons' Pillar House	10.00 pm
Music by Flat Out	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Paul Burns	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30 pm
Lions Club - Church Gate Col.	St Michael's & Creagh	All Day
The Happy Bar Stars	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9.00 pm
Abbaesque Tribute Band	Shearwater Hotel	10.30 pm

<b>December 13th</b>		
Carol Service	St John's, Ballinasloe	10.00am
B'sloe Panto-Hansel & Gretel	Town Hall Theatre	2.30 pm
Trad for G.E.L.S & Garbally S.N.U.	Gibbons' Pillar House	6.00 pm
Two Socks & A Toothbrush	The Countryman	6.00 pm
Music Session	The Countryman	6.30 pm
Texas Hold'Em	The Countryman	6.30 pm
Toxic Twins	Maud Millar's	8.00 pm
Paddy O'Brien	Plaza Room, Shearwater	9.00pm
Two Socks & A Toothbrush	The Countryman	9.00 pm
Buzz The Agent	Downeys Bar	9.00 pm
Small Deal	Joes Bar	9.30 pm
Pacifica	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
Kings of Connacht	The Countryman	10.00 pm
Session with Davy & the Boys	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm

<b>December 14th</b>		
Yoga	Gullanes Hotel	6.30 pm
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	9.00 pm

<b>December 15th</b>		
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30 pm
Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9.00 pm

<b>December 16th</b>		
Christmas Hamper Giveaway	The Countryman	9.30 pm
Trad	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
French Group	Gullanes Hotel	12.00 pm

<b>December 17th</b>		
Ciorcal Comhra	Gullanes Hotel	11.00 am
Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Open Music Session	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm
<b>December 18th</b>		
Country Market	Town Hall Theatre	9.30 am
Ceili Session	The Countryman	6.30 pm
Beggars Velvet	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm
John Shadow Country	Joes Bar	10.00 pm
Joe Wynne	Gibbons' Pillar House	10.00 pm
Evan Blake	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
Bobby Kikenny	The Countryman	10.00 pm
Chris & Tara	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30 pm
DJ E. Noone & D.Purcell upstairs	An Tain Bar	10.30 pm
The High Reel	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9.30 pm

<b>December 19th</b>		
Ice Age 1	Cinema Town Hall	12.30 pm
Inside Out	Cinema Tow Hall	2.30 pm
Minions	Cinema Tow Hall	4.30 pm
Last Man Standing	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Red Tape	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm
Gary Lawlor	Joes Bar	10.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
DJ upstairs	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
Geagan Pagans	Gibbons' Pillar House	10.00 pm
Legacy	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
The Blaggards	Killeen's Bar	10.00 pm
Too Tall Paul	The Countryman	10.00 pm
Chris Dallatt	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Kensley 3	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30 pm
Live Music	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9.30 pm
Beatles Tribute Band	Shearwater Hotel	10.30 pm

<b>December 20th</b>		
Special Christmas Trad Session	Gibbons' Pillar House	6.00 pm
Waves	The Countryman	6.30 pm
Music Session	The Countryman	6.30 pm
Texas Hold'Em	The Countryman	6.30 pm
Nudie Suits	Maud Millar's	8.00 pm
Christmas Concert	Town Hall Theatre	8.00 pm
Robert Mizzell	Plaza Room, Shearwater	9.00 pm
Outback	Downeys Bar	9.00 pm
Shane Moore	Joes Bar	9.30 pm
Davy and The Boys	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Sauce Mechanics	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm

<b>December 21st</b>		
Service of Reconciliation	Portiuncula Chapel	1.30 pm
Polar Express - Storytime PJs	Ballinasloe New Library	6.00 pm
Yoga	Gullanes Hotel	6.30 pm
ConTempo Quartet Concert	Ballinasloe New Library	7.30 pm
Penitential Rite	St. Michael's Church	7.30 pm
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	9.00 pm
Dinner Dance	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Joes Xmas Draw + Sara O'Kane	Joes Bar	9.30 pm
The Hush	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm

<b>December 22nd</b>		
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30 pm
Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9.00 pm
Dave & Blue Tax Band	Joes Bar	9.45 pm
Imposter	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm

<b>December 23rd</b>		
Desi Egan & Sweet Sensations	Downeys Bar	9.00 pm
DJ Keith Geraghty	Gibbons' Pillar House	9.00 pm
Christmas Hamper Giveaway	The Countryman	9.30 pm
Anchormen	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm
Take Time	Joes Bar	10.00 pm
Trad	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
Macy South	Killeen's Bar	10.00 pm
Davy and The Boys	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Tradstone	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
Take 2	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30 pm

<b>December 24th</b>		
St. Michael's Church Carols	Main Street	1.00 pm to 4.30 pm
Children's Mass	St. Michael's Church	6.30 pm
Joe Wynne	Gibbons' Pillar House	7.00 pm
Vigil Mass	Portiuncula Hosp.	7.00 pm
Eucharist	Holy Trinity, Aughrim	8.00pm
Sing Along by Candlelight	Killeen's Bar	10.00 pm
Christmas Mass	Creagh Church	10.00 pm
Midnight Mass	St. Michael's Church	12.00 am

<b>December 25th</b>		
Christmas Mass	St. Michael's Church	9.00 am
Christmas Mass	Portiuncula Hosp.	9.15 am
Christmas Mass	St Brendan's C.N Unit Creagh	10.30 am
Holy Communion	St. John's Church	10.00 am
Christmas Mass	Creagh	10.30 am
Christmas Mass	St. Michael's Church	11.00 am
Eucharist	St. John's, Ballinasloe	11.00am
Christmas Mass	St. Michael's Church	12.15 pm

<b>December 26th</b>		
Captain v Exiles	Bsloe Rugby Club	2.30pm
Pillar House Trad Session	Gibbons' Pillar House	6.00 pm
Shane Moore + DJ John	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Michael English	Plaza Room, Shearwater	9.00 pm
Sara O Kane	Joes Bar	9.30 pm
DJ Keith Geraghty	Gibbons' Pillar House	10.00 pm
The Blaggards	Killeen's Bar	10.00 pm
DJ upstairs	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
Music by Valerie and Tommy	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Davy and The Boys	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Boom Diggity	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
Too Tall Paul	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30 pm
Live Music	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9.30 pm

<b>December 27th</b>		
Eucharist 1st Sunday	St. Matthews, Clontuskert	11.00am
Pillar House Trad Session	Gibbons' Pillar House	6.00 pm
Music Session	The Countryman	6.30 pm
Texas Hold'Em	The Countryman	6.30 pm
Mike Denver	Plaza Room, Shearwater	9.00 pm
DJ John	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Shane Moore	Downeys Bar	9.00 pm
Live Music	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm
Pacifica	Gibbons' Pillar House	10.00 pm
Paddy Buckley	Killeen's Bar	10.00 pm
Driftwood	Joes Bar	10.00 pm
Sway	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
Davy and The Boys	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Wonder Melon	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30 pm

<b>December 28th</b>		
Bsloe Social Services Fundraiser	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Macey South	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm

<b>December 29th</b>		
Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9.00 pm
Folk Club – The Four Of Us	Gibbons' Pillar House	9.00 pm
Toxic Twins	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm

<b>December 30th</b>		
Christmas Hamper Giveaway	The Countryman	9.30 pm
Strung Out	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm

<b>December 31st</b>		
Kevin Rohan + DJ John	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Buckeye	Maud Millar's	10.00 pm
DJ Keith Geraghty	Gibbons' Pillar House	10.00 pm
New Years Eve With Dave	Joes Bar	10.00 pm
The Blaggards	Killeen's Bar	10.00 pm
Shane Moore	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Gentleman John	The Countryman	10.00 pm
The Gaegan Pagans	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30 pm
Live Band	Canal Bar, Shearwater	10.00 pm



# JANUARY EVENTS GUIDE

<b>January 1st</b>		
Buzz The Agent	The Dunlo Tavern	10.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
Live Music	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
The High Reel	Canal Bar, Shearwater Hotel	9.30 pm
<b>January 2nd</b>		
DJ John	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
G2	Gibbons' Pillar House Bar & Restaurant	10.00 pm
Lyn Em Up	Killeen's Bar	10.00 pm
Boom Diggity	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
Music in the Lounge by Chris Dallat	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Buck Eye Dan	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30 pm
Amy Brennan	Canal Bar, Shearwater Hotel	10.00 pm
Katie Hopkins	Town Hall Theatre	8.00 pm
<b>January 3rd</b>		
Pillar House Trad Session	Gibbons' Pillar House Bar & Restaurant	6.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	7.00 pm
Shane Moore	Downeys Bar	9.00 pm
Session with Davy and The Boys	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Finnegans Fury	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
<b>January 4th</b>		
Pacifica	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
<b>January 6th</b>		
Brendan Grace	Plaza Suite, Shearwater Hote	8.00pm
Trad	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
<b>January 7th</b>		
Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
<b>January 8th</b>		
Country Market	Town Hall Theatre	9.30 am
Amy Brennan	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9.45pm
Trad Session	The Dunlo Tavern	10.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
DJ Johnny F	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
<b>January 9th</b>		
DJ John	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
Joe Wynne	Gibbons' Pillar House Bar & Restaurant	10.00 pm
Music and Dancing in the Lounge	Valerie's Of Aughrim	10.00 pm
No Bodder	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
Sean Crehan	Killeen's Bar	10.00 pm
The Livewires	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30 pm
<b>January 10th</b>		
Pillar House Trad Session	Gibbons' Pillar House Bar & Restaurant	6.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	7.00 pm
Session with Davy and The Boys	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Live Music	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
<b>January 13th</b>		
Trad	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
<b>January 14th</b>		
Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Singers Circle	The Dunlo Tavern	10.00 pm
<b>January 15th</b>		
Country Market	Town Hall Theatre	9.30 am
Pillar House Folk Club – Declan O'Rourke	Gibbons' Pillar House Bar & Restaurant	9.00 pm
Ken & Steve	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9.45om
Live Music	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
Evan Blake	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
Trad Session	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30 pm

<b>January 16th</b>		
DJ John	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
High Reels	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9.45pm
Too Tall Paul	The Dunlo Tavern	10.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
Live Music	Gibbons' Pillar House Bar & Restaurant	10.00 pm
Music in the Lounge by Anything Goes	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Night Owls	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
Maggie Dunne	Killeen's Bar	10.00 pm
<b>January 17th</b>		
Pillar House Trad Session	Gibbons' Pillar House Bar & Restaurant	6.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	7.00 pm
Session with Davy and The Boys	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Live Music	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
<b>January 19th</b>		
Mountaineering Ireland Winter Lecture Series	Church Gallery, Ballinasloe New Library	7.00 pm
<b>January 20th</b>		
Trad	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
<b>January 21st</b>		
Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Three Amigos: R.Mizzel, J. Buckley, P.Feeney	Plaza Suite, Shearwater Hotel	9.00 pm
<b>January 22nd</b>		
Country Market	Town Hall Theatre	9.30 am
Tir na nÓg	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9.45pm
Trad Session	The Dunlo Tavern	10.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
DJ Johnny F	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
<b>January 23rd</b>		
DJ John	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
On Rail	Gibbons' Pillar House Bar & Restaurant	10.00 pm
Birthday Party with DJ	Valerie's Of Aughrim	10.00 pm
The Crime	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
Wonder Melon	The Dunlo Tavern	10.30 pm
<b>January 24th</b>		
Pillar House Trad Session	Gibbons' Pillar House Bar & Restaurant	6.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	7.00 pm
Session with Davy and The Boys	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Live Music	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
<b>January 27th</b>		
Trad	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
<b>January 28th</b>		
Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
<b>January 29th</b>		
Country Market	Town Hall Theatre	9.30 am
Trad Session	The Dunlo Tavern	10.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
Evan Blake	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
<b>January 30th</b>		
DJ John	Haydens Hotel	9.00 pm
Paul Burns	The Dunlo Tavern	10.00 pm
Live Music	An Tain Bar	10.00 pm
Live Music	Gibbons' Pillar House Bar & Restaurant	10.00 pm
Music and Dancing with Valerie and Tommy	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Tradstone	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm
Take Time	Killeen's Bar	10.00 pm
<b>January 31st</b>		
South Roscommon Vintage Auto Jumble	Taughmaconnell Community Centre	11.00 am
Pillar House Trad Session	Gibbons' Pillar House Bar & Restaurant	6.00 pm
Session with Davy and The Boys	Valerie's of Aughrim	10.00 pm
Live Music	Auld Sod Bar	10.00 pm

To advertise your events here,  
Contact: [ballinasloelife@hotmail.com](mailto:ballinasloelife@hotmail.com) or Call 090 964 3779 or 085 148 1911



# BALLINASLOE & DISTRICT VINTAGE CLUB

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**As the end of the year approaches, the Ballinasloe and District Vintage club wish to thank all who supported them throughout the year.**

The club members remained busy on a collective and individual level within the Vintage scene and other personal endeavours, including three classic car outings at Pallas Karting in Tynagh. Another event attended, was the annual club day and market in Carey's Equestrian Centre, which this year, boasted an antique display of other goods complementing the artist inside, which included two blacksmiths, a traditional potter and a Stone Age grain milling tutorial.

**"The summer season was packed with various car runs and shows for different charities of which we support and help organize and requires great commitment from various individual members, who put their precious time in the support of these events",** added Ivan Mullen, Chairperson of the Ballinasloe and District Vintage Club.

The clubs involved in local shows and fairs, with members being

called on to support and steward, is indicative of the professional nature of which the club is viewed. This was particularly noted at the 2015 National Ploughing Championship, where club members won the special exhibit award in the highly popular vintage section, for the second year in a row.

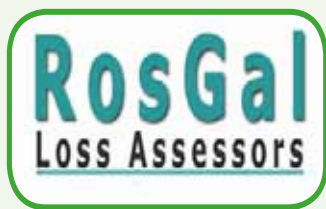
**The club also took part in the annual October Fair, with members, family and friends participating, who brought a fine show to Main Street, in front of Gullanes Hotel. "We would like to thank Thomas Gullane, as well as the staff for their continued support throughout the life of the club", mentioned Ivan. "Thomas has been instrumental in the continued success of the club and for other**

**countless clubs and groups locally over the years."**

"Our greatest strength has been our members, who have remained consistent. It is from the floor, we take our direction for the year to come", he expressed. As the club prepares for Christmas and the end of 2015, they will no doubt, celebrate this year's achievements fondly. "There is a small possibility that a few of our members may make an appearance on Christmas Eve, appropriately dressed for the season. But don't be alarmed as they will be collecting for charity", added Ivan.

**The team behind the clubs success includes Ronnie Cobban, Michael 'Hessy' O'Hehir, Pat Glynn, Michael Glynn, John McDevitt, Shane Burns, Michael Hyland and Peter Enright-Mooney. "There wouldn't be a club without this team, and the members that drive it", stated Ivan. "On behalf of the Ballinasloe and District Vintage Club, we look forward to seeing some of you at our events in the coming year."**

The club can be contacted by emailing [bdcvintage@gmail.com](mailto:bdcvintage@gmail.com).



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# BALLINASLOE GARDEN COMPETITION RESULTS

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**Recently, the Ballinasloe Tidy Towns committee presented their Best Kept Garden Awards to 17 winners. Chairman, William Duthie welcomed the gardeners, Mike Finnerty (Chair, Ballinasloe Municipal District), Breda Mulrennan (Senior Staff Officer from the Community Enterprise section of Galway County Council) and Eddie Kelly, manager of Supervalu, Brackernagh.**

"It's been a difficult year with the many road works taking place, as will next year with the Street Enhancement, but we hope it will all be worth it with an improved infrastructure. We worked on improving the Tesco roundabout and hope to run a competition for a design which would be long-term and low maintenance with a prize of €350. The workers from Galway County Council, the Gateway scheme, Ballinasloe Training for Employment, the Probation Services and our own volunteers were thanked for their

work", mentioned William.

Councillor Finnerty congratulated the committee on their work and assured the temporary inconvenience of the road works would be beneficial in the long term. "The Ballinasloe competition is the only one run for local gardens in all of Galway", added Ms Mulrennan. Eddie Kelly announced that Gullanes Hotel won the Best Business front after the Gardens and Floral Display awards were announced.

"I am always delighted to judge the Ballinasloe Garden Competition. The amount of effort, time and energy that goes into every garden never ceases to amaze me. Each individual garden has its own charm and personality no matter how big or small. Even the pots seem to take on their own persona. The positioning of flowers, arrangement of ornaments and choice of colour scheme all lend a hand in building the character of the garden for that season. Everyone's creative side gets a chance to shine and it's very evident from year to year. So well done to all – keep up the good work", stated William Duthie, Chairman of the Tidy Towns Committee.

## BEST SMALL GARDEN

1st - Ann Donaghue, 19 Hillcrest  
2nd - Christy & Margaret Costello, 65 Garbally Dr  
3rd - Liam Backhouse, 9 Meadowbrook Park

## BEST LARGE GARDEN

1st - Maureen & Willie Devlin, 2 Ashfield Drive  
2nd - Thomas & Breege Kilbane, Garbally  
3rd - Muriel Duthie, Cleaghmore

## BEST VEGETABLE GARDEN

1st - Pearse & Eileen D'arcy, 2 Ard Mhuire  
2nd - Patrick & Margaret Moran, Poolboy

## BEST HANGING BASKETS & TUBS

1st - Phil & Kevin Whyte, Garbally Drive  
2nd - John & Helen Watters, 14 Brackernagh  
3rd - Noreen Connaughton, 17 Hymany Park

## BEST KEPT ESTATE/RESIDENTIAL AREA

1st - Hillcrest Park, c/o Nora Flaherty  
2nd - Garbally Drive, c/o Maura Rafter  
3rd - St Joseph's, Brackernagh, c/o Johnny Walsh

## BEST BUSINESS FRONT

1st - Gullanes Hotel  
2nd - Bould Biddys

## OVERALL WINNER

Mari-Rose & Michael Cullinane, Bridge Sreet





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# KEVIN WHYTE COMMITTED COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER (29/05/1949 – 19/10/2015)

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**Kevin's life began in Cork City in 1949 where he grew up with his parents Jack and Teresa, his three brothers and two sisters. Despite moving to Dublin at the age of 16 he always considered himself a proud Corkman!**

While working in insurance in Dublin he met his wife Philomena. In 1983 Kevin, Phil and their four children, Karen, Finola, Lisa and John, moved to Ballinasloe and quickly became involved in all aspects of life.

Kevin was predominantly a family man. He was very proud of his children's achievements and in his latter years his ten grandchildren were a source of great joy to him.

Throughout his working life Kevin held a number sales-related jobs and was regarded as a very persuasive salesman. In his work in sales he travelled all over the country.

In 2004 he was instrumental in setting up a new telecommunications company locally - TalkXtra where he worked until he became ill in December 2014.

In terms of priorities Kevin's work with voluntary groups came second only to his family. He gave huge amounts of time and energy to many organisations including Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, the Chamber of Commerce, Ballinasloe Area Community Development, Fianna Fáil, The Knights of Columbanus, St. Teresa's Special School and critically the St. Vincent de Paul. Many members of these groups provided Guards of honour at his funeral.

Kevin has had a long association with SVP in Ballinasloe - visiting people in need and offering practical support and information. In recent

years he was asked by the Western Region of the SVP to form a new conference to meet the needs of people in the Mountbellew area. This he did with the help of local volunteers and remained President of this Conference until late 2014.



Kevin also became a member of the St. Augustine's Conference in Galway, tasked with distributing the Maureen O'Connell Fund - the largest legacy ever willed to a voluntary organisation in Ireland. Kevin became Vice-President of this conference and held this position until his death. Up to last summer a total of €8.5m of the MOCF has been spent or approved

for 60 beneficial projects in Galway city and county, including many in the Ballinasloe area.

Kevin was diagnosed with cancer in December of 2014. He will be remembered fondly by his family, friends and many associates.



## THE PASSING OF FR. VIVIAN TWOHIG

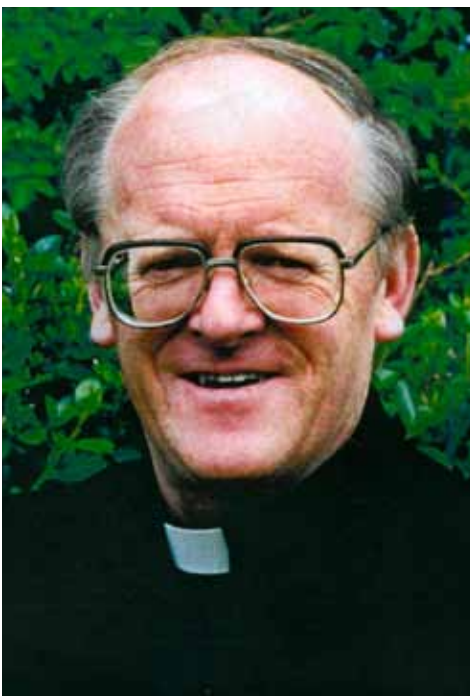
**The passing of Fr. Vivian Twohig, a former parish priest of Mullagh and Killoran, marked the demise of a remarkable man that survived a helicopter crash in New York and continued to minister his priestly duties for over twenty years after suffering a stroke, which confined him to a wheelchair.**

The eighty-year-old cleric grew up in Creagh, Ballinasloe where his parents were both national schoolteachers. His mother, Mai, started teaching in the Convent of Mercy but later spent thirty-six years in Newtown where Vivian attended before moving onto Taughmaconnell NS where his father, Michael, was the master for forty-six years. Then it was on to Garbally College for his secondary education before Vivian commenced his studies for the priesthood in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth.

Ordained on 19th June 1960, Fr. Twohig celebrated his first Mass in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Creagh attended by his parents and family. Later that year he joined the teaching staff in St. Molaisses College, Portumna where he would remain until 1981. During the school holidays, Fr. Vivian travelled to different parts of the USA, helping out with ministry work. On one of those excursions he and 27 others were on a helicopter tour of New York City when they crashed into the Hudson River. They spent forty minutes in the icy waters waiting to be rescued

but, fortunately, nobody was seriously injured.

Fr. Twohig was appointed Curate in Kiltormer in 1981 and two years later became Parish Priest of Mullagh and Killoran, a position he held for twenty seven years before retiring in



2010. However in 1989 the popular churchman suffered a stroke which necessitated hospitalisation in Ballinasloe, Galway and the Rehabilitation Centre in Dunlaoighre. He was

determined to return to his flock and despite being confined to a wheelchair he adapted to his restricted lifestyle but continued to minister his duties in his beloved parish for another twenty years. His fighting spirit epitomised the character of a man that was resigned to his fate but never wilted in the execution of his pastoral duties. He was greatly assisted by a community that cherished his presence and his bravery.

For the past five years, Fr. Vivian had resided in Mill Race Nursing Home in Ballinasloe where he celebrated the Sunday morning mass, right up to a few days before his passing. His remains reposed at Portiuncula Hospital Mortuary where large numbers turned up to pay their respects. Parishoners lined the route when his mortal remains arrived at St. Brendan's Church in Mullagh and over forty priests joined the Bishop of Clonfert, Dr. John Kirby, for the funeral mass. Afterwards Fr. Twohig was laid to rest in the Church grounds, just across from his former residence. Among the attendance was the former Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, Dr. Colm O'Reilly, who was a classmate of Fr. Vivian's in Maynooth and a life-long friend.

The late Fr. Twohig is survived by his sisters Florence Glennon, Ballinasloe and Maureen Lydon, Athlone; brother-in-law Michael, niece, nephews, relatives and friends as well as Bishop John Kirby and the priests of the Clonfert Diocese.





## GENEVIEVE DUNCAN - STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

By Ellen Butler and Hannah Finn



**Ardscoil Mhuire student, Genevieve Duncan, sat the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) grade eight exam for piano, earlier this year. Genevieve performed 'Sonata in C minor' by Beethoven, 'Prelude in F minor' by Bach and 'Golliwog's Cakewalk' by Debussy. Having had no idea how brilliantly she had performed, Genevieve was delighted to receive her results confirming that she had passed with honours.**

Little did Genevieve know, the following month she received a letter from the RIAM to inform her that she had won a High Achiever Award, following excellent results in her Grade Eight exam. Like all recipients of this prestigious award, Genevieve was invited to audition recently in Sligo for a Connaught Region Concert. She performed 'Feed the Birds' from Mary Poppins and 'Prelude in F minor' by Bach. She is currently awaiting the results of her audition with great anticipation.

Genevieve has been playing piano since the age of five and sat her first exam at just six years old. Her hard work and dedication over the years ensured that she always achieved an Honours grade or above in every exam. Joanne Jordan, a local primary school teacher, has been Genevieve's piano teacher since she began playing, encouraging and supporting her all the way. They have developed a close bond over the years and Genevieve cannot thank her enough for all she has done.

As well as this, Genevieve has enjoyed studying music as a subject in Ardscoil Mhuire since first year and continues to do so for her Leaving Cert. Her music teacher, Ms. Maeve Higgins, was delighted but not surprised to hear of Genevieve's outstanding achievement, "A talented pianist with an innate musical ability. Genevieve performs with a maturity beyond her years. I am delighted and proud of her achievement." She is currently preparing for her Leaving Cert and especially her music practical. Following this, she intends on completing her diploma, which will allow her to teach piano.

Music has been instilled in Genevieve from a young age, coming from

a family infused in music on both sides. From her primary school, Scoil an Chroí Naofa, to her secondary school, her teachers have been a great influence on her musical ambitions. She is a valued member of her school choir and has participated in musicals both in school and with the Ballinasloe Musical Society.

Genevieve will be attending a presentation/concert in NUI Galway. She will be joined by friends and family who are all incredibly proud of her fantastic achievements. Genevieve is certainly a credit to her family, her piano teacher, Joanne Jordan, and all who have encouraged and assisted her over the years.

## KILGASS NATIONAL SCHOOL STRIVING AHEAD!

By Cillian Dolan, Diarmuid O'Brien, Aisling O'Brien, Jay Hayes, Maeve Geraghty and Lucy Carroll.

**Kilgass National School is located on the outskirts of Ahascragh village and was built in 1840. The school currently has 72 students and a great sporting tradition.**



We are very proud to have two past students on the senior inter county hurling team, with Cathal Mannion winning an All-Star. In our school, we play many different sports such as hurling, football, handball and soccer. Last year, we reached the hurling County Final against Brackloon National School in Loughgeorge but unfortunately, we were narrowly defeated. So far this year, we have played a hurling tournament and have entered into numerous competitions in a variety of sports. We also do swimming lessons in the Coral Swimming Pool, once a week.

Last year we were awarded with the Blue Flag for our studies of the EU and we completed our Comenius Project, where we hosted teachers and students



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## CONTINUED...



from Sweden, France, England, Italy and Germany. Some of our senior students along with Mr Kane and Ms Mullins payed a visit to France and got wonderful experience of a different European culture.

We received our first Green Flag due to all of our hard work around the school, such as putting up posters and signs. We cut down on waste by getting compost bins, recycling bins and landfill bins for every room. This year, we are aiming to get our next Green Flag by working with saving electricity.

Every Wednesday morning, a Speech and Drama teacher comes to the school with all classes participating for 45 minutes. We talk about a different theme each week. We also play games, write poems and tongue twisters related to the theme. Every classroom also does a Christmas play each year.

Recently, the school had a very successful visit from an inspector. The Principal, along with other teachers, decided that the children would go to the Town Hall Theatre cinema as a treat for the inspection going so well.

Every Friday is 'Football Free Friday', where we play lots of different games that we don't usually play. It is coordinated by the 6th class students, with help from the teachers. We play games like 'Simon Says' and 'What Time Is It Mr Wolf' and try different sports like Athletics, Olympic Handball and lots more with the senior classes.

As part of the 1916 Easter Rising Memorial, every school in Ireland was presented with an Irish Flag and a copy of the Proclamation, Lt. Grattan O'Hagan and Officer Pat McGillon gave us ours. There was a ceremony where the proclamation and the poem 'Mother' by Padraig Pearse were read out. The flag will be raised on Easter Monday, 16th April 2016.

### CHRISTMAS SHOEBOX APPEAL

By Martyna Florek, Scoil na Chroí Naofa

**Every year in early November, a teacher from the school, Ms. Gilligan asks us to participate in the Christmas Shoebox Appeal.**

We get an empty shoebox and cover it with Christmas wrapping paper. Then we decide if the box is for a girl or boy, and what age group it is for.

After that, we fill the shoebox with various items such as pens, pencils and copies for writing, a toothbrush, toothpaste and soap for washing. A hat, scarf and gloves to wear and finally a treat such as sweets, make up or a cuddly toy.

It is a really nice thing to do. Our Christmas Shoebox "might not change the world but, it might change the world for one child."



Last year, in Scoil An Chroí Naofa, we donated over 50 shoeboxes. This year we hope to beat that and send even more to children less fortunate than ourselves.

### ACE PROGRAMME

By John Lydon, St Gabriels NS Kilconnell

**At St Gabriels N.S Kilconnell we do an ACE programme, which stands for Activity Confidence Eating. We are the only school in Ireland that have received a platinum award in the ACE school programme. The programme encourages everybody to take part in different activities and promote health amongst children. Ms Slattery is the co-ordinator of the ACE programme.**

We have lots of sporting activities including hurling, football, basketball,

**ACE School's Committee in St. Gabriel's N.S., Kilconnell receiving their award from Annemarie Bennett, HSE.**



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rugby, handball and cycling. Every second year we have swimming lessons. JJ Carey from Ballinasloe rugby club gave us rugby training. Pdraig Downey trained us at hurling. Debbie Donnelly gave us basketball lessons and Mike Malone trained us at football. We also had a day of cycling training.

We had Marchathon earlier this year, where some of the children marched 26 miles over a month. Once a year, we have a school 7 km run/walk where the children are joined by parents and other people who wished to take part. We have an active schools week when all the children take part in fun games including a skipathon.

We did some gardening in the school garden. We planted vegetables, some trees and also made a willow arbur with Debbie Donnelly, with each class making a different part of it. The third class children do cookery lessons every year. There is an ACE committee, with one child from every class participating. The committee do a food audit everyday on the children's lunches by checking for fruit, vegetables and water. The students are given clear refillable water bottles every year to encourage us to drink plenty of water. We had many mini chefs at the school and they made yummy smoothies.

Some of the 5th and 6th class students do 'Big Buddies' for the junior and senior infants, to help them in the school playground. They also do playworks, where they make new games for the infants to play. Ms Slattery does a 'Zippys Friends' programme, where children are encouraged to talk about their problems or feelings at school. She also does a 'Friends for Life' programme, which helps children sort out their arguments and stay friends. 4th class students got to pick adult role models. They chose Joe Callanan and Debbie Donnelly, who are two parents that do lots of work at the school. There is something for everyone in the ACE programme and we really enjoy it!

### TAUGHMACONNELL SCHOOLS VISIT TO CUSTUME BARRACKS. By Seán Brennan and Danny Lynch, St Ronan's National School

**On a warm, bright Wednesday morning, the children from St Ronan's National School boarded a bus to visit the Army Barracks in Athlone. You could feel the excitement as the pupils from 3rd to 6th class got ready to see, what was once, the second largest enclosed army barracks in Europe.**

When we arrived, we followed two soldiers into the presentation room. On the way, we could see the soldiers training hard all around us. We sat down and listened to the engineers talk about the warzones, military jobs and the peacekeeping missions they had been on in places like Syria, Kosovo and The Lebanon.

They then guided us to the courtyard, where they were displaying the equipment. Each pupil held the Styre rifle and a light machine gun. The



rifle was light and had a telescopic sight, whereas the machine gun was heavy and designed to spray bullets everywhere. Next we saw the helmet, body armour and the heavy backpack, full of essential equipment that the soldiers carry. Each student also got to try on the equipment.

After that, we saw the explosives. Each explosive had a different purpose. Some were for taking out armoured vehicles and some were for eliminating squads of enemy troops. Next, one of the soldiers insisted on our teacher, Mr Breathnach, putting on the bomb protection suit. After five long minutes, the suit was finally on and it was hard for the teacher to move.

One soldier led us to the helipad, where we saw the air ambulance. Before we saw the inside, they told us all about the helicopter and what they do. Then we entered the helicopter, which looked hard to drive because of all the controls and there was lots of equipment inside. We got our pictures taken and then we made our way back to the bus.

It was a great day and we would really recommend going there. The soldiers were nice and friendly and they taught us a lot about life in the Defence Forces.



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# A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ARTLINK COLLECTIVE

BY CIARA BERESFORD

Members of Ballinasloe's Artlink Collective provided an exciting display of contemporary work based on the theme of 'windows' at their recent exhibition in the Galway East Life Support (GELS) centre in Cullen's Yard. With a variety of mediums from acrylic to oils and ceramics to encaustic, the work on display was varied and vibrant.

There were five artists including Jackie Eastwood, Tomas Finn, Lily Kelly, Ness Kelly and Rosemarie Langtry, who have all completed an Arts Degree in the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology.

The artists used the opening of the exhibition to explain their methods and inspiration for their work. Following a welcome by Chairman of GELS, Aidan Lonergan, the artists expressed their sincere thanks to GELS for their continued support and the use of their premises for their second annual exhibition.



(L-R) Aidan Lonergan (Chairperson of GELS) with artists Lily Kelly, Rosemarie Langtry, Ness Kelly, Jackie Eastwood and Tomas Finn.

2016 and is looking forward to the next in its series of events; 'Conversations With', which takes place in Gullane's Hotel, where they will be joined by local visual artist Una Spain for a talk about her work.

For further information about the Collective or if you wish to be included on their mailing list please contact Jackie Eastwood on 087 2341535 or see their Facebook page at Art Link Collective.

**Marie Staunton**

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# PROMOTING GAEILGE IN BUSINESS

BY CIARA BERESFORD

The "Business with Irish" award involves promoting speaking of the Irish language in business in Ballinasloe, a competition which Conradh na Gaeilge run every year during Seachtain na Gaeilge.

However, the judges are listening and looking out from now on to see who will win the award in March 2016. Kathryn Gibbons of Gibbons Pillar House, Society Street, won the prize last year.

If you would like to be a part of the "Business with Irish" award in Ballinasloe, please contact Joe Beirgin on 086 353 6085 or visit their Facebook page at Conradh na Gaeilge.

## "Gnó le Gaeilge i mBéal Átha na Slua"

Beidh aitheantas tugtha do ghnó a dhéanann an t-iarracht is fearr an Ghaeilge a úsáid. Beidh na baill craoibhe Chonradh na Gaeilge ag faire amach idir seo agus Lá 'le Pádraig do na gnónanna a dhéanann iarracht an teanga a úsáid i rith an lae. Beidh duais brionta i rith Seachtain na Gaeilge 2016.



Kathryn Gibbons, who won the prize last year is pictured along with her children Evelina and Fiona, with Máirín Ní Thuairisc and Ruairí Ó hAnluain of Conradh na Gaeilge.

## Bígí ag úsáid bhur gcúpla focal!

Má tá suim agat bheith páirteach in imeachtaí an Chonradh na Gaeilge Béal Átha na Slua teigh i dteagmháil linn ar Facebook nó cuir glaoch ar Seosamh Ó Beirgin 086 3536085."

## S/ROS. VINTAGE CLUB AUTO JUMBLE SALE

Plans are at an advanced stage for the hosting of the long established Annual South Roscommon Vintage Club Auto Jumble taking place at the Taughmaconnell Community Centre, Ballinasloe on Sunday January 31st from 11am to 5pm. Again this year, the event will feature a selection of new trade and stands.

The clubs Christmas Dinner Dance will be held in Hayden's Hotel on Saturday night December 12th with live music provided by Simon Casey.

For full details on these events please contact Liam Keogh on 087 756 5147.



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# NEW INN TO HOST MUMMERS FESTIVAL 2016

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**Plans are at an advanced stage for the hosting of the popular Mummers Festival in the local Leisure Centre on Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd of January 2016.**

It will be the 38th annual staging of this unique event of music, song, dance and storytelling, which attracts competitors and patrons from all corners of the County and Midlands.

**The format of the Festival will be similar to last year, with the senior section being staged on Saturday night, and the winning group being presented with the Peter J Donohue Perpetual Trophy.**

The Sunday afternoon will be all about the younger performers, who are the lifeblood of the Festival, and will ensure that the Mummers tradition is kept alive for future generations. This is usually a great family occasion, with parents and grand-parents coming along to support the stars of the future. There will be a Juvenile competition for under 13's, and a junior competition for those under 18, along with a high standard of entertainment and lots of friendly rivalry guaranteed.

When confirming the arrangements for the event, Chairman of the Festival Committee, Michael Mullins paid tribute to the loyal sponsors who have supported and encouraged the Mummers Festival over the years. "Thanks to their incredible generosity, there will be cash prizes and trophies for the winning groups, as well as individual awards to recognise the most talented musicians, singers, dancers and storytellers", mentioned Michael. Again this year, there will also be the 'Most Outstanding Entertainer Award' across all categories.

**Festival Secretary, Michael Finnerty, is encouraging groups to get their entries in as soon as possible, along with new groups, who would be particularly welcome. Michael can be contacted at New Inn, Ballinasloe on 087 382 8281.**

The Mummers Festival is run under the auspices of the Community Council, and started life all those years ago as a fundraiser towards the building of the Community Centre. Today the proceeds of the Festival help maintain and develop the Centre, as well as contributing some funds to local charities.

"The festival committee look forward to seeing you in New Inn on January 2nd and 3rd, for what is sure to be a feast of top class traditional entertainment, in a comfortable venue", added Michael.

**There is no better event than the Mummers Festival, to bring the Christmas festivities to a close, and get the New Year off to a musical start.**



# 'TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**Cinema will return again to the Town Hall on Saturday 19th of December in the form of three Special Christmas Matinees with screenings at 12.30 p.m, 2.30 p.m and 4.30 p.m selected with the younger ones in mind the films chosen for this Xmas are Minions, Ice Age 2 and Pitch Perfect 2. It's hoped that having the Cinema Screen open on that day will encourage more families to relax in the town centre. Family Tickets at €18 with children under 12 at €3 and Teenagers at €5.**

The Cinema facility will be available in January for Club/ Organisation/ School or indeed Birthday or group screenings by prior appointment only. A Voucher booking for a Kids Birthday or winning team, large group of boisterous cousins would make an ideal Christmas gift.

**Ballinasloe Town Hall presents a celebration of local arts and musical talent in a fundraising evening- "Twas the Night before Christmas" on Sunday 20th December at 8pm.**

This novel Yuletide tide cabaret evening will be preceded by a mulled wine reception at 7.30pm. Directed by Marie Power with narration being provided by M.C. John Boland, there will be a medley of local choirs and singer/songwriters. Emma O'Reilly will be joined by David Kennedy with their recent collaboration FUAR for Junior Eurovision. The local harp ensemble Blossom will also feature along with dancers, instrumentalists and one or two special entertainment acts!



**Mrs. Marie Power Director of the "Twas the Night Before Christmas" Town Hall Theatre Show.**

**Some local storytellers will regale us with tales of Christmas past in a miscellany format bringing the warm panoply of famous Christmas time writings and memoirs to life. Tickets €15 with €12 concessions at 090 9643779 and early booking is advisable.**



## Festive Gathering 2015

**to welcome Santa and the big Xmas Illuminations Switch on.**

**Saturday 28th Nov:**

**Live Music, School Choirs, Surprise Guests and a Visitor from the North Pole!**

**Show starts 3.30pm! Top of St. Michael's Square.**

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# BALLINASLOE HORSE FAIR 2015



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# HANSEL AND GRETEL – PANTO SEASON 2015

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**This year B'sloe Panto are bringing something that will suit all of those with a sweet tooth to the stage! Their production of "Hansel and Gretel" is set to run from the 7th to the 13th of December in the Town Hall Theatre.**

This will be B'sloe Panto's seventh consecutive production but there are no signs of weariness from the production crew. "This year, like every year, we're aiming for a bigger and better show than the one that came before. We strive to bring a thoroughly entertaining show to the stage, from the music to the special effects, we want it to be a show that has something for everyone; kids and parents alike" says Director Eoin Croffy.

**This year's cast sees the return of a few familiar faces to the stage but also the addition of some new talent. Róisín Lyons, a 5th year in Ardscoil Mhuire, is joining the Panto for the first time and is delighted to be taking on one of the title roles as Gretel. The part of brother Hansel, a lad with a voracious appetite for sweets, is being played by Mike O'Reilly. Mike is no stranger to the Town Hall stage having taking part in countless productions in the Town Hall over the years.**

Returning for another year from Tullamore is the hugely talented Louise McEvoy who is taking on the role of Gretchen the evil witch, the owner of the gingerbread house hidden deep inside the Petrified Forest. Her wicked performance will certainly scare some of you; however, Dave Hardiman is sure to provide some comic relief, for kids and adults alike, as her bungling sidekick.

**Prince Kurt, the hero of our story, is being played by Ciaran Smyth. This will be Ciaran's first production in Ballinasloe since he took a break from performing to complete his law studies in college. Prince Kurt is smitten by Gretel, however, Hansel and Gretel's aunt Beatrice**

**mistakenly thinks she might have a chance with the young Royal.**

Panto veteran Pat Vaughan will be donning the stockings as Aunt Beatrice, she may not get her hands on the prince but you never know she might still find love before the end of the show. Enda McGrath is partnering up with Paul Drysdale, to form the comic duo of Maximillian and Otto, two local police officers who are on hand to help Prince Kurt and Aunt Beatrice when things go wrong. The youngest member of the cast is 12 year old Gráinne Behan a 6th class student from St. Ronan's National School, Taughmaconnel. She will be playing the part of Lenora, a forest fairy who tries her best to thwart Gretchen's evil scheme and to keep Hansel and Gretel safe as they journey through the Petrified Forest. This year's cast is rounded off by a Gnome, and Brian Derrane states that not all is what it seems with the outwardly innocuous garden feature that he will be playing!

**New to the production team line-up this year is the talented Avril Smyth (former Queen of the Fair) who is taking on the role of choreographer. She is joined by Elizabeth Hartigan who, after her great success with the Blue group last year, is again encouraging and choreographing B'sloe Panto's youngest performers. The production crew is completed by the very talented musical direction of John Roe who is delighted to be working with the Panto crew once again.**

B'sloe Panto's production of "Hansel and Gretel" will be running from December 7th to 13th in the Town Hall Theatre, the show begins nightly at 7.30pm with two fancy dress matinees on Saturday and Sunday December 12th and 13th 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! Tickets are available from the booking office at J&S Photos on Society Street, drop in or call (09096) 31566 to get yours! They will also be available on the door, however, pre-booking is advised.



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## NEW LIBRARY UPDATE

BY CIARA BERESFORD

Pictured are some images from the newly renovated Ballinasloe Library. The facility offers an array of services for the modern library user.

There are large tables and computers with super-fast WiFi for students and a children's area with bright paintings and a selection of age appropriate books. There is also digital check-out stations for quick and convenient book withdrawals and returns. Also photographed is the Gallery – which was the old Pugin inspired Chapel. The resituated church also boasts the original roof which has been beautifully maintained. There is a display of historical artefacts from the area including the Roll of Honour, which commemorates the fallen soldiers who fought in WW1.

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

- December 21st 'Polar Express' Christmas Storytime at the library with PJs, hot chocolate & marshmallows on December 21st at 6pm. Booking essential. Ages 5-8.
- December 21st Contempo Quartet Christmas Concert on December 21st at 7.30pm in the Church Gallery, New Library.
- Mountaineering Ireland Winter Lecture Series with acclaimed Hiking Writer Paddy Dillon on January 19th in the Church Gallery, New Library.

### LIBRARY OPENING HOURS CURRENTLY ARE:

Monday: Closed

Tuesday: 11am-1pm & 2pm-5pm

Wednesday: 11am-1pm & 2pm-5pm

Thursday: 11am-1pm & 2pm-5pm

Friday: 11am-1pm & 2pm-5pm

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# BALLINASLOE BRASS BAND PARADES ROLE IN 1938 ALL-IRELAND FOOTBALL FINAL



BY CIARA BERESFORD

**In 1938, a year before the hostilities of World War 2 broke out - Galway and Kerry qualified to contest in the 51st All-Ireland Football Championship Final. Cyril Dunne, son of John Dunne and grandson of Willie Dunne, relates the triumphant story of how both his father and grandfather preformed at Croke Park that day.**

In the weeks leading up to the final, Galway were notified of the Artane Boys Band's decision to go on strike which meant there was no available band to play at the opening ceremony of the All-Ireland final.

John 'Tull' Dunne, captain of the Galway team and later secretary of the Galway Football Board, asked his father Willie Dunne, who was a leader and drummer of the Ballinasloe Brass Band, if the band would be willing to substitute for the Artane Boys Band at the All-Ireland final. The band agreed to travel and play at Croke Park.

As there was a junior sector in the band, it was agreed to host a draw amongst the younger members, with two winners getting the opportunity to travel to Dublin and march in front of the band around Croke Park. Rory Kilduff and Mattie McNally were chosen as mascots to travel to the final.

The band travelled by train to Dublin on the morning of the All-Ireland game to Westland Row Station (Pearse St.). On arrival, they were taken to the Grosvenor Hotel for a meal and

from there, marched to Croke Park. "On the way to Croke Park a local man donned a Galway hat and scarf and walked behind us all, pretending to collect money in his cap for the band", recalls Rory Kilduff. "As we arrived at Croke Park the local with the hat, scarf and money disappeared into the crowd."

Before match throw-in, the Ballinasloe Brass Band took their positions on the pitch, with Rory and Mattie leading the parade; one carrying a Galway flag and the other with a Kerry flag.

The match was witnessed by a record crowd of 69,000 supporters with the final score a draw, Galway 3-3 and Kerry 2-6. "It was the most classic exhibition of football ever seen in Croke Park" according to supporters. It was also the largest crowd ever attended at a sporting event in Ireland according to the scribes of that time.



Mattie McNally, Cyril Dunne & Rory Kilduff.

After the match, the Band along with their junior mascots made their way to Westland Row Station and returned home to Ballinasloe. The Brass Band and Ballinasloe Mascots were hoping to get a return invitation to play at the All-Ireland Final replay but unfortunately missed out on another opportunity - as Artane Boys Band were available again. The replay was won by the Tribesmen Galway 2-4 to Kerry 0-7.

The mascots who are now both in their 93rd year have vivid memories of their great day out in Croke Park on All-Ireland Final Day in 1938.

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# BALLINASLOE FOOTBALL 100 YEARS AGO

BY WILLIE TULLY

In 1915, Derrymullen won the Ballinasloe Town senior football league, clinching the trophy following a 2-4 to 1-1 win over Culliagh in the game refereed by Joe Dunne. Four teams participated in the League-Derrymullen, Culliagh, The Town and The Asylum, (St. Brigid's Hospital). In an extract from the "East Galway Democrat" of that year, it stated "A large crowd of spectators attended and intense excitement prevailed throughout" as both teams clashed in the vital game played on the Fair Green. The report also stated "The Brass and Reed Band played a fine selection of music during the progress of the game" which was led by Joe Dunne, an uncle of John "Tull" Dunne.



DERRYMULLEN-Ballinasloe Town senior football champions of 1915. Back row, l to r: Mick Fallon, Johnny Keeley, P. Ring, M. Nee, T. Ryan, Tommy McDonnell, Denis Egan, Christy Neill. Middle row, l to r: Michael Kelly, P. Fallon, Tommy Craddock, Peter Higgins, Tom Egan. Front row, l to r: Freddie Greene, Michael "Knacker" Walsh and Mike Small.



The St. Grellan's Cup presented to Michael "Knacker" Walsh, captain of the Derrymullen team, in 1915 and still in mint condition today. Donated by Fr. Broderick.

## SEVEN IN-A-ROW TEAM

Over one hundred years ago the Ballinasloe senior Football team won the Galway Co. Championship by defeating Clifden for the start of their historic seven-in-a-row Co. Titles. The 1913 win heralded the greatest ever era for the East Galway town, who went on to retain the Co. Titles in the following years-1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918 and 1919. The successes resulted in many Ballinasloe players being selected on the county teams, where at one stage there were thirteen Ballinasloe men on the Galway senior football team. It was accepted at the time that the introduction of the St. Grellan's Town League by the late Fr. Broderick played a vital part in raising the standard of football in the town.

The Ballinasloe team who were Co. Senior football champions 1913-1919: Gilbey Jennings, Joe Dunne, Jack Hanniffy, Stephen Bradley, Denis Egan, Peter Keighrey, Michael Shanley, P. Fallon, Peter Higgins, Johnny Egan, Paddy Ganly, Larry Raftery, Josie Walsh, Tom Egan (capt.), Paddy Roche, Michael "Knacker" Walsh.

The officers of the Ballinasloe GAA Club at that time (which comprised Football, Hurling, Handball, Cross-country Running, Cycling and Athletics) were: President-J.J. Whyte, Vice-president-A.J. Staunton, Treasurer-M. Murray, Secretary-T.J. Keating.



# HEATHER PAYNE – RISING UNDERAGE INTERNATIONAL SOCCER STAR

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**Heather Payne is a fifteen year old soccer fanatic from Ballinasloe, who is powering ahead in large strides in her sporting career. The transition year student shares how her love of soccer came about, her international highlights and her plans for the future.**

Heather's love of soccer came from playing with her older brother, Conor in the front garden of their house. Similar to her brother, she decided to attend Tony Coyne's soccer training on Sunday mornings in St. Brigid's Hospital Ballinasloe at the age of eight, "this training further enhanced my love for soccer", added Heather.

**Her first soccer trial was at u10 level, where she was selected by Jason Fallon for the u10 and u11 boys' team for Ballinasloe Town in the ADSL league. Heather played with Ballinasloe town FC up to the age of 14 where Jason Fallon and Noel Lyons continued to coach her. From playing with Ballinasloe, she was selected to play with the ADSL Academy and trained with them every Friday night. "I travelled with the Athlone Academy to Wales and Bolton to play in tournaments" she said.**

Heather was selected to play for the Connaught school girls' team at the age of 12 in the u15's schools Interprovincial. The following two years, she was selected to represent Ireland in the Bob Doherty International tournament which was held in Repton and Glasgow playing against England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Czechoslovakia. Due to the FAI rules, girls are not allowed to play with boys, so at the age of 14, Heather joined Salthill Devon's Girls team in Galway.

**"Due to my successful tournament with the Irish u15's, the following**

**year I was selected to play with the Irish u16's at a UEFA development tournament which was held in Dublin playing against the Czech Republic, Austria and Denmark", she states.**

Earlier this year, having won the Irish u16 cup, Heather was requested by the Irish u17 management to train with them and was subsequently successful in being selected for the team which participated in the UEFA u17 Championship, which was held in Reykjavik, playing against France, Switzerland and Norway.

"It can be difficult to balance school work and training, especially as we go away to training camps at different times during the year", admitted Heather.

"Earlier this year, I was preparing for the Junior Cert prior to the UEFA Championships in Iceland, therefore I had to try and manage my time for study accordingly."

This year she remains with the Irish u17 panel and has recently returned home from a successful tournament in Turkey, where the team topped the group having played Ukraine, Andorra and Turkey. At the moment, the team

are preparing for the elite phase of the u17 UEFA championships, which will be held early next year.

**"Playing for Ireland, for me, is like a dream come true I am very proud to represent my town and country internationally. I am honoured to be part of such an elite group and I have made many friends from different parts of the country. As a group on trips away, we get along very well and even though we are playing at a high standard of soccer, we still have good fun. The highlight of these trips would have been my game against Andorra as I scored two goals. My plan for the future is hopefully to continue to play soccer for Ireland at a senior level and possibly get a scholarship to America to play soccer", shared Heather.**



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## CONNACHT CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

BY CIARA BERESFORD



**Athletes from Ballinasloe & District Athletic Club members did their club proud by performing admirably at the Connacht Cross Country Even and Uneven Age Championships.**

The even age championship kicked off in Moyne, Longford. Ava McKeon ran in the u12 girls 2000m and put in a splendid performance to finish in 6th place, earning a Galway County Silver medal. She also made it onto the Galway County & Connacht Provincial Teams in the National Cross Country Even Championships, which will be held in Santry Demesne.

The next race saw both, Conor Harley and Shane Fitzpatrick put in a great performance in the u12 Boys 2000m, coming in 9th and 10th position. They also both made the Galway & Connacht Teams for the Nationals in Santry and received a Silver Galway County medal on the day for the county team event. Joseph Tierney, Adam McGreal and Adam Coyne, all ran very well, with the five boy's collective performance earning a Silver Team medal for the club team and have all qualified for the Nationals in Santry.

Brian Burke ran in the U18 Boys 6000m, had a fantastic run and also qualified for both the Galway County and Connacht Provincial Teams in the Nationals.

The uneven age championship kicked off in Lough Key Forest Park in challenging conditions of inclement weather, but it didn't deter the very talented runners.

The u11 girls were the first into action in the 1500m race. Ava McKeon had a splendid run leading the race, from start to finish in 1st place, which resulted in her being crowned the u11 Girls Connacht Champion for the

second year in a row. Aoibheann Fitzpatrick had a brilliant run, finishing in 3rd position. Both Ava and Aoibheann won Gold medals with the Galway County Team.

They also made both the Galway County & Connacht Provincial Teams for the Nationals, which will be held in Dungarvan, Waterford on December 6th. Mya Kelly, Kayla McKeon and Aiveen Curley all performed very well on the day. These six girls went on to win a silver medal in the team event which was a fantastic achievement and meant that all six girls qualified for the Cross Country Nationals.

Mark Kilkenny had a marvellous run in the u11 Boys 1500m, finishing in 11th position. He also received a Silver Galway County medal on the day in the county team event. Mark also made it on to both the Galway County & Connacht Provincial Teams in the National Cross Country Uneven Championships.

Shane Fitzpatrick and Conor Harley both ran in the u13 Boys 2500m, finishing in 6th and 7th place. This earned them both a Silver medal in the Galway County team event. They also qualified for the National Cross Country Uneven Championships.

Brian Burke had a super run in the u17 Boys 5000m. He finished in 8th position overall and received a Silver Galway County medal for the county team event. Brian also made it on both County & Connacht Provincial Teams in the National Cross Country Uneven Championships.

**"On behalf of the club, we would like to congratulate all of the runners on their splendid performances and we wish the ten children, who have qualified for the National Cross Country Championships the best of luck", Monica McKeon, Club PRO.**



# GAA UPDATE BY CIARA BERESFORD



**Staff Ruane Street League - Creagh Team**

**Back Row (L-R):** Darragh Kenny, Danny Byrne, Eoin Fenton, Anthony Curley, Jack Dillon, Donal Fenton

**Front Row (L-R):** Oisín Kenny, Davy Gavin, Padraig McHugh

## HURLING SEASON DRAWS TO A CLOSE

As the 2015 hurling season draws to a close, the club can feel very positive about where hurling is going in Ballinasloe. "We never had as many playing the sport as we have at the minute and the fruits of our labour are paying dividends", added Committee Member Christine Kenny.

Fielding from u6 to Junior B level has been very productive with almost every team featuring at semi-final stages and many reaching and winning their finals.

There were many highlights throughout the year such as the Mini All-Irelands, County Finals and a Connaught Final!

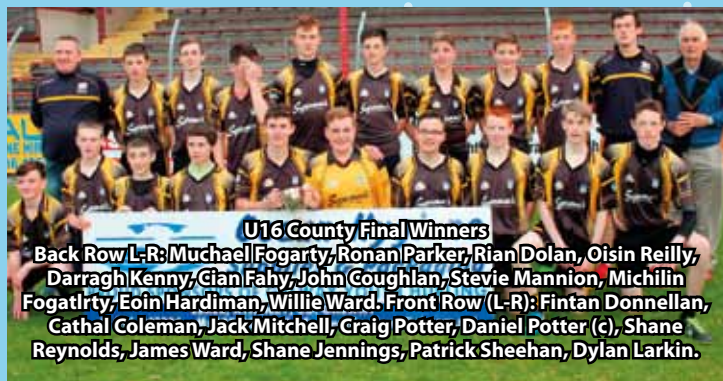
Up to u10 hurling is part of Go Games which is non-competitive and focuses on the fun element of the game, fostering the spirit of being a team member and gaining player

skills.

From u12 upwards, the emphasis is more focused on competition and Ballinasloe showed this year, that they can mix it with the best of them, winning county titles at u13, u16 and u21 and reaching semi-finals at u14, u15 and junior level.

This year saw the welcome revival of the Staff Ruane Street League which was a hugely popular event. Looking at the good natured rivalry between players, who usually played together, were playing on opposing sides and the enjoyment of the people on the side-lines, "No doubt this will be a fixture in our calendar going forward", mentioned Christine.

"Looking back on the season that has just drawn to a close, we can feel confident that hurling is in a good place. This year we have seen the result of the tireless work of the dedicated management teams and the committed players reap rewards. We also recognise the great work of the jersey washers, team drivers, sandwich makers and loyal supporters. Hurling in Ballinasloe really is a team effort by all involved and with this attitude, the future's looking bright", stated Christine.



**U16 County Final Winners**

**Back Row L-R:** Muchaell Fogarty, Ronan Parker, Rian Dolan, Oisín Reilly, Darragh Kenny, Cian Fahy, John Coughlan, Stevie Mannion, Michilin Fogatlrty, Eoin Hardiman, Willie Ward. **Front Row (L-R):** Fintan Donnellan, Cathal Coleman, Jack Mitchell, Craig Potter, Daniel Potter (c), Shane Reynolds, James Ward, Shane Jennings, Patrick Sheehan, Dylan Larkin.

## CAMOGIE

Cumann Camogaiochta, Beal Atha na Slua are drawing to the end of their season after a very successful year. The club competed in all age categories from u8 to junior. "We had teams playing at half time during Galway matches and players from the club representing our county at different age groups", mentioned Sinead Kennedy, Club Chairperson.

The club held fundraisers throughout the year from Progressive 25 and family fun days, to a table quiz and a race night with a difference, in the hope of receiving much needed funds for the club. "We would like to thank all the businesses in town who sponsored prizes and all those in our community who took part and

supported us", added Sinead. The club would also like to thank all businesses that provided sponsorship for team gear and those who allowed us to use their facilities for meetings.

"I would like to thank the committee for their hard work in keeping the club running - those who volunteered their time in organising fundraisers, the team managers and trainers, all of whom are so professional and did an amazing job with the different teams. It is a very time consuming role and takes a lot of commitment but it is worthwhile when you see the talented players coming through in the club", stated Sinead. "I would also like to thank the players who turn up for training and represent our club in matches. Camogie is a great game and being part of this club helps develop friendships for life."

The club have had a very successful year and are already planning to hopefully see the red and white having more success.



**Beal Atha na Slua Camogie u11 team on their recent victory over Kilconieron.**



**Ballinasloe Ladies u12 Football team who won the Shield in their League earlier this year by beating Loughrea. They also reached the final of the championship only to be narrowly beaten by Monivea-Abbeyknockmoy.**

**Back Row (L-R):** Paul Madden (trainer), Jemma Ward, Emma Mitchell, Shauna Mitchell, Orla Madden, Ruth Manning, Abbie Cunningham, Oriana Tyrrell, Aislinn Clifford, Katie Galvin, Katelyn Bradley and Stephen Kerr (Trainer). Missing from the photo is Ciara Daly.  
**Front Row (L-R):** Sarah-Jane Ruane, Lisa Neassens, Alana Cunningham, Nicole Ward, Hannah Russell, Roisin Fahy, Caoimhe Kennedy, Caoimhe Ni Tuairisg, Chloe Cox and Eilis Kerr.



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Tue 29th December: The 4 of Us

Fri 22nd January: Declan O'Rourke

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• Food Served Daily 9am-9pm







## TENNIS CLUB UPDATE

The Tennis Club's fundraising activities this year continued with a shop they opened during the Fair, located in the former Duane's Pharmacy. The shop sold a variety of produce including hot drinks, sandwiches and homemade cakes and buns.

The shop did very well and was supported by local people and visitors to the fair, and made a significant contribution to ongoing fundraising activities. The club would like to thank Joe Duane for his support with this venture. The club also ran their first Halloween Camps, which were well attended and only slightly affected by rain.

The club will shortly have their new website live - look out for details of their Christmas party.

### Ongoing club activities for the winter season include:

Junior Supervised Open Sessions - Sundays 12-1pm  
 Junior Coaching - Mondays 5-6pm  
 Adult Coaching - Mondays 6-7pm  
 Ladies Open Sessions - Tuesdays 7-9pm  
 Adult Mixed Open Session - Wednesdays & Fridays 7-9pm  
 Ladies and Gents Club Ladders - Ongoing  
 Junior and Adult Interclub Challenges - Ongoing  
 New members are most welcome, with annual membership fees at a reasonable price of €25 for adults, €15 for juniors/students and €40 for families.  
**For further information call Garry Zancanaro on 085 112 4197, Louise Doherty on 087 135 3751 or visit [www.facebook.com/bsloetennisclub](http://www.facebook.com/bsloetennisclub) or [www.ballinasloetennis.com](http://www.ballinasloetennis.com).**



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# BALLINASLOE RFC – WOMEN'S RUGBY

## BLAZING TRAILS! BY CIARA BERESFORD

In October 2012, only 12 girls representing Ballinasloe Rugby Club travelled to Buccaneers RFC to play rugby in a Connacht blitz.

Just over two years later, the club now have teams at a number of different age groups including Minis, u13's, u15's and u18's – almost 65 girls in total, playing rugby. Due to unprecedented success at underage levels, five of the u18 girls were recently awarded representative honours for Connacht u18 girls.

The Ballinasloe girl's rugby teams, from Mini's to the u18's are playing and hosting teams throughout Connacht. "The past two years, our teams have represented our province at Irish Senior Women's Internationals, Senior Connacht matches in the Sportsground, IRFU tournaments in the Aviva Stadium and the Umbrella 7's All Ireland Tournament" mentioned Patricia Tierney, Club Secretary.

As one of the fastest growing sports in Ireland, women's rugby is enjoying phenomenal growth in popularity, especially locally, with new members of all ages joining every week. The Mini's, u13's and u15's train every Saturday from 11.45am to 1pm and the u18's training on Tuesday evenings from 6-7pm and also Sunday mornings.

"We have girls from Kiltormer, Kilconnell, Aughrim, Mountbellew, New Inn, Taughmaconnell, Portumna and of course Ballinasloe, proudly playing rugby for our club. We welcome new members and no experience is required, come up and give it a try", added Patricia.

For further details and regular updates, visit their Facebook page at Ballinasloe Rugby Club. If you are interested in playing or getting involved, contact Declan Murphy 086 854 8046 or Trish Tierney 087 917 6541.



Girls Rugby Mini's Team



Girls Rugby u15's Team



Girls Rugby u18's Team

## Ballinasloe Livestock Mart

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**THURSDAY** Sheep Sale from 5.30pm



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## COOPER BRAND AMBASSADORS VISIT TOWN

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**The Cooper Brand originated in Canada in the 1960's, which originally specialised in Ice Hockey and Skateboarder helmets. The Cooper Brand was then bought in 2002 by Brendan Kelly and Ronan Lally.**

While many products are sold at Cooper, the most recognised product to date is the Cooper Hurling Helmet. It is the lightest and only adjustable hurling helmet on the market. The product is always player's choice and has been used in the game of hurling for over 50 years, "something our competitors cannot argue with", added Ronan, Manager Director of Cooper.

"Last weekend we had our three brand ambassadors here at our work place doing a photo shoot for our new range of Cooper Snakeskin Base Layers", mentioned Ronan. The base layers are used by athletes for training or matches, with a function to increase blood flow through the body.

The three ambassadors include Noel McGrath, All-Ireland medallist from Tipperary who recently battled with testicular cancer, but thankfully made a quick recovery for this year's All-Ireland Semi Final against Galway - "A sight which everyone in Croke Park applauded as he took the field", stated Ronan. Next is 2014 Hurler of the Year, Richie Hogan, who has gained seven All-Ireland Senior Hurling Titles throughout his career and is the Marquee Name in the Game of Hurling presently.

Last but not least is Jason Flynn, a 21 year old Galway Senior Hurler, who we recently caught up with in Ballinasloe. Jason grew up in the parish of Ballinakill and went to school in the Mercy College Woodford, where he completed his leaving cert. As well as county

hurling, Jason plays for Tommy Larkins GAA club. "I started playing Hurling ever since I was born really. I had a hurl in my hand at the age of two", added Jason. "My family played a huge part in my development at a very young age. All my siblings played hurling and camogie, so when I was growing up everything we did, we did with a hurley."

Jason has gained many achievements through his hurling career. In 2010, he won and captained the club u16 team to a County Title, as well as winning the Minor A Championship in 2012, where he was Man of the Match. "Winning with your club is always a great feeling because you grew up and played with those lads from the age of eight", said Jason. He also won a Minor All-Ireland title with Galway in 2011, which was a huge achievement at such a young age.

Jason has been using a white Cooper Hurling Helmet ever since he was 10 years old. "I hugely looked up to my older brother, Paul, who also wore a white helmet - so I got one to be just like him", he added. "Cooper has that extra bit of style and comfort, which you don't get with other brands. And most importantly, they're very safe."

Jason's debut for the Galway senior team showed his great free taking ability throughout this year's Hurling Championship with a stand out point from play in the final. Although Jason is still at a young age, like every other hurler, he dreams of winning an All-Ireland Senior medal - "Losing one this year was very tough in every way, but hopefully I learn from it and gain plenty of experience for years to come."

Contact Ronan: 087 2369665





# KARATE CLUB KICK STARTS A NEW SEASON!

BY CIARA BERESFORD

**Ballinasloe Karate club classes take place every Tuesday and Thursday at 7pm in Gaelscoil Uí Cheithearnaigh, Ballinasloe. The club was established in 1976 in Ballinasloe and celebrates its 40th year in 2016.**

The Club is the headquarters (Honbu) for Itosu-Kai Karatedo Ireland, Karate & Kobudo Association (IKKI). The IKKI is affiliated nationally to the national governing body for karate in Ireland (ONAKAI), and internationally to Canada Itosu-Kai, Japan Karatedo Itosu-Kai, the IKF and Ryukyu Kobudo Kongo-Ryu, Japan. It is these affiliations that keep the association busy and on its toes!

Besides karate classes - instructors, coaches and squads put in a lot of work behind the scenes attending extra training sessions, courses and competitions. This year, the IKKI held its spring national championships

in the Shearwater Hotel. The club had some phenomenal results with Marcus Doherty, Lisa Casey ranked to 1st Dan Degree in Kobudo while Pamela Nee and David Feury ranked to 2nd.

The IKKI also won the Ballinasloe Golf Club Inter Club Challenge Cup, with many thanks to those who supported the IKKI team. There have been numerous national competitions with IKKI students taking top honours. The national junior kata championships, with squads from 32 different countries were recently held in the Shearwater Hotel. IKKI took the most medals of any other competing association.

This year, IKKI also competed in the Budo Nord Championships in Dublin with huge success, again taking home a large cache of medals.

For more information on the IKKI Association, visit their website on [www.itosukaiireland.org](http://www.itosukaiireland.org).



This year there were new entries to the IKKI blackbelt ranks with some instructors attaining 2nd and 3rd Dan Degrees.



Karen Dolphin (IKKI) represented Ireland at the European Games in Baku. Karen represented her country and association to the best of her ability.



## FIT TOWN PROJECT LOOKING FOR SIGN UP! BY CIARA BERESFORD

**Calling all Clubs, Groups, Schools, Organisations and Businesses - Ballinasloe has entered the race for the Fit Town (Pobail Aclai) title 2016!**

The competition, which is ran by the Galway Sports Partnership, was developed in 2015 to encourage communities to come together with a view of increasing participation in physical activity and building on the good work that is already taking place within the town.

**Fit Town Team will schedule activities over a six week period from February 1st to March 13th 2016, with the intention of targeting specific groups and encouraging them to get involved. The format for the programme is non prescriptive and allows for scope in how/when events are organised within the timeframe. Depending on the activity it may be more suitable to schedule a one day workshop or a more regular weekly format such as 'each Thursday evening at 7pm' over the six week period.**

Whatever the activity, "we would encourage participating organisations and clubs to try to ensure it is goal focused and realistic - e.g. swim a length in six weeks, dance five steps, couch to 5km walk or run, pre-season training for field sports. Depending on the uptake, this may also be an opportunity to learn other life skills such as self-defence, water safety, bicycle maintenance and more." Said Organiser Marian Ruane.

"This is a perfect initiative for the town to work together and to further strengthen the community. Many of us know of people who, for so many reasons find themselves isolated from their community - the Fit Town project will provide them with a chance to 'reconnect', with the added benefit of improving overall health and wellbeing" says Marian.

If you/your organisation are interested in getting involved in the programme or have any questions about the project simply email them on [fitballinasloe@gmail.com](mailto:fitballinasloe@gmail.com) or alternatively contact a member of the Fit Town Team directly (below). You can also follow the project on twitter @fitballinasloe and on Facebook at Fit Town Ballinasloe for updates.

**Fit Town Team: Marion Ruane 087-6261709, Noel Mannion 086-2528110, Lyn Donnelly 0909646516**

**School Representatives: Eoin Hurley Garbally College Laura Finn Ard Scoil Mhuire.**



Members of Swimming Club, Athletic Club, Chess Club & a local talented artist who all represented Galway county in the Community Games National Finals

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## GREAT SUCCESS FOR CYCLING CLUB'S FIRST YEAR

BY CIARA BERESFORD

Ballinasloe Cycling Club is almost one year old, and what a first year they've had! The club consists of 93 members and have completed many sportive's, along with their own charity cycle 'Tour D'shams', which had 50km and 100km routes.

"The event raised funds of over €2000 for East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support Centre, which was a huge achievement for the club in our first year", John Donnelly, Club Treasurer.

The club also encouraged many people to progress their fitness levels and to reach their cycling goals throughout the year, with the beginners classes teaching the basic skills involved in cycling both on their own and in groups.

At the moment the club has five cycles a week with something to suit all abilities. "We are now taking members for 2016. Being a member of the club and Cycling Ireland you get insured every time you hop on your bike with your helmet. We have up to five organised cycles a week and for as little as €1 a week, gets you into a club that is fun, active and will get you fit and happy" added John.

The club also provide kits of jerseys, shorts and jackets, so you will be seen on the roads at all times. "If anyone would like to join or is looking for more information, please contact us on [ballinasloecyclingclub@gmail.com](mailto:ballinasloecyclingclub@gmail.com)" mentioned John

"We will have beginner cycles starting again in January for the new year, so get out get active and get cycling" he concluded.

## CANDIDATE FOR GALWAY ROSCOMMON CLLR. MAURA HOPKINS

Wishing all readers  
a happy Christmas  
and best wishes  
for 2016



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The Tour D'Shams charity cycle and our pink spin presented a cheque for €2050 to East Galway & Midlands cancer support in Brackernagh.



# THE SCHOOLS FOLKLORE COLLECTION

BY BARRY LALLY

In the years preceding the Second World War the Irish Folklore Commission launched a project whereby pupils in the country's primary schools were asked to record items of folklore gathered from older members of their communities. Known as the Schools Collection, it reflected the sectarian and rural bias of its time in as much as only Catholic-run schools were invited to participate, while Dublin City schools were also excluded.

Material was grouped under 55 headings, with each school at liberty to choose as many or as few topics as it wished. The initiative was not, however, unanimously welcomed by our literary elite. For instance, the poet Patrick Kavanagh facetiously suggested that the money might be better spent supplying the bards of Ireland with free cigarettes!

It is now possible by going online to peruse the local results of the scheme at [dúchas.ie/en](http://dúchas.ie/en). Here it becomes apparent that of the two Ballinasloe schools involved, the Boys' National and the Convent of Mercy, what the latter produced was by far the more interesting and detailed with 15 topics covered. Curiously, while all the sources are meticulously recorded, not one of the contributing pupils is mentioned.

The Boys' School chose 11 headings with 36 pupils named as contributors, of whom Joe Higgins of St. Joseph's Place is believed to be the sole survivor.

Willie Ward, the headmaster, wrote a perceptive introduction tracing the beginnings of national schooling in Ballinasloe to a location at the junction of Bridge Street and Main Street on a site at present occupied by the Oat Gallery apartment building. Later the school moved to what is now Jubilee Street before once more re-locating in 1910 to rooms at the back of the Town Hall.

Ward believed that the dearth of local knowledge evident in his pupils' submissions was probably due to the fact that the movement of population in towns was much more frequent than in

rural areas. "In the surrounding countryside," he wrote, "there are farms which have been in possession of the ancestors of the present owners for many generations, while in business premises in the town very few second generation owners exist. This accounts to a large extent for the fact that tradition is barren as far as Ballinasloe town is concerned." In support of his argument he furnished a comprehensive list of 130 local businesses, only 17 of which were operated by a second generation.



A reading of some of the pupils' contributions prompts us to question the relationship between folklore and history. To take two examples, one boy writes that a Fr. Burke on a sick call on Christmas Eve in 1864 was drowned in the canal, while another relates that a priest drowned in the canal in the 1890s collecting for charity on a Thursday night.

Fatal accidents at the Canal Basin were not uncommon, but there seems to be no evidence that a clergyman named Burke ever drowned there. Both pieces very likely had their origin in the following account based on a newspaper item dating from 1888:

A watchman at Ballinasloe Gasworks reported hearing screams coming from the general direction of the adjoining Canal Basin sometime between 11.00p.m. and midnight on a date in January. The following morning a body was recovered from the water and taken to the Workhouse on Station Road where an inquest was later told that the deceased had been identified as Thomas Ryan, a 68-year-old former Catholic priest, a native of Loughrea, though not a member of the Clonfert diocesan clergy. He had done a stint on the American Mission, and on his return to Ireland had been silenced some nine years before his tragic demise because of chronic drunkenness. Ryan had recently arrived in Ballinasloe, taking lodgings in the Market Square, and had spent the day prior to his death cadging drink in local public houses.

The comparison here between folklore and fact serves to remind us that the former is not history. What history involves is the reconstruction and interpretation of the past from its documentary remains, whereas folklore is concerned with communal memory, and memory, as we know, tends to blur and distort past events and to view them through the prism of present-day preoccupations and cultural values. Eighty years ago a story involving discreditable conduct by a cleric would not have been entertained. Should we then be surprised that the sad and sordid fate of a silenced priest had undergone a process of sanitization and transmutation by the time the event was recorded by schoolboys in the 1930s?

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# THE EARL AND THE SHOWGIRL

BY DECLAN KELLY

**William Frederick le Poer Trench, future fifth Earl of Clancarty, was barely 21 years old when he married Belle Bilton, a music hall dancer, in 1889. The marriage caused a sensation at the time and is worth recalling both as an example of true love and as a reminder of a remarkable lady.**

The fourth Earl was incandescent with rage and as the law of entail forbade him from disinheriting his son completely, he is said to have begun to have the timber on his estates felled in order to make them as worthless as possible. William Frederick le Poer Trench was forced to live off his wife's music hall earnings with one newspaper noting that he was "no more capable of earning his living for himself than a cow is capable of composing a comic opera". This process was halted when the ill-tempered fourth earl, collapsed and died in his library in London in May 1891.



earl was driven to Coorheen House in Loughrea to remonstrate with his stubborn mother.

The new couple were held in disdain by Galway society to the point that at a hunt ball in 1893, most ladies left the floor when Frederick and his Countess began to dance. Despite this, Belle quickly became a firm favourite with the people of Ballinasloe and stories of her kindness to local people who were ill and her charity to the less well off were in circulation until recent years. She even had her effigy cast by the wax museum in Dublin and won over the respect and affection of Queen Alexandra, the wife of King Edward VII. Belle was not long for this world, however, and after suffering from cancer for some years, died aged 39 on the last day of December 1906 at Garbally House, some 104 years ago!

**As her funeral slowly made its way from Garbally to the place of interment in the precincts of St John's Church on Knockadoon, the hearse was filled to capacity with floral tributes and the tenantry of the demesne bore the coffin the entire**

**The story handed down by all generations of townspeople tells how the new Earl and Countess arrived at Garbally and finding the gates locked against them, were obliged to scale the walls. It may seem unlikely, yet Belle Bilton was a remarkable lady who later reportedly performed a dance for the gentry of Connaught at Garbally House where she raised her right leg to the point where the big toe almost touched the lowermost light of a chandelier. They were scandalised and she was delighted.**

Being light on her feet and a stage acrobat of sorts, she would hardly have found the scaling of a wall too troublesome. Matters did not end there and the keys of Garbally were only handed over after the fifth

**journey. Every business was shuttered and virtually every man, woman and child in the district lined the streets to bow, curtsy, sob or throw flowers as the coffin passed. The outpouring of grief was both genuine and extraordinary and despite Belle's humble origins, those who followed the coffin included Lord Ashtown, Lord Clonbrock, the local magistracy and every merchant of note.**

When the Gaelic League came to rename Victoria Street in 1946, they opted for 'Duggan Avenue' in honour of the revered Bishop of Clonfert Dr Patrick Duggan. Had they chosen to rename it in honour of Belle Bilton, who lies within Knockadoon's apex, there would surely have been few objections to honouring the memory of the simple but abundantly generous showgirl who danced her way into local hearts.

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## Ballinasloe History Walk

**1** – Start at the statue known as *The Man with the Horse*, where Main Street joins St. Michael's Square. From the crossing near the statue, continue by turning right onto Main Street. The prosperity of Ballinasloe in Georgian times can be seen in the scale and classical style of the buildings here. A fine group of four frontages stand across from the statue of The Man with the Horse. With shops and pubs on the ground floor for the most part, these Main Street premises have several floors above.

**2** – Walking along Main Street, lift your eyes above the shop frontages for one of the town's characteristic sights. There are the Diocletian windows that grace several facades. They are from the years after 1805 when the 2nd Earl was in charge. A window of this sort is formed under a semi-circular arch with two upright divisions so that the whole opening is divided into three parts.

**3** – As you stand at the meeting point of Bridge Street and Main Street, you will see the Victorian frontage of a commercial premises, originally the Masonic Hall. Next to it stands a classical looking, beautifully-crafted, early 19th century stone house, currently a guest house. Beside these is a tall, fine stone-fronted classical mansion, which is now the Bank of Ireland. It was originally the town mansion of the Lord of all of Ballinasloe, the Earl of Clancarty. A friend of king George IV, the Earl was one of the architects of the resistance to the emperor Napoleon. It could be said that he was the person to whom most credit is due for the layout, growth and architectural character of Ballinasloe as we see it today.

**4** – At the end of Main Street, head along Bridge Street, then turn to the right to the pathway which runs to the riverscape where you can see channels flowing through the several arches of the long stone bridge over the river Suck, one of the town's most precious monuments. The Bridge has been in continuous use since the 16th century and its extension in 1754 prepared it structurally to carry even the heaviest juggernauts of today.

**5** – Walk through to the far end of the park; you will approach St Michael's Church (1852-58) that stands in a commanding position over the Square. Its architect was J.J. McCarthy, a follower of Augustus Pugin (famed for other Neo-Gothic churches in Ireland) – and the design is said to have been revised by Pugin himself. Inside are many fine stained glass window. Of particular quality are those of St. Patrick and St. Rose of Lima, of 1925, by the renowned Dublin Stained glass artist, Harry Clarke and The Raising of the daughter of Jairus by Patrick Pollen, inserted in 1958.

**6** – From St. Michael's Church now walk up St. Michael's Square back towards the Man with the Horse Statue. Take a left into Dunlo Street, an important street in the history of the town, which contains, together with other buildings of about the same date, the late-Georgian Garda Station. The Station is towards the far end of the street, on the right hand side. Also on this street, over Dolan's Electrical Shop, you can see another fine example of Diocletian windows.

**7** – Halfway up Dunlo Street, turn right up Duggan Street, which will take you to St. John's Church (Church of Ireland, 1843). It dominates the vast Fair Green which becomes a hive of activity during one week every year when up to 100,000 people throng to the October fair. Look out over the Fair Green and admire one of the grandest freestanding classical monuments in the region. Dedicated to Charles Le Poer Trench, it was designed in the Neo-Greek style by the English architect George Papworth (1781-1855). A mile past this monument on the Main Galway road, South West of the town, the Earl of Clancarty's former country house is situated, where imposing gates mark the entrance to Garbally Court. It has been a school since 1923.

Walk down Church Hill onto Society Street and turn left, arriving at the Courthouse on the right. Society Street, like Main Street, was the 19th century location for the professional classes. As well as The Courthouse, it contains the former Bridewell (or gaol) from the 1840s. Further along this street, Ballinasloe Railway Station is a must. Constructed in 1851, it is a Neo-Gothic limestone tour-de-force and a fine example of the quality of rural Irish railway architecture in the mid-19th century.



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