

# BALLINASLOE LIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Issue 03 August/Sept 2011



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# BALLINASLOE LIFE

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Issue 03 August/Sept 2011

## RÉAMHRÁ



*Back end of the summer is here, Race week behind us and the countdown to the Back-to-School frenzy and the build up to the Great October Fair Week. How fast the seasons tumble in front of us? Since our last outing we have seen our stock on the traded markets being demised as Junk Bonds but given the national media's wallowing in our economic misery, since the poor late Brian Lenihan received the finance portfolio 42 months ago, a small but discernable change in the mood music seems to be occurring, with the interest rate reductions and other economic data – allegedly ceasing its free fall.*

*The local picture seems not as uplifting. The recession, unemployment, changing shopping patterns to consumer behaviour, the pull of the great Multiples, the heavy discounting have all contributed to the demise of usual buzz of our principle streets and town centre.*

*A new group has emerged to confront the decline and to work together to improve things. This has to be welcome news. However we all have a responsibility to support our own efforts and businesses when we can. There are no under age team jerseys in any code sponsored by Dublin or Athlone stores or firms – it is the local business community who do the lion's share of local lifting. A further opportunity for dialogue has been given for more consultation on the massive new streetscape enhancement programme that will radically alter the presentation of the town for a generation. It can't ONLY be about the number of trees, flower shrubs and car parking spaces, it has also to be about what are key signature elements this heritage town has; that it wishes to highlight to local and visitor alike? It has to linkup the town pedestrianly for the browser and visitor and it must be able to combine that with key elements of a Provincial Market and Service Town.*

*Any town in the teeth of the economic malaise ought to be chomping at the bit to creatively and imaginatively invest the €2.4 million with minimum disruption to the fragile business that is there and with a keen eye on future trends.*

*Enjoy what may hopefully be yet an Indian Summer!*

*Le gach Dea Ghuí  
Colm Croffy, Editor*



*Since our last edition the weather has not been kind to us but we have seen some positive economic signs emerging. There will be plenty of activity over the next few months on the GAA front and hopefully we will have something to cheer about locally as we enter the second half of the Summer. No doubt our Community Games representatives will also do us proud.*

*From a Business perspective there is a need to have a sense of greater loyalty to our local entities as we need to support one another to get through these difficult times. The Enterprise Centre under the Management of Helen Kelly is there to help and support new and existing businesses and once again I encourage you to visit our facilities in Parkmore which is being upgraded on a monthly basis.*

*Please continue to send your articles for inclusion to [info@ballinalsoenterprisecentre.ie](mailto:info@ballinalsoenterprisecentre.ie) We must strive to work together for the betterment of our Community.*

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

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# Ballinasloe's New Town Mayor



**Writes Colm Croffy**

**First elected in 2004 and subsequently in the 2009 local elections, Brackernagh native Michael Kelly has been keenly involved in local community issues and organisations from his earliest years.**

Currently living in Derrymullen with his wife Anne and daughter Niamh, Mike was first elected Mayor in 2007 and this summer was voted the town's first citizen for the second time, having previously served as deputy Mayor on two occasions.

Practically a full time representative, a baker by trade, Mike's hobbies span from sports & culture, with him involved in many a Relays, Ballinasloe Musical and Ballinasloe Panto production in various shows and roles down through the years.

He believes that his role as Mayor is primarily to promote Ballinasloe in a

positive way, promoting all the town has to offer to attract investment and tourism, while representing the community, acknowledging their achievements and the valuable contribution that all groups and organisations have to make to Ballinasloe life.

Since first elected to the Town Council in 2004 the most significant changes he has seen are an openness and willingness of organisations to work together. Ballinasloe Town Council has an open door approach with a genuine partnership evolving to harness all of our energies for the development of the town.

Michael believes the most positive aspects of our town would have to include our sporting facilities – with the opening soon of the new €1.2 million state of the art athletics track and community pitch, our fantastic educational facilities, our hospitals, our excellent hotels, varied shopping facilities, the marina and the natural resource that is the Suck, continued awareness and engagement

with our tidy towns efforts and all the groups involved in protecting the environment and enhancing the visual impact of our town.

For the Mayor, the biggest challenges facing Ballinasloe are unemployment, the reduction of state services to families and the elderly, the protection of our medical services, capturing back some of the passing trade from the M6 and the development of Ballinasloe as a niche gateway town as part of Tourism West.

He is confident that the proposed Ballinasloe Town Enhancement Scheme, together with the water and sewage upgrade, presents a unique opportunity, in the current economic environment, to increase the attractiveness of the town centre as a place to live, work and do business.

He would also like to see the improved marketing and promotion of our festivals, both the Summer Fest and Great October Fair, along with national & regional conferences. Ballinasloe is the most westerly connected town on Europe's largest waterway, Shannon / Erne, which needs to be promoted and marketed in partnership with the Town Council, Waterways Ireland and Failte Ireland.

Ballinasloe has always had a strong affiliation with the Arts and we also need to promote and support the proposed Town Hall Theatre development as a showcase for the Arts in Ballinasloe.

Asking him aloud what way will you consider the year to be successful? He replies with enthusiasm:

“The commencement of the Town Enhancement Scheme, the maintaining of all existing services at Portiuncula Hospital, the legacy of the flooding issues for all our residents resolved, job creation with the support of state agencies and the Enterprise Centre, the opening of the new Athletics track and Community pitch along with communities and organisations working together with a common purpose.”

Finally for Michael the hosting of the third biennial Mayor's Awards Scheme acknowledging the voluntary effort of groups and individuals, would be a fitting closure to his year.

How does he see the future of the town in 5 years time? “I am confident that our town, in five years time, will be a more attractive and vibrant place to live, work, do business or visit, with a proud community continuing to work together for the betterment of all.”

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# At the Cutting Edge of Childcare



## Writes Ruairi Moore

**A former psychiatric hospital might not be the first place to spring to mind as the ideal location for a children's daycare and Montessori school, but the open and brightly-decorated space that is the interior of the Tiny Tots Crèche is much-changed from how it must have looked twenty years ago, before the run-down shell of St. Enda's Ward became the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre.**

"We moved here in 2003, and with the help of a few available grants and the support of Ballinasloe Area Community Development (BACD), we were able to remodel the building the way we wanted," explains crèche owner Jennifer Sheridan.

Jennifer began her career in childcare back in 1999, when she opened her own daycare centre in a house in Woodlawns, Ballinasloe. Plagued by issues of planning permission and limitations in space, Jennifer was eager to move her enterprise elsewhere, and when the opportunity arose, she leaped upon it.

"BACD were very active, trying to rent units and get people involved. They didn't have the money at the time to renovate,

so the agreement was that I would take over this large portion if I could get funding to renovate it myself."

And so she did, creating in the process a unique and safe space for the young children she cares for, as well as employment opportunities for the six fully-trained childcare specialists who have been with her since the crèche's inception.

Far more expansive than it appears from the outside, Tiny Tots Crèche boasts room after room of kaleidoscopic design, each packed with toys and learning materials specific to the various age groups Jennifer caters for. There are the Yellow, Green, and Purple Rooms, which house children aged 1-2, 2-3, and 3-5 respectively, as well as two bedrooms, a dedicated kitchen, office, changing room, bathroom, and a beautiful enclosed yard outside. "It's just a great location, nice and safe, with fabulous grounds."

While the children's day is structured around nutrition and play (child-led rather than adult-directed, Jennifer is careful to point out), the programme at Tiny Tots includes a huge focus on early learning. A combination of Montessori, CETS and ECCE learning schemes, the curriculum is quite broad, but it is not what the children learn that Jennifer places store in so much as how they learn it. "It's really the social development that matters. The teacher

is going to teach them their ABC's and 123's regardless, but it's being able to have the attention span to sit and listen, or the confidence to speak up when asked: that's the kind of thing that will stand to them."

And what do parents think of Jennifer's approach? "I think parents are much more involved now, they recognise the chance they have for their kids to learn through play at this early stage. We try to take time out each day to talk to parents, and we send home a daily scrapbook on what they did that day, what they learned, where they went, what they ate, that kind of thing. As the primary carers, it's important that they have an input."

Far from handicapped by the economic limits many parents face today, Jennifer has adapted to the climate in a way that allows her to maintain business and childcare to a high standard.

"We offer a full day, and either morning or afternoon sessions. More and more people are working flexi or part-time, so we try to accommodate the needs of the parent." Fresh from the graduation of her latest class, Jennifer admits that it can be difficult to see the children go each year. "You spend all day with these kids, some of them for years, so you would miss them!"

For more information on Tiny Tot's Crèche and Montessori, contact us at **Tel: 090 964 4480** or visit [www.tinytotscreche.com](http://www.tinytotscreche.com)

# Cloud Computing

**Writes Ciaran Doherty**

Moore's Law dictates that technology is accelerating at such a rate that it grows twice as powerful each year, and is rapidly changing the way we live. Easy to believe, when the digitalization of information makes knowledge accessible to millions at the touch of a button, but this digitalization has its own problems: Have you ever stored thousands of holiday snaps on a single card only to lose it, or experienced the frustration of accidentally tapping the wrong button and seeing an entire day's work become a blank screen? Many have, but just as it frustrates us, so too does the fast-flowing evolution of technology offer us solutions. Ciaran Doherty of PC Laptops, Ballinasloe, talks us through it.

"The term cloud computing can best be described as using the Internet as one big hard drive.

Instead of using the computer or laptop on your desk to access your programmes, files, pictures, music etc. locally, they would instead be used as a conduit to access and store all this information on a giant virtual hard-drive or server somewhere else via the Internet. This virtual server or hard drive can be located anywhere in the world and is accessed through any web-browser (e.g. Internet Explorer) from your computer, laptop or smartphone. These devices would therefore only need to have basic specifications, just enough to access the Internet.

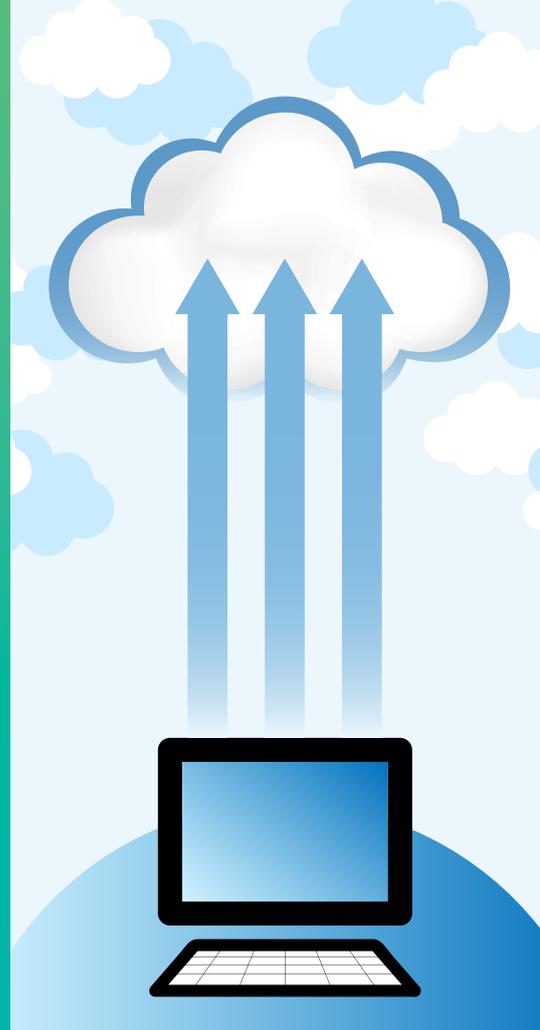
Another way to look at it is to imagine it being like the electricity grid you use every day instead of having a generator at home. In many ways cloud computing

will make purchasing computer software for your computer or laptop at home or work unnecessary. The idea is that you will connect to it via the Internet instead.

If you lose your laptop or your computer is broken, all your programmes and data will still be safe on-line on the virtual hard drive i.e. in the 'cloud'. You will be able to access all this information from anywhere in the world once you have an Internet connection. With the advent of high-speed broadband, accessing this information will be just as fast as using your existing hard drive at home or work. With cloud computing there is a significant work load shift. Local computers or laptops no longer have to do the 'heavy lifting' when it comes to running programmes and processing data. The network of computers or virtual hard drives that make up the 'cloud' will handle things instantly.

If cloud computing still sounds strange to you, chances are you have been using it already. If you have a Google or Hotmail or store photos/music on-line for example, then you have been using the 'cloud'. All your computing needs for work or pleasure will eventually be Internet based, in the 'cloud'. Cloud computing is at an early stage but it will encompass a range of services that will be subscription-based, pay-as-you-go or free.

The benefits of cloud computing are many, but it is not without its risks. The concept is built around an assumption of a permanent high-speed internet connection for every user. But in the real world it is not unusual to lose your Internet connection for a variety of reasons and therefore lose access to all



of your data. Everything would be on-line. Also, you are relying on someone else's computers all the time and this has both security and loss of control risks.

However, with giant companies like Google, Apple and Amazon, to mention a few, having already launched cloud computing services, the technological forecast says that cloud cover is here to stay."

For further info contact Ciaran at Tel: 090 9642221  
Mobile: 087 2209967

## New Management Team at Shearwater



### Head Chef: Johnny Harvey

The Carlton Shearwater Hotel is delighted to introduce their newly appointed Head Chef, Ballinasloe native Johnny Harvey. Beginning his career in Haydens Hotel, Johnny moved to the Rivercourt in Killkenny as a senior chef de partie, before spending 2 years becoming the sous chef in the Slieve Russell in Cavan. Johnny returned to Ballinasloe in 2006 where he took the position of head chef in the Moycarn Lodge before joining the Carlton in April 2008 as senior sous chef and has spent 3 years working under the guidance of the late Andrew Ryan. Johnny is excited to take on the challenge of running this extremely busy kitchen and is looking forward to the launch of the Carlton's new "Marina Restaurant".



### General Manager: Martin Daly

Over the last two months Martin Daly has been settling into his new role the new General Manager at the Carlton Shearwater Hotel & C Spa. Bringing with him over 20 years experience won in senior positions in a number of Ireland's best known hotels, such as the Athlone Springs Hotel, the Bridge House Hotel, and Slieve Russell Hotel.

# New Business Alliance Forged

**Writes Ruairi Moore**

*This summer saw a giant leap forward in the relationship between the town's commercial businesses, the Chamber of Commerce and the Town council with the formation of a group designed to specifically champion the cause of small business in the downturn.*

*The Ballinasloe Business Alliance was set up to discuss and address the difficulties being faced by small local businesses and to put in place proactive plans and ideas to increase the commercial activity in the town centre.*

*Chairman Dave O'Connor of Costcutters in St. Michael's Square explains the catalyst incident behind the set up.*

*"When the recent roadworks on the bridge ran over-schedule, blocking access to Main St. for days, we noticed that business really began to suffer in the town centre. A group of the owners and managers of the streets businesses concerned, came together to ensure something like that wouldn't happen again."*

*The Alliance, which consists of over 120 businesses from the town centre and beyond, went on to engage on the Draft Plan Town's Street Enhancement Scheme, succeeding in deferring a Council vote and establishing an avenue of dialogue with the Town Council and Chamber of Commerce which will see greater communication between the groups concerned in future decisions affecting the layout of the town centre.*

*But the BBA will not limit their focus to just the enhancement scheme and ensuring that the town centre can carry out*



*commercial and traffic requirements that will underpin retail activity as opposed to derail it.*

*"We'd like to capitalise on the energy generated here. One issue that had a huge impact on business was the flooding in 2009; we need to put measures in place to prevent that from happening again." With approximately 13 premises having shut down in the centre this past year alone, Dave feels that positive action is a must, and urges any businesses to attend the regular meetings of the Alliance which will be called over the next weeks, as the Alliance becomes a more formalised business association. The group are also finalising an application to Fergal Quinn's new TV series for enhancing and rejuvenating Town Centres.*

*The BBA Officers are Chairman Dave O'Connor, Secretary Mairéad Barry of Astara Beauty Salon, and Treasurer Jackie Dolan of J&S Photography. For more information about meetings, contact Mairéad on 0879770983 or email [ballinasloebusalliance@gmail.com](mailto:ballinasloebusalliance@gmail.com)*

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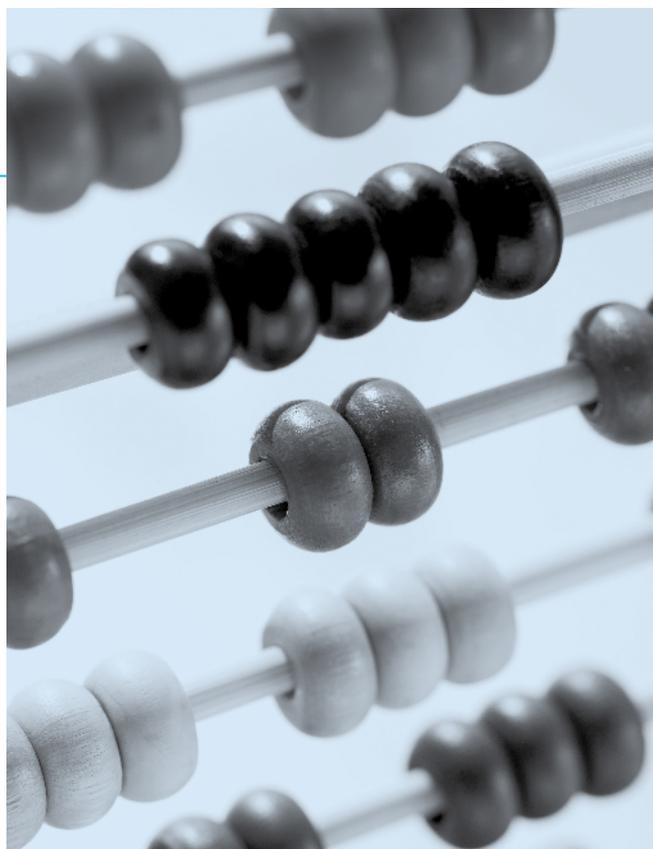
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## An Táin Owner Wins National Retail Award

Writes Barry Blaine

One half of the business partnership that spearheaded the investment and management of the very successful An Tain Bar in St. Michael's Square, recently became the proud winner of the Kitchen Retailer Awards. John Blaine has been involved in the Kitchen business for over 10 years as a retailer, having had a background in retail. Originally from Mackney, John and Declan Colleran of Birchgrove purchased Jenkins Pub in the Square in the late 90s and transformed the operation into the Award Winning Venue it is today. Both Declan (who manages a Car Rental Company in Shannon) and John maintained their separate business interests and John's sister Anne Marie is the premises full time Manager. John's Galway kitchen company Surreal Designs, recently beat off competition from all over Ireland to win the coveted "Showroom of the Year" award at the Kitchen Retailer Ireland Awards which were announced during a glittering black tie event in the Four Seasons Hotel in Dublin last month.

Founded in 2002, the showroom has long been regarded in the industry as being one of the finest kitchen showrooms in Ireland and this was officially recognised last week when owner John Blaine collected his award. The showroom was complimented for its "innovative layout and inspirational designs" which are showcased in a variety of styles from



contemporary to country chic using the very best of German engineering and innovation.

"We are delighted to have won the Showroom of the Year award. The nomination and subsequent win were the result of many years of work in perfecting our showroom and gearing it towards our client needs, ever changing to reflect ever changing demands of our clientele. The award will be particularly important in encouraging people to visit our showroom and especially those who are considering travelling from far away as it assures them they will not be disappointed when they arrive."

Surreal Designs are located in the Briarhill Business Park, Galway. For more information visit the website at [www.surrealdesigns.ie](http://www.surrealdesigns.ie) or Call 091 764682.

# 180 People Now Employed at Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre

Writes Ruairi Moore

Stories of entrepreneurial success have been few and far between among this year's headlines. With the country still in the throes of an economy wrecked by massive debt and over-expenditure, it's no surprise that organisations have decided to focus on downscaling rather than developing new projects. But one group in Ballinasloe is doing just that.

The Ballinasloe Area Community Development group was set up with the goal of creating sustainable employment within the community by promoting enterprise and supporting projects that encourage investment into the Ballinasloe area. Founded in 1999, the not-for-profit company's first act was to purchase the building that was to become the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre, once St. Enda's psychiatric ward.

"The last few years have hopefully taken most of the psychiatric hospital feel out of the place," laughs centre manager Helen Kelly, in her small office adjoining the newly-renovated canteen. As well they should have, with over €330,000 having been invested in the past three years towards making the building the safe, modern and comfortable office space that it is today. On moving in, BACD Ltd was faced with the unenviable prospect of bringing the building to a habitable standard.

"A lot of renovations had been undertaken by the time I joined the company over 3 years ago, Helen recalls, however, we've also carried out many further capital projects since then. We had to widen the entrance way, as well as replacing all of the internal doors and some of the windows, to meet fire safety standards and increase energy efficiency." Further renovations included the installation of a functioning water tank on top of the building, increasing car parking space and extensive electrical work. The next major and hopefully final capital project is to repair and insulate the very large roof of the building.

## But where do these funds come from?

"We've received financial support from a lot of organisations and initiatives, including Galway Rural Development, Galway City & County Enterprise Board, Galway County Council, Enterprise



Ireland, Ballinasloe RAPID, and partners Ballinasloe Credit Union as well as Creagh Community Development Council. We simply could not have done it without their assistance and are very grateful for their continued support"

Though BACD Ltd. are occasionally criticised for a lack of visibility in the local community, Helen is confident that this view will change in the next months as renovations at the Enterprise Centre near completion and the company shifts a greater amount of its focus outwards, towards all local businesses great and small. "We're very active around the town," Helen maintains, "though people may not realise it all the time."

True enough, as the past few years have seen BACD and The Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre play an instrumental role in bringing events such as the BEST Competition, an entrepreneurial award for secondary students, to the town. They were also involved in the Fair & Festival Fashion Entrepreneur Competition last year and became the co-ordinator for relief efforts during the floods of 2009. In addition 'The Ballinasloe Life Magazine' is the most recent initiative of BACD and is proving to be a positive showcase for the town.

The centre also regularly hosts various events, from Skillnet seminars to coffee and networking mornings. A big project that Helen is currently involved in is the development of a Ballinasloe Listing, a comprehensive listing of email addresses for different organisations throughout the town. "It will act as an email networking service. This service will enable any business in the area to email The Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre with details of an upcoming event or a special offer, and we will forward that information

to over 500 businesses and organisations in Ballinasloe, explains Helen. There are a lot of small businesses and services in the area that local people are simply not aware of, in the current economic climate it is vital that we support local businesses in our community."

**In the twelve years since its foundation, the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre has been quietly building itself from the germ of an idea into a fully-functioning reality, now playing host to over 15 varied companies, in turn employing more than 180 people. But while the majority of BACD's revenue stems from rental and membership fees, the services the company offer are not limited to members or clients alone.**

"We're not just here for members," Helen clarifies. "As manager here at the Enterprise Centre I'm available to meet absolutely anyone looking to get their business off the ground, whether it's advice that's needed or just a bit of positive reassurance that they're doing the right thing. It's all about keeping them on that path, promoting businesses locally as well as promoting Ballinasloe as a place to work."

"We would encourage anyone involved in a business or looking to start one up to contact us - BACD Ltd. is a registered charity, and there is absolutely no cost to any of the ancillary services we provide." So whether it's a new home for your business, or just some friendly business advice that you're looking for, the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre can offer you the help you need.

For more info or to be added to the email list visit [www.ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie](http://www.ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie), or contact manager Helen Kelly at [info@ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie](mailto:info@ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie)

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# Almost Forty Years of Serving

Writes Ruairi Moore

**Tucked away in Brackernagh, the Ballinasloe Social Services is an organisation the scale of which is often underestimated. Little do the people of the town realise the hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, which the service has managed to save the state down through the years.**

“We’re celebrating forty years next January, and we hope to mark that with various events down through the year” explains Social Services Director Theresa Coughlan, when she sat down to talk to Ballinasloe Life in her small office above the much-renovated service headquarters.

Set up in 1972 by a group of concerned citizens, the initial function of the organisation was to provide a “Meals on Wheels” service to the town. Operating from the Emerald Ballroom on Society Street, a group of volunteers would drive out within a twenty mile radius and deliver hot meals to the elderly and incapacitated who otherwise might not receive it. The operation has broadened massively in scope since then.

“Our main goal is to keep people in the community, and to enable older people to continue to play an active role within it,” says Theresa. “You might be home alone with no one to see from one end



*The Social Services Centre.*

of the day to the other, so we provide a free bus service to the town proper, serving a different rural area each day. All told, these various operations service approximately one hundred and thirty seniors in the community, and Theresa would love to see that figure climb ever-higher. “It’s just a matter of coming in here to meet other people. We have a range of activities as well as physio and chiropody. But if not, then just sitting down and having a chat is fine as well.”

The Social Services has also recently been heavily involved in the HSE “Open

Your Eyes” programme, a campaign to highlight the abuse of elders.

“It’s generally psychological, through isolation or poor work practice that this abuse occurs. It might not even be consciously done. The idea is to highlight this abuse and hopefully stop it, so that the elderly can continue to live within their family or community.”

Extensive as their programme is, it is not just the elderly that the Ballinasloe Social Services cater to. “Our most recent endeavour was to provide English classes for foreign nationals. Many of them come



*Having a Break during the Ballinasloe Social Services fundraising Table Quiz in Haydens Hotel, Ballinasloe.*

to live and work in this country, but can often find themselves isolated because of their limited English," she explains.

The lessons also address the lack of a social outlet inherent with this isolation.

"The classes run every Tuesday morning from September to June, and all participants are encouraged to take advantage of the free cup of tea afterwards and socialise." The Social Services also provide an on-site preschool for children with special needs, as well as an early intervention centre for those with learning disabilities.

But with a core staff of nine people, how do the Social Services manage to maintain this variety of operations? Theresa is adamant in her gratitude towards the volunteers.

"We'd be lost without them. We have about 75 volunteers who come in each day to help out, whether it's as drivers for "Meals on Wheels" or going out to different homes and doing a few odd jobs for those who need an extra hand. Sometimes it might be as simple as coming into the centre and sitting down for a chat, but I can't emphasise enough the contribution they make. Our oldest volunteer is 90 years old herself!"

As well as individual volunteers, Theresa and her staff often liaise with various other groups from around the town. "We do a lot of work with St. Vincent De Paul, as we often cater to the same groups. The Gardai also play a role: we have them call in every now and then to play some music and to allow the elderly people we have in to put a name to a face in case they ever need anything."

Last winter also saw the local Civil Defence pitch in, volunteering to take over the meal delivery service in areas where only their vehicles could go.

But even given this level of interaction with the community, Theresa often finds that many are unaware of just how extensive a presence the Social Services has in their daily lives. "People often never engage with our services until they're in need of them themselves, which is just human nature, I suppose. But once they get involved, we're constantly hearing how they wish they'd done so sooner!"

Four years ago, the grant allocation designated to the Social Services was nearly €150,000; 2011 saw it shrink to €135,000, with no sign of stopping. Given these financial woes, it would be understandable if the Social Services saw a downscaling in activity, but Theresa is assured that this will not be the case.

"Yes, times are tough and the government grants are shrinking each year, no doubt about that, but if anything the demand for our services is growing. We've just had to up our fundraising, and much as we hate going to people with cap in hand, people have been very good to us."

Which is putting it lightly. In 2010, between service charges, donations and fundraising, the Ballinasloe Social Services managed to bring in an impressive €139,000, more than half their budget. "We have 75 volunteers who give of their time and talents freely and the value of what we're saving the state is incalculable."

Firm in her belief that the Social Services should always be able to retain their core services, Theresa believes that more funding should be allocated to groups of their nature. But failing that, she is confident that Ballinasloe Social Services will endure as long as their services are required. "The town of Ballinasloe needs us, but we need them too. And look," she smiles, "we intend to be here for another forty years yet."



**Some Attendees Celebrating their 90th Birthdays at the Centre.**



**Childcare Facility**



**Members of the Gardai entertaining at the Centre**



**Ballinasloe Social Services Computer Class in progress.**



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# The Ahascragh Village Festival

**Writes Karyn Gavin**

*Over the past two years, the village of Ahascragh has experienced its own mini-renaissance. From enhancements to derelict buildings, litter management, and weekly clean-ups to horticulture and a community vegetable garden, the village is looking better than ever, but most importantly the spirit of community is alive and active, and the people of the village are preparing to prove it.*

*To benefit from this revitalisation, the Ahascragh Development Association Committee has decided to organise a celebration; the first of what they hope will become an annual event.*

*“This renewed sense of responsibility and goodwill stems from the Ahascragh Development Association Committee’s decision to re-enter the Tidy Towns competition back in 2009,” says committee chairman John Egan. “This proved motivation enough to get the entire village involved and achieve today’s result. To say thanks, as well as to showcase the work that’s been done, we’re running this festival.”*

*The Ahascragh Village Festival and Family Fun Day will take place over the weekend of the 6th and 7th of August, initially launched by a hurling blitz on the 6th, followed by live music in Clinton’s Bar. Sunday the 7th will see both Ballinasloe and Mountmellick Vintage Clubs take to the streets in a parade, as well as various children’s activities organised throughout the village on the day including face-painting, bouncy castles, obstacle courses and much more. For the adults, the committee has organised various country market stalls, as well as local art and craft displays, field activities and games, helicopter rides, a tractor build and various other events for great family fun all*



*Festival Committee (L-R): Karyn Gavin, Tim O’Connor, Teresa Keenan, Frank Leonard, John Egan, Mary Courcay, Micheal Lally and Pat Gavin.*

*of which will run in the village fairgreen. The evening’s events will include a tractor pull, ladies tug-o-war and a wheelie bin race, plus live music and entertainment for all the family throughout the evening.*

*“The idea is to celebrate all we’ve achieved in the last few months,” concludes John. People have worked very hard, so we’d like to commemorate that, as well as build on the great sense of community we’ve generated.”*

*For up to date information regarding vintage run dates and routes, club events, members and their beloved machines, visit the website [www.bdvc.ie](http://www.bdvc.ie), or call PRO PJ Guinnessey at 087 2855930.*

## Town Hosts Second Bootcamp

**Writes Ruairi Moore**

Most residents of the town likely don’t realise that they’re part of one of Ireland’s oldest and most successful landmark events.

The late Paul Dooley always claimed the International Rose of Festival was conceived in Ballinasloe, when Tralee Vintners, having seen the Fair Queen in town as they returned from a race meet in Galway, added their own twist to the concept by honouring the famous ballad. The past two years have seen the town play a vital role in facilitating the selection of the International Escorts: thirty-two young men lucky enough to be paired with a Rose to act as chaperone, local guide, and cultural ambassador for the festival.

This June brought with it forty hopeful finalists, travelling to attend the Escort Boot-Camp in the hopes of winning a place in the Dome in Tralee this August. The candidates, all of whom passed through their own county selections all over the island, were put through their paces with local support and sponsorship from water-based adventure centre

Upriver.ie, The Carlton Shearwater Hotel and especially Ballinasloe Town Council.

“We’re always delighted to see the Escort Boot-Camp return here each summer,” said Mayor Mike Kelly, addressing the finalists at a dinner held in their honour in the Carlton Shearwater Hotel. “The town offers all the essentials required to fashion these young men into Rose Escorts, from the rugged outdoor terrain to test their mettle, to the finer facilities on offer here at the Carlton to tutor them in the ways of a proper gentleman.”

As well as being put through their paces

in both survival skills and table etiquette, the Escorts had the chance to briefly meet some of the Roses themselves at a photo-shoot in the Carlton, where they promoted the campaign for suicide helpline *1Life Ireland*, for whom the lucky thirty-two are raising funds in a nationwide campaign.

“Ballinasloe is honoured to be able to play its part in such a far-reaching cultural event,” enthused Mayor Kelly. “We wish the guys (and girls) the best of luck in August, and look forward to welcoming all the 32 International Roses here for a Gala Cabaret Evening on Wednesday 17th of August as part of their national tour”.



*Pictured enjoying Bootcamp were Mayor Mike Kelly with selected Irish Rose Finalists and Escorts including John O’Meara (Galway) and Shane Lennon (Roscommon), Colm Croffy (Escort Co-ordinator) and Rebecca Kemp (Rose of Tralee Operations Co-ordinator).*



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Longfellow, 1874 (Marituri Salutamus)

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## Vintage Club Toast Success

Writes Ruairi Moore

*Given the nature of its focus, it is surprising to learn that the Ballinasloe and District Vintage Club has not been around near so long as any of the machines it showcases. However, having seen a leap in membership to 170 after only three years, it seems safe to say that the club will thrive for a long time to come.*

*Fresh from their latest AGM in December of last year, the club's committee immediately set about implementing their extensive programme of events, a year-round calendar of various road runs, rallies and vintage displays throughout the province. The club's own inaugural vintage display, which took place on the last Sunday of the October Fair, proved to be a huge success with exhibitors travelling from as far away as Donegal, Cork and Waterford to see what Ballinasloe had to offer. "We as a club were truly astonished and humbled by the support we received from clubs and individuals all sharing a passion for vintage," said club committee member Shane Burns. "To them we are eternally indebted and it is our intention to return the favour throughout this coming season."*

*The club also hopes to maximise upon their success at last year's October Fair, where everything from a very early Titan tractor to a Ford County were on display, with the club's oldest club member at 93 on hand to show how threshing and baling should be done. "The club is indebted to the Gullane family, who provided their Hotel parking facilities on the day as the venue*



*for our vintage display," said Shane. The club, quickly becoming one of the largest in the West, is constantly seeking to expand upon its range of activities, such as the recent establishment of the Ballinasloe Ferguson 20 Build Team. This event sees team members deconstruct and reconstruct a Ferguson 20 tractor against the clock, and the team's success has seen them earn the chance to host a round of the competition in Ballinasloe this summer.*

*For up to date information regarding vintage run dates and routes, club events, members and their beloved machines, visit the website [www.bdvc.ie](http://www.bdvc.ie), or call PRO PJ Guinnessey at 087 2855930.*

# Relay For Life Ballinasloe Champions Cancer Awareness

**Writes Ruairi Moore**

*It is a disease which affects more than a third of the world, stories of which meet us at every turn in headlines, pamphlets, radio bylines and television broadcasts, yet too often cancer is no more than a medical term the overuse of which robbed it of any meaning.*

*One group in Ballinasloe will join the ranks of a global movement seeking to return that meaning, and to put a human face on what has become a faceless killer. Under the moniker "Celebrate, Remember, Fight Back", the Relay for Life initiative's three-fold agenda involves just that: to celebrate those who have survived cancer, to honour those who were lost to it, and to fight back through raising funds and awareness about the disease.*

*The movement, which was founded in 1985 by American Dr. Gordon Klatt, involves a 24-hour, continuous relay around*

*an indoor track. Brian Derrane, local cancer survivor and awareness activist, explains the meaning behind the 24-hour event. "It represents the fact that cancer never sleeps. You suffer from it all day, every day, and you're fighting it all the time. If it won't stop, how can you?"*

*The first lap celebrates cancer survivors, who are given purple Relay T-Shirts and paraded around the track to applause from the crowd. The second is given over to those who have acted as caregivers to cancer sufferers, the third to those who have lost loved ones to the disease. Then various sponsored teams take over, ensuring at least one member is on the track for the duration of the 24-hour event. "It's a hard concept to get across," says Relay committee member Annette McDevitt, who lost her mother to cancer. "But it's a powerful one."*

*Equally powerful is the response the committee has received locally, with over 25 teams from Ballinasloe entered already and a projected rise in those figures before the event itself, which takes place from 5.30pm on Saturday August 13th to 6pm the next day. As well as live acts, fun laps and amusements to keep relayers and supporters alike entertained, there will also be a special Candle of Hope ceremony at sundown on Saturday. Attendees are encouraged to light a Candle of Hope to commemorate all those touched by cancer, which can be specifically dedicated and personalised. All proceeds will go to the Irish Cancer Society, and there have also been a wealth of local fundraising activities too numerous to include in these pages.*

*"But the fundraising is secondary for me," says Brian. "To me, this is an awareness event, to encourage people to live healthily and get themselves checked regularly."*

*The Ballinasloe Relay for Life will take place in the old Tesco complex, and all are encouraged to attend and celebrate relayers and survivors alike. For more information email [relayforlifeballinasloe@gmail.com](mailto:relayforlifeballinasloe@gmail.com), contact 086 0344 672, or search "Relay For Life Ballinasloe" on Facebook.*



**Senator Michael Mullins, CEO Irish Cancer Society John McCormack and Mayor Pat O'Sullivan at the official Ballinasloe Relay for Life Launch.**

## New Youth Group Rebranding

**Writes Ruairi Moore**

*This September, one group which has been active in Ballinasloe for over twelve years will see itself re-invented to match a broad new programme in community youth work. The National Association of Travellers (NATC) will relaunch themselves as "Involve", complete with a new website and a range of expanded activities. With such a wealth of work behind them, why the need to re-brand?*

*"We're trying to be more inclusive," explains Youth Co-ordinator April McGrath. "While we are active in the traveller community, we're a youth service that's open to absolutely anybody and we're afraid that being branded as NATC doesn't reflect that. We run after-school youth work services for kids from disadvantaged areas and backgrounds, so we'd work with about*

*60 kids from the local area, all aged from 10-19." One particularly successful service offered by Involve is the drop-in centre in the Cube, which twice a week offers a safe and secure place for the youth of the town to enjoy themselves. The result? Less and less young people to be seen hanging around the town during the day. Alan Hughes, youth worker and April's colleague, states it simply. "They just want to be there."*

*Involve's new programme includes the implementation of NQSF, or the National Quality Standards Framework, a system designed to ensure youth services are at an exceptional standard nationally. But April and co. couldn't do it without the parents. "They're very involved, and they're more than happy to help out when they can. Our government grants have been hit hard, and though we may have to start asking for parent*

*contributions soon, I don't think it's a bad thing: they know the value of the service, and they'll be that much more active within it."*

*One relationship (or lack thereof) that April laments is that between the various related social service groups around the town. "The Canal House have been good to us, allowing us to use their building after ours was flooded," she enthuses. "But overall I'd love to see more collaboration, to set up a support network with all the groups around town so that we're constantly in communication and constantly able to pool resources and ideas. It's all for the benefit of the town."*

*April's ethos only reflects the positive, forward thinking behind a group which has newly branded itself Involve: to find out more about Involve and their services locally, visit [www.involve.ie](http://www.involve.ie) or call April McGrath on 086 320 7761.*

# New Chapters Offered for Those Young At Heart



*BARA Singer's Group in action last Christmas.*

## Writes Ruairi Moore

**When the word “retirement” is used, there is typically a standard set of images which spring to mind to go with it. Mornings whiled away in a garden or evenings tucked in by a fireside are generally what can be expected, but one group locally is far from concerned with what’s expected.**

“People often seem to see retirement as the end of your life,” said retired publican Christina O’Flynn, when we met at the canteen of the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre recently. “The whole idea behind the Active Retirement Association is to show people that it’s really about starting a whole new chapter in your life, about trying things you might not have had the chance to do before.”

So how about an aquarobics session at your local swimming pool, or a day trip to the city to take in some shopping and a show? This is just a fraction of what the association offers, promises Chris.

The Ballinasloe Active Retirement Association is a non-political, non-sectarian organisation with members drawn from all walks of life, which aims to enhance the physical, social and

psychological well-being of retirees in Ballinasloe and the town’s surrounding areas. Inspired by similar groups nationwide and spurred by her own dissatisfaction in her retirement, Christina founded the BARA in March of 2002 with likeminded friends Nancy Ward and Mary Grealley.

“The spark that ignited the A.R.A in Ballinasloe was my own restlessness after I retired from business. My retirement coincided with the death of my husband, and within a short space of time my four children had left home to lead their own lives. Then followed the empty nest syndrome. Gradually I began to realise that there must be an awful lot of people of my own age in a similar situation.”

And indeed there were, as that first BARA meeting saw 45 retirees from the town and its hinterlands in attendance, a figure which has increased exponentially in the years since; the association today boasts a membership of over 200 with an estimated turnover of approximately €93,000.

The reason for this massive boost in numbers isn’t hard to discern; the range of activities on offer to members is staggering. From book clubs, historical walking tours and singing sessions to sun holidays and Mediterranean cruises, there is much and more to keep any retiree out of the garden! But theatre trips and social

outings are not all that the association has to offer.

“Our image at the moment is of devil may care jet setters, and as there is a far deeper side to our association,” says active retiree and Webiste Officer-Douglas Rafter.

True enough, as the BARA is not content merely to distract their members, but also offers seminars with informative speakers on subjects ranging from health to the use of technology. Members have also collaborated with transition year student of Ard Scoil Mhuire to collect selected memories into one volume entitled “Fadó, Fadó in Ballinasloe.” A similar online archive is also in the process of being built with the help of Brendan Smith of the DERI institute.

Chris views the latter activities with particular pride. “That’s probably our greatest achievement so far, in my opinion,” she reflects. “Not only was it great to get to work with the younger people, we also got the chance to improve our computer skills in the process.”

The BARA’s collaboration with the youth of Ballinasloe did not end there, by any means. Last year also saw secondary students without any living grandparents paired with members of the Association.

“The Rent-A-Granny scheme,” jokes Chris. “But no, it was just a really nice way of

getting involved, and giving something back.” This interaction with youth seems an important issue to Chris, and she explains its importance by citing a particularly favourite passage from fellow retiree and “Fadó, Fadó in Ballinasloe” contributor Jim Crehan.

“Our members grew up in an era where our parents had lived through the Great War and seen the foundation of the State; we lived through the economic struggles of the thirties, forties and fifties, in what has been called the “era of the paraffin oil lamp.

“When we look at the challenges that young people face today, at global warming, unemployment, road rage, traffic jams, financial insecurity and a multiplicity of other problems, it seems like we are looking at another planet!”

With so many achievements and a dearth of progress under it’s belt, how does the Active Retirement Association look to the future? Chris answers with confidence.

“The role of the ARA will become more important in the future, especially in the field of communication. With letter-writing a thing of the past, and the sound of the human voice on the end of the phone having been drowned out by texting, e-mail and internet, the personal touch and friendly chat over the fence seems long gone. While we go forward into this fast world of technology, the ARA has also become an important place where we can escape from the press-button world, a place to make new friends, or to enjoy the friendly “cuppa”.”

*The Ballinasloe Active Retirement Association hold a regular meeting on the first Wednesday of each month, with more informal weekly gatherings each consecutive Wednesday, all are welcome. For more information on the Association, simply contact Christina O’Flynn at 0876492466 or Email [chrisflynn99@eircom.net](mailto:chrisflynn99@eircom.net), or visit their website at [ballinasloeactiveretirement.blogspot.com](http://ballinasloeactiveretirement.blogspot.com).*



*BARA members aboard the Galaxy during their Mediterranean Cruise of 2006.*

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# 20 Years of Saluting the French

Writes Ruairi Moore

Located in the Loire valley, roughly fifteen kilometres from Angers and sixty from Nantes, the town of Chalonnes-Sur-Loire supports a population of over five thousand and is well-known for its agrarian industry, beautiful Rose wines and the production of shoes and its scenic setting on the navigable River Loire.

Sound familiar? That's because for the past three decades the Town Twinning programme has seen communities around Ireland matched with European towns bearing similar industrial, environmental and social hallmarks, and this year will mark the twentieth anniversary of Ballinasloe's matching with French jewel Chalonnes-Sur-Loire.

Before the existence of commercial, low-cost airlines, 1988 saw the first of many exchanges between Ballinasloe and Chalonnes-Sur-Loire in France. This first historic visit took place under the Town Twinning initiative of the European Parliament, and saw the Mayor of Chalonnes and his deputy visit the town with their wives. The Late Cllr. Patsy Geraghty and Deputy Chairman Pat O'Sullivan were instrumental in the first visits. They must have received a warm welcome, as the following year saw a host of students led by Carol Kavanagh (Garbally College) and Ann Guerin (Ardscoil Mhuire) invited to travel to Chalonnes for a week. Key to the success of the early years of the project were committee members Sean Óg Hurley (First Committee Chair), Mary Molloy (Council Official), supportive successive Town Clerks, Lilly Broderick, Seamus Doherty, Nancy Cregg, Carol Kavanagh, Michel Belliard, Eugene Bonnin and his late wife Annick of Chalonnes and Liam Keller MD of Keller Travel.

This visit proved the first of many, as residents of both towns benefitted from the financial support of the Town Council coupled with their own fundraising to spend summers throughout the nineties travelling over and back, affording them a pleasant and safe way to experience the French culture and way of life first hand.

"Town Twinning has provided an opportunity over the years for individuals, clubs and groups from our towns to share and learn about each other's culture and heritage, as well as providing a way of promoting tourism in our respective towns," said Mayor and Town Twinning committee chairman Mike Kelly, when asked about the significance of this



Councillor Patsy Geraghty and M. Alain Poirier signing the Town Twinning Charter between Ballinasloe and Chalonnes Sur Loire.

anniversary.

"We have had many successful exchanges between students, sporting and cultural clubs alike, as well as some very successful exchanges in conjunction with the HSE."

These HSE exchanges traced their origins to a visit from then-committee chairman Sean Tully to a psychiatric day care facility in Chalonnes back in 2001, which led to 15 Chalonnes service users reciprocating the visit to Ballinasloe in 2005. Ballinasloe service users from the East Galway Mental Health Services, led by Gerry Blake and Collette Murphy

reciprocated in 2007, when they were warmly welcomed by Chalonnes-Sur-Loire Mayor Michel Borderau as well as consultant psychiatrist Francois Bonnal and his team. The exchange made a huge impact, going on to be cited in Irish mental health journal "Mensana" and becoming a central highlight of a world psychiatric seminar in 2007.

Some of the other visits which took place down through the twinning partnership were varied in scope. 2003 saw six students from Garbally College and Ardscoil Mhuire alike cook Irish national dishes in a European competition in



Garbally Senior French Class Football Team, Chalonnes 2008

Chalonnès. A year later, the Camogie club squared off against Eyrecourt in the local stadium in Chalonnès, much to the delight of the French onlookers who were fascinated by their first glimpse of Irish national sport. The Town Band under the baton of Noel Madden visited, as well as a notable visit of French cyclists led by Gui Bigou. On both occasions and, indeed, on every occasion, the Irish ambassadors succeeded in upholding the distinguished reputation of those who had gone before. The anniversary has already been marked in Chalonnès with a formal ceremony and the dedication of a plaque, with preparations well under way for the Irish celebrations, which will take place when a contingent from Chalonnès visit for the October Fair.

Mike Kelly is adamant that this historical link has yielded nothing but good things for both towns and is certain that the future holds more of the same if the people of Ballinasloe take advantage of the opportunity and cultivate their relationship. "The success of town twinning depends on the participation of individuals and groups alike, and it is the committee's wish to facilitate an opportunity for other clubs and groups to partake in exchange visits to build on the successes to date. As chairman of Ballinasloe Town Twinning I would like to thank all the people who have given so much time and support to town twinning

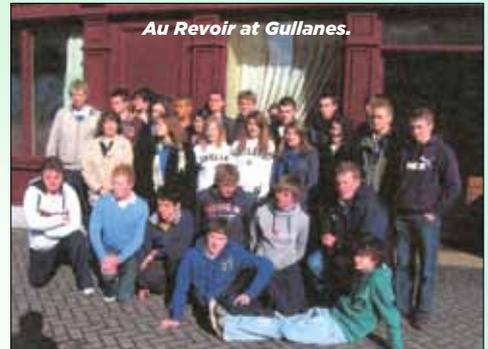
over the years as so many people, particularly our youth, have found it most rewarding. We've had a good twenty years with the people of Chalonnès-Sur-Loire, and I'm hopeful that we'll have at least twenty more."

Mike would like to thank all who have been instrumental in ensuring the success of the endeavour during his involvement as Committee Chair, including Bobby Finn, Seamus Doherty, Geraldine Kelly, Brian Murphy, Alan Farrell, Adrian Ahern, Johnny Walsh, Mark O'Donnell, Brian Murphy, Kevin Kelly, Lilly Broderick, Mary Molloy, MS Kelly (Official Snapper), Tom Madden, Cathal Concannon and many, many more. Carol Kavanagh, Nancy Cregg and Sean Tully, 20 years on from the original setup are still actively engaged in the twinning project.

For more information on Town Twinning or to find out how to get involved, contact Mike Kelly on 087 2933894.



Garbally Senior French Class, Chalonnès 2008



Au Revoir at Gullanes.



Junior Cycle Students, France 2009



Junior Cycle Students, France 2009

# Clonfert Pilgrimage to Lourdes

## Writes Ruairi Moore

*With a summer that has largely proved every bit as bleak as the winter, many will seek foreign shores in the hopes of finding relief beneath the sun. For the past 21 years, one group from East Galway has found solace at Lourdes, the famed commune and site of religious apparition set in the foothills of the Pyrenees.*

*"The Clonfert Diocesan Pilgrimage started in 1990 when we joined Elphin diocese to learn how best to organise and manage such a venture," remembers Bishop John Kirby, who has had a hand in co-ordinating the trip these past 20 years. "We set up on our own in 1992, so the pilgrimage this year will mark our 20th. Usually we have had about 280 - 300 pilgrims, with peaks in special anniversary years."*

*The trip is coordinated by a committee of ten, who meet during the winter months to plan for the coming year. This involves some fund-raising in addition to an annual church collection held in early February. "The first task each year is to ensure that we have an adequate staff to care for the travelling invalids and pilgrims. These usually consist of a doctor, nurses, bishop*

*& priests, handmaidens and brancardiers and especially the organist. The rest of the support team is fully voluntary and pay a portion of their own travelling and accommodation costs.*

*Bishop Kirby explains what is involved once the pilgrims arrive.*

*"The 5-day trip is a mixture of a pilgrimage and an overseas break. We celebrate Mass daily, and there are special services on arrival and departure and for anointing and confessions. The Stations of the Cross are another major feature. For most pilgrims time at the grotto itself, where Our Lady appeared to St. Bernadette in 1858, is the most*

*important part of the pilgrimage."*

*But it's not all penance and prayer. There are opportunities for shopping visits to the town of Lourdes, short tours to Bartres, Gavarnie and even across the French border into Spain. "The Fields of Athenry is as well known in Lourdes as it is in Lansdowne Road or the Glasgow Celtic ground in Scotland," laughs the Bishop.*

*The Clonfert Pilgrimage takes place from the 23rd to 28th August and is organised by Society Travel of Ballinasloe. Anyone interested in travelling as a helper, pilgrim or in any other capacity can contact Society Travel at 090 9645350.*



The dedicated staff of last year's pilgrimage pictured at Lourdes

# RAPID Programme

Writes Kieran Coyne

The RAPID Programme is a focused Government initiative to target the 51 most disadvantaged areas in the country. Ballinasloe is one of two designated RAPID areas in County Galway.

The programme is built around these seven areas:

- Community Safety & Anti-Social Behaviour
- Health
- Family Support
- Physical Environment
- Education
- Youth Support
- Employment & Training

**Kieran Coyne, Ballinasloe RAPID Coordinator**

**Tel: 091 476 507**

**Mobile: 087 952 0999**

**Email: [kcoyne@galwaycoco.ie](mailto:kcoyne@galwaycoco.ie)**

## Ballinasloe Community Support Budget

Under the Ballinasloe RAPID Programme there is a small amount of funding for the development and support of the community and voluntary sector in the Ballinasloe RAPID (Ballinasloe Town) area. Support here is in the areas of capacity building, community events, innovative community actions, and community public relations. Projects supported must be delivered in the current year. There is no formal application process but applicants are required to contact the RAPID Coordinator on prospective projects. If a project is eligible an applicant will then have to provide the following:

- Project outline
- Project cost
- Project timescale
- Target group(s) supported
- Projected local impact.



## Ballinasloe Community Safety

As a follow on from the production of the *Your Community Your Safety* booklet as well as the hosting of a community safety event last October, the Ballinasloe RAPID programme is supporting and working with a number of local groups in relation to the Ballinasloe submission to *Pride of Place 2011*. Further detail on the outcome of this will appear in the next edition of Ballinasloe Life.

## Free Smoke Alarms for Vulnerable People

On Monday 28th March 2011, the Mayor of County Galway launched this year's Community Smoke Alarm Scheme for 2011. This initiative will see the County Council work with communities, service providers and volunteers to distribute free smoke alarms to vulnerable households.

The alarms are lithium battery-operated and have a life span of 10 years. If you know of vulnerable households in the community that need a smoke alarm contact the Community & Voluntary Forum on 093 45547 or email [forumtuam@eircom.net](mailto:forumtuam@eircom.net). Alarms are funded by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.



Having a tryout in the Marina at Kayaking on the Suck during the Summerfest.



Escorts larking around on Fair Green at Rose of Tralee Bootcamp.



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# Events Guide - AUGUST & SEPTEMBER

<b>Monday, 1st August</b>		
An Táin	Pink Panther Jazz Band	6pm
<b>Tuesday, 2nd August</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Trad Session	9.30pm
<b>Wednesday, 3rd August</b>		
An Táin	Trad Session	10pm
Gullane's Hotel	Ballinasloe Active Retirement Monthly Meeting	3pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Paudge Bennett	9.30pm
<b>Thursday, 4th August</b>		
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Big Trad Session	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
<b>Friday, 5th August</b>		
Blakes Bar	Local DJ	
Carlton S'water Hotel	Country Night Dancing with Lisa McHugh	10pm
	Canal Bar - Michael Regan	10.30pm
Dunlo Tavern	Trad Session	9.30pm
Gullane's Hotel	Big Reunion Trad Fest: Proceeds to "Geraldine Owens Foundation"	
Haydens Hotel	Last Man Standing	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Helium	10pm
<b>Saturday, 6th August</b>		
Blakes Bar	The Coyles	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Annemarie McLoughlin	10pm
East Nightclub	DJ Ozz G	10pm
Gullane's Hotel	Big Reunion Trad Fest: Proceeds to "Geraldine Owens Foundation"	
Haydens Hotel	Shannagolden	10pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Skint	10.30pm
Maud Millar's	Streetwise	10pm
Ballinasloe RFC	Rugby Extravaganza in aid of Irish Cancer Society	12pm
<b>Sunday, 7th August</b>		
Blakes Bar	Cool Hand Dukes	10pm
Gullane's Hotel	Big Reunion Trad Fest: Proceeds to "Geraldine Owens Foundation"	
Haydens Hotel	Pete Jones	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Music with B. Coyle	9pm
Maud Millar's	Hoppy Bar Stars	10pm
<b>Monday, 8th August</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
Ballinasloe RFC	Connacht Rugby Summer Camps	12pm
<b>Tuesday, 9th August</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Trad Session	9.30pm
Ballinasloe RFC	Connacht Rugby Summer Camps	12pm
<b>Wednesday, 10th August</b>		
An Táin	Trad Session	10pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Paudge Bennett	9.30pm
Ballinasloe RFC	Connacht Rugby Summer Camps	12pm
<b>Thursday, 11th August</b>		
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Big Trad Session	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
Ballinasloe RFC	Connacht Rugby Summer Camps	12pm
<b>Friday, 12th August</b>		
Blakes Bar	Local DJ	10pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Canal Bar - Eamon O' Neill	10.30pm
Dunlo Tavern	Done and Dusted	9.30pm
Gullane's Hotel	Pat Kenny Fundraising Dance	9.30pm
Haydens Hotel	Night Owls	9.30pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Music with Frank Mc	10.30pm
Maud Millar's	Chillout	10pm
Ballinasloe RFC	Connacht Rugby Summer Camps	12pm
<b>Saturday, 13th August</b>		
Blakes Bar	Chillout	10pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Canal Bar - David Maguire	10.30pm
Dunlo Tavern	Helium	10pm
East Nightclub	Fergal D'Arcy	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Last Man Standing	10pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Tom Flynn Band	10.30pm
Maud Millar's	The Rivulettes	10pm
Old Tesco Building	Ballinasloe Relay for Life	6pm
<b>Sunday, 14th August</b>		
Blakes Bar	Live Music	8.30pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Country Night Dancing with John McNicholl	
Haydens Hotel	Ceile - Brian Boru	4-7pm
	Country Comfort	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Fiona Duane	9pm
Maud Millar's	The Skillet Pot	10pm
Old Tesco Building	Ballinasloe Relay for Life continued	
<b>Monday, 15th August</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
Moycarn Marina	Upriver.ie Kayakivity Summer Camp	10am-2pm

<b>Tuesday, 16th August</b>		
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Trad Session	9.30pm
Moycarn Marina	Upriver.ie Kayakivity Summer Camp	10am-2pm
<b>Wednesday, 17th August</b>		
An Táin	Leaving Cert Results Night. DJ Gavin O'Toole	10pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	A Night of Cabaret with the 32 International Roses, in association with the Ballinasloe Town Hall Theatre Society	7pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Paudge Bennett	9.30pm
Moycarn Marina	Upriver.ie Kayakivity Summer Camp	10am-2pm
<b>Thursday, 18th August</b>		
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Big Trad Session	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
Moycarn Marina	Upriver.ie Kayakivity Summer Camp	10am-2pm
<b>Friday, 19th August</b>		
Blakes Bar	Local DJ	10pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Canal Bar - Frankie McDonald	10.30pm
Dunlo Tavern	Cajun Chicken	9.30pm
Haydens Hotel	Shannagolden	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Jukebox Gypsy	10pm
Moycarn Marina	Upriver.ie Kayakivity Summer Camp	10am-2pm
<b>Saturday, 20th August</b>		
Blakes Bar	The Sheerins	10pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Canal Bar - Kevin Carroll	10.30pm
Dunlo Tavern	One 2 One	10pm
East Nightclub	DJ Byrno	11pm
Haydens Hotel	Night Owls	10pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Music with B. Coyle	10.30pm
Maud Millar's	DJ Eoin Quinn	10pm
<b>Sunday, 21st August</b>		
Blakes Bar	Live Music	8.30pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Country Night with Mike Denver	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Pete Jones	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Dew Drop	9pm
Maud Millar's	Hoppy Bar Stars	10pm
<b>Tuesday, 23rd August</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Trad Session	9.30pm
<b>Wednesday, 24th August</b>		
An Táin	Trad Session	10pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Paudge Bennett	9.30pm
<b>Thursday, 25th August</b>		
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Big Trad Session	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
<b>Friday, 26th August</b>		
An Táin	Still Slopini'	10pm
Blakes Bar	Local DJ	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Buzz the Agent	9.30pm
Haydens Hotel	David McGuire	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Hickory Wind	10pm
<b>Saturday, 27th August</b>		
Blakes Bar	Kieran Sheerin	10pm
Downes Bar	Boys from the Black Stuff	10pm
East Nightclub	John McHugh	10pm
Haydens Hotel	One 2 One	10pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Claymore	10.30pm
Maud Millar's	The Rivulettes	10pm
<b>Sunday, 28th August</b>		
Blakes Bar	Live Music	8.30pm
Haydens Hotel	Shannagolden	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Joxer	9pm
Maud Millar's	The Skillet Pot	10pm
<b>Monday, 29th August</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
<b>Tuesday, 30th August</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Trad Session	9.30pm
<b>Wednesday, 31st August</b>		
An Táin	Trad Session	10pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Paudge Bennett	9.30pm
<b>Thursday, 1st September</b>		
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Big Trad Session	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
<b>Friday, 2nd September</b>		
Blakes Bar	Local DJ	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Trad Session	9.30pm
Haydens Hotel	Night Owls	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	The Rivulettes	10pm
<b>Saturday, 3rd September</b>		
Blakes Bar	The Knockers	10pm
East Nightclub	DJ Trolly	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Country Comfort	10pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Last Chance	10.30pm
Maud Millar's	Chillout	10pm

# Events Guide - AUGUST & SEPTEMBER

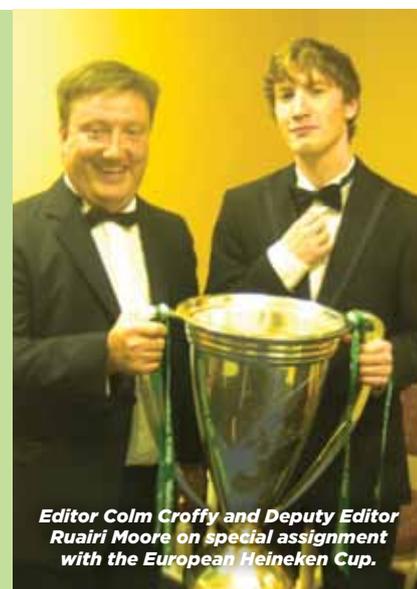
<b>Sunday, 4th September</b>		
Blakes Bar	Cool Hand Dukes	10pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Country Night with Patrick Feeney	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Buzz the Agent	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	The Heffernan Bros.	9pm
<b>Monday, 5th September</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
<b>Tuesday, 6th September</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Trad Session	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Hoppy Bar Stars	10pm
<b>Wednesday, 7th September</b>		
An Táin	Trad Session	10pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Paudge Bennett	9.30pm
<b>Thursday, 8th September</b>		
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Big Trad Session	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
<b>Friday, 9th September</b>		
Blakes Bar	Local DJ	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	The Ramblers	9.30pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Last Man Standing	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Streetwise	10pm
<b>Saturday, 10th September</b>		
Blakes Bar	Back Stage	10pm
East Nightclub	Second Birthday Party	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Shannagolden	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Frank McDonald	10.30pm
Maud Millar's	The Rivulettes	10pm
<b>Sunday, 11th September</b>		
Blakes Bar	Live Music	8.30pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Country Night Dancing with Jason Travers	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Pete Jones	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Last Man Standing	9pm
Maud Millar's	The Skillet Pot	10pm
<b>Monday, 12th September</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
<b>Tuesday, 13th September</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Trad Session	9.30pm
<b>Wednesday, 14th September</b>		
An Táin	Trad Session	10pm
Gullane's Hotel	Ballinasloe Garden and Flower Club	8pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Paudge Bennett	9.30pm
<b>Thursday, 15th September</b>		
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Big Trad Session	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
<b>Friday, 16th September</b>		
Blakes Bar	Local DJ	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Sons of Erin	9.30pm
Haydens Hotel	Country Comfort	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Kiwi Paddy	10pm
<b>Saturday, 17th September</b>		
Blakes Bar	Chill Out	10pm
East Nightclub	Fergal D'Arcy	11pm

Haydens Hotel	Last Man Standing	10pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Claymore	10.30pm
Maud Millar's	Streetwise	10pm
<b>Sunday, 18th September</b>		
Blakes Bar	Live Music	8.30pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Country Night with Jimmy Buckley	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Ceile - Copper Plate.	4-7pm
	One 2 One	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Highly Strung	9pm
<b>Monday, 19th September</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
Maud Millar's	Hoppy Bar Stars	10pm
<b>Tuesday, 20th September</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Trad Session	9.30pm
<b>Wednesday, 21st September</b>		
An Táin	Trad Session	10pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Paudge Bennett	9.30pm
<b>Thursday, 22nd September</b>		
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Big Trad Session	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
<b>Friday, 23rd September</b>		
Blakes Bar	Local DJ	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Boys from the Black Stuff	9.30pm
Haydens Hotel	Shannagolden	9pm
Maud Millar's	Helium	10pm
<b>Saturday, 24th September</b>		
Blakes Bar	The Sheerins	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Helium	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Night Owls	10pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Bojangle	10.30pm
Maud Millar's	Al O'Connor	10pm
<b>Sunday, 25th September</b>		
Blakes Bar	Live Music	8.30pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Country Night Dancing with Declan Nerney	10pm
Haydens Hotel	Pete Jones	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Take Time	9pm
<b>Monday, 26th September</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
<b>Tuesday, 27th September</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Trad Session	9.30pm
<b>Wednesday, 28th September</b>		
An Táin	Trad Session	10pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Paudge Bennett	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	The Skillet Pot	10pm
<b>Thursday, 29th September</b>		
Haydens Hotel	Kevin Rohan and Friends	9pm
Killeen's (S'bridge)	Big Trad Session	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
<b>Friday, 30th September</b>		
An Táin	Still Slopini	10pm
Blakes Bar	Local DJ	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	One 2 One	9.30pm
Maud Millar's	Hickory Wind	10pm

To advertise your event here, Contact: [ballinasloelife@hotmail.com](mailto:ballinasloelife@hotmail.com) or [info@ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie](mailto:info@ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie)

*This is our third edition of Volume one of the pilot phase. Half way through and we hope we are getting a bit better. We will be taking stock of our steady evolution, especially with our founding subscribers and are still grateful for the wonderful feedback positive and sometimes not so, on our efforts. Please bear in mind that within 48 hours of 5,000 copies hitting the streets you and your loved ones in distant places, can view the current and archived editions on [www.ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie](http://www.ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie).*

*The first three editions would not have been possible at all for a gregarious and intrepid young University of Limerick Student who hails from Holycross, Tipperary - Ruairi Moore. Hailing from the Editor's Alma Mater, Ruairi cut his journalistic teeth on the award winning college publication started 20 odd years by yours truly - An Focal - the campus newspaper. His tireless tenacity to extract copy from organisations and individuals that appear to shy from publicity and his writing craft have really helped the publication and I wish to thank him and pay tribute to his enthusiasm. He is moving back to groves of Academe in the fall and we will be announcing a new Reporter to facilitate editions 4 to 6. I suspect we will not have seen or heard the last from him in the world of communications and writing. The Project Team and Editorial Board wish him every success in his future endeavours and hope his memories of Ballinasloe and establishing our Community Magazine - will be mostly happy ones!*



*Editor Colm Croffy and Deputy Editor Ruairi Moore on special assignment with the European Heineken Cup.*

# Out and About in Ballinasloe

*Rose of Tralee Escorts on their recent Bootcamp in Ballinasloe.*



*Green Flag raising ceremony for Scoil Ui Chearnaigh.*



*Volunteers and members of the Tidy Towns Committee at one of their many cleanup operations.*



*Cutting the cake to celebrate Newtown National Schools Green Flag were James Gavin, Mark Burnell, Peter Kelly, Maria Corcoran (Eldest pupil) and Erin O'Callaghan (Youngest Pupil)*



*Roses and Escorts enjoying UpRivers zorbing at Bootcamp.*



*Ballinasloe Railway Station won a 2nd place award for Iarnrod Eireann, Best Kept Station for Connaught. Pictured are Staff, Tomas Earls, Fintan Gately and Kerrill Burke.*



*Pictured at the venue launch (Old Tesco Store) were Brian Derrane, Mike Daly, Jackie Daly and Mary Brewer.*



*Anne & PJ Glynn (centre) formerly Fohenagh, home from Boston recently to celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary in Gullanes Hotel.*



# Summerfest Tries to Bring The Sunshine !



www.ballinasloe.ie  
www.discoverireland.ie  
www.facebook.com/antsuafiainballinasloe

## Writes Ruairi Moore

Though the weather wasn't entirely consistent with the time of year in celebration, this year's An tSiuca Fiáin Discover Ballinasloe Summerfest nonetheless established itself as an event worth marking on the calendar! Taking place over seven days, the festival week initially featured a youth arts camp run by the Ballinasloe Community Arts Group. Based out of the Emerald Ballroom, the week's activities saw the children put together an original performance piece, creating all of their own props and costumes which were put to good use during Friday night's public pageant, which saw over 70 children march down to the marina for a performance and fire display. The entire week also featured a variety of music in various establishments around town, drawing crowd-pleasers such as Noriana Kennedy and the Begley Family.

The weekend's range of activities broadened considerably, with the Summerfest offering:

- Numerous Inflatable Amusements in Sli na hAbhainn Riverside park
- Further children's activities including facepainting and puppet shows
- Several outdoor music concerts showcasing local talent
- Vintage Tractor-Build and Tractor-Pulling Competitions, which drew crowds in their hundreds
- A wealth of live traditional music sessions on the Free Pub Session Trail
- 25 Arts and Crafts Market Stalls
- Over 80 Kids Zorbing and Kayaking Tryouts on the River Suck with Upriver.ie
- And much, much more!

The festival's impact cannot be denied, delivering over €45,000 worth of positive media and publicity to the town, as well as drumming up a sense of community and vitality for visitors and locals alike. Summerfest committee chairperson Cathal Concannon extended a huge thank you to all who made the festival possible, from volunteers and vintners to visitors alike. "With such a great response this time around, there's no doubt we'll be seeing them again come Summerfest 2012!"



Art Camp



Fishing Competition participants.



Tractor Pull



Local Set Dancing Display



Tractor Building

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Town Council**

**GALWAY  
County Council**

# Town Hall under New Management

## Writes Colm Croffy

The new Town Hall Theatre Society announced recently that the painstaking negotiations with the owners of the building had formally concluded – with an effective long-term lease in place.

*The society will formally take charge of the 166-year-old building in early Autumn. The new Company charged with renovating and managing the facility was formed out of a public consultation process over three years in the wake of a feasibility report on the need for a cultural space and arts centre in town. The Company was incorporated in the summer of the previous year and has individuals and organisations who are committed to the continuation of performance art in town as its members.*

### **The key aims of the Company are:**

- To transform THT into a modern “state of the Art” multi-purpose venue
- A venue/facility that will enhance, facilitate and showcase Art in all its diverse forms consisting of 420 seat multi-purpose/multi-user Theatre
- Rehearsal/Storage facilities for user group + “youth groups”
- Hard Core Volunteer Corps/Clear action focused groups
- Outreach/Audience Development for all genres in community
- To consolidate existing partnerships and develop new ones in the professional and community arts activities
- To recognize the importance of the artist and audience in the community and to make Ballinasloe an imaginative and supportive environment for artists and their audience
- Enhance the facility as a leading venue for performance arts
- Use of space as a 3rd or continual educational facility.

*The Society are applying to a number of grant programmes to obtain funding to undertake immediate repairs and to formulate a business plan that deals with the long-term capital requirements of the facility. Their first keynote fundraising venture is the Night of Cabaret with the 32 International Roses of Tralee at the Carlton Shearwater Hotel & C spa on the 17th of August.*

*Chairperson of the Board of Directors - Mary O’Connell states that they are delighted to be making progress and are looking forward to establishing a new presence in the Town Hall, “We hope that for an evening of music and entertainment directed by Paul Norton and a wonderful Buffet created by the Carlton - Ballinasloe people will show their support for our venture” .*

*Tickets are priced at €20 - tables of 9 ( A Rose will be your Host) and tickets are available from the Society members or the Hotel Reception. Further Information can be had from Mary at 087 2200132*



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# Ada English Symposium Plans a New Spring School for Town



Martine Smit, Adrien Ahern (General Manager Galway Mental Health Services), Margaret O'Grady (Consultant Psychiatrist, Clinical Director East Galway Mental Health Services), Jane Rothwell (President of Soroptimists International, Ballinasloe and District), Cllr. Pat O'Sullivan, Dr. Brendan Kelly (MD MA Msc MRCPI MRC Psych), Rosalie Byrne-Muir (President Soroptimists International Republic of Ireland), Sen. Michael Mullins, Dr. Oonagh Walsh (Senior Research Fellow in Medical History).

## Writes Ruairi Moore

**The Carlton Shearwater Hotel, found itself playing host to a range of professional scholars, women's interest groups and amateur history buffs alike as they flocked to the inaugural session of the Ada English Symposium, the ultimate aim of which is to establish an annual spring school in honour of the town's unsung Reveloutionary hero next year.**

Dr. Ada English, as well as a leading figure in the Rising and War of Independence and one of the first female psychiatrists in the country, was a resident of Ballinasloe for nearly forty years. Organised by the District Branch of Soroptimists International, a women's advocate group, the event featured in-depth talks on the many facets of Dr. English's life, from her role in the freedom movement, her election to the second Dail, to her appointment as Senior RMS at St. Brigid's

Hospital, Ballinasloe. The Symposium also featured discussions on the history and footprint of St. Brigid's and indeed a look at the care of patients of District Asylums in the 19th Century.

Attended by over 60 delegates and sponsored by the Carlton Shearwater Hotel; in the last weekend in May, among the speakers on the day were decorated academics Dr. Brendan Kelly and Dr. Oonagh Walsh, author Dr. Margaret Ó Hógartaigh, General Manager Galway Mental Health Services Adrien Ahern, as well as a final panel chaired by the Consultant Psychiatrist and Clinical Director of East Galway Mental Health Services Margaret O'Grady.

Relatives of Ada now living in the UK had planned to travel but at the last minute had to cancel plans. The couple who are now living in her ancestral home in Mullingar hoped to be in attendance and a great number of local people with connections and rembrances of her have contacted the group.

Mayor Pat O'Sullivan promised that the Council would honour Dr. English's

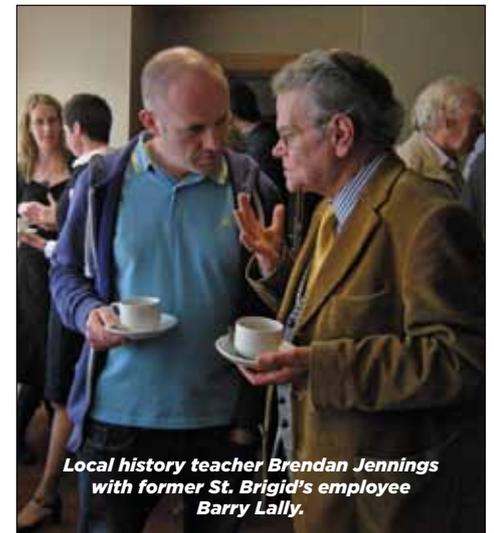
contribution to the people of the town and the nation when he announced his intention to examine proposals for a commemorative statue in her honour, as part of the ongoing town enhancement scheme; for which he welcomed all creative contributions.

Dr. Kelly spoke of English as a patriot as well as a psychiatrist, while Dr. Oonagh Walsh outlined some of the trials faced by female mental patients from the 1800s onwards. Dr. Margaret Ó Hogairtaigh traced the key trends of women in medicine during English's lifetime, and Adrien Ahern was able to give an intimate account of the hospital's history from his time working there. "Having been a Loretto girl myself, nothing she did after her initial education would surprise me," said District Soroptimist President Jane Rothwell.

The wrap up session included many contributions from attendees reflecting on some of the sub themes that ought to be examined by the Spring School; ranging from Advocacy, Self Reliance, Public Health, Mental Wellness, Innovation



Jane Rothwell and Martine Smit with Senator Michael Mullins.



Local history teacher Brendan Jennings with former St. Brigid's employee Barry Lally.

*Cllr. Matt Ganly, Jimmy Crehan, retired hospital staff and Clontuskert author Joe Molloy.*



and Gender Issues. Many of those in attendance agreed to volunteer their services towards the running of next year's event. It has been agreed that the initial project group will be widened to encourage wider involvement. The Heritage Council and Galway County Council's Heritage service have also offered their support for the School.

Mr. Ahern then lead a historical walking tour of the hospital's buildings and grounds, affording the delegates a rare insight into the life and times of Dr. English as well as the day-to-day running of the hospital itself, culminating in a wreath-laying ceremony at her grave in Creagh cemetery. "I really enjoyed this," said

## In Ómós d'Ada

*Nuair a D'éirigh said Amach  
Chabhraigh sí.  
Nuair a ceiliúradh Saoirse na Poblachta  
Chrom sí.  
Bláth, I bhfoscadh fireann na h-aoise.  
Chuala sí an stoirm chéanna,  
An "Oíche Nollag na mBan" úd.  
Chuala sí, mar d'éist sí.  
Thaisteal sí ar an mbus úd,  
Le h-Áine an lá sin,  
Í ag faire.  
Chonaic sí 'An Ghealt'  
Agus thuig sí.*

*Thuig sí sreangacha casta na meabhrach  
Agus d'fhuascail sí na snaidhmeacha,  
A las solas an dóchais dúinn.  
D'éag an eala ghrástúil sna daicheadaí,  
D'fhill sí ar na Flaithis  
A cuid oibre déanta.  
Gabhaimís buíochas a Íosa,  
Buíochas d'Ada.  
Ceannródaí,  
Dochtúir,  
Bean.*

*Siobhán Loughrey*

National Soroptomist President Rosalie Byrne-Muir at the close of ceremonies. "I knew next to nothing about Dr. English this morning, but now I can say that we'll definitely be making the spring school a national priority for the Organisation for next year."

The Soroptomists Branch have established an online presence and are currently seeking locals who have worked in the hospital, or have relatives who might

## Ode to Ada *(Translated from the original Gaeilge in Ómós d'Ada)*

*During The Easter Rising,  
She helped.  
When they celebrated Freedom of the Republic  
She bowed.  
A blossom in the masculine shadows of the era.  
She heard that same storm  
On that "Little Women's Christmas" night.  
She heard,  
Because she listened.  
She travelled on that very bus,  
With Áine that day; Watching out.  
She saw the "lunatic"  
And she understood.*

*She understood the complex wiring of the mind,  
She untangled, releasing its knotted wires  
Thus lighting the light of hope for us.  
The graceful swan left us in the forties,  
She returned to the Heavens  
Her work here done.  
We give thanks, Jesus,  
Thanks to Ada.  
Pioneer,  
Doctor,  
Woman.*

remember Dr. English to come forward and have their stories and memorabilia recorded. The living history element of the project will continue in the lead up to the pre planning which will take place from September onwards, with a January launch anticipated.

*For more information, Contact Martine by Email at [martine@aoifeonline.com](mailto:martine@aoifeonline.com). The Inaugural Spring School will take place in the Carlton Shearwater Hotel on the May Bank Holiday weekend 2011.*

# Local Author Pens St. Nathy's History

## Writes Ruairi Moore

*St. Nathy's College, Ballaghaderreen, recently saw its history captured in a book written by local author, poet and playwright Xandra Kilduff.*

*Xandra, a Ballinasloe native, spent two years researching the gargantuan work. 'Moments in Time' covers two hundred years worth of the college's history, from the roots of its namesake, St. Nathy, down through the persons both ecclesiastical and lay who built the foundation for the structure which exists today.*

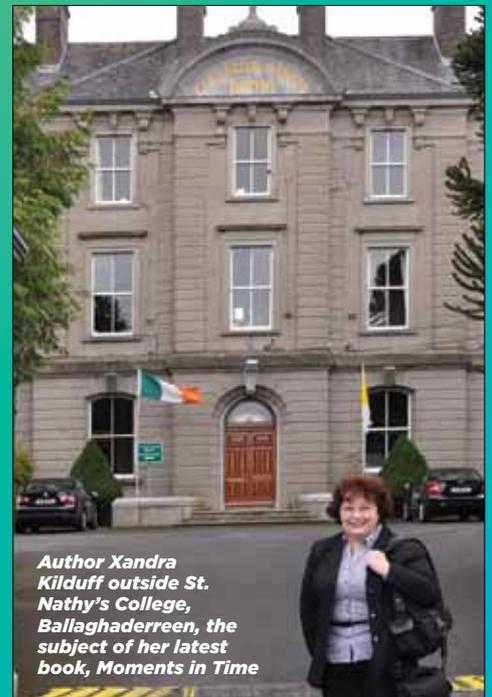
*Throughout the book, the historical importance of the town of Ballaghaderreen and its symbiotic relationship with the college is detailed in economic, religious and social life.*

*"Being the ecclesiastical centre of Achonry Diocese, the input of the various Bishops - many of whom were educated in St. Nathy's - proved invaluable," said Xandra recently. "Surviving the poverty of the early 19th century and persevering*

*through the famine, the land wars, two world wars and the birth of the Irish nation, students and teachers alike stood courageously on the front lines."*

*It was Nollaig O'Muraile, Professor of Irish at NUIG and former student of St. Nathy's, who launched the book at a packed ceremony in the school hall recently. Professor O'Muraile praised the professionalism of the work, as well as the attention to detail evident as Kilduff traces threads of history down through two hundred turbulent years.*

*More reflection on this auspicious event came in the form of an address written by College President Father Martin Conroy: "It's hard to believe, yet alone comprehend, that St. Nathy's College is now celebrating the two hundredth anniversary of its foundation in 1810. In a disposable age, anything that lasts for more than a couple of years deserves some degree of recognition. For an institution to have survived and flourished for two hundred years is, indeed, worthy*



*Author Xandra Kilduff outside St. Nathy's College, Ballaghaderreen, the subject of her latest book, Moments in Time*

*of note and this makes St. Nathy's College one of the oldest second level schools in the country as few others can trace their origins back over such a vast expanse of time."*

*Xandra's work has been well-received by students, staff and historians alike, and can be purchased online at: [www.stnathys.com/shopping\\_Moments\\_in\\_Time.html](http://www.stnathys.com/shopping_Moments_in_Time.html).*



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# Johnny Riddell is Still on Cue!

Writes Ken Kelly

**Now in his eightieth year, one of Ballinasloe best-known billiard players still loves the lure of the baize cloth. Johnny Riddell of St. Michael's Place has had the distinction of being a member of all three billiard clubs in the town over the past seventy years.**

The only ever winner of a Galway Sportstar award for billiards, which he won in 1972, Johnny also went on to be honoured by the Roscommon and District Soccer League with a Sportstar award for refereeing in 1981.

Not many townspeople recall the British Legion Hut, which was situated in the Fairgreen and was subsequently demolished to make way for the public toilets. There World War 1 veteran soldiers gathered to play cards, darts or billiards. That building also displayed a large roll of honour with the names of those, from the area, who had lost their lives fighting for the Crown. There were two billiard tables in "The Hut" where most of the town's cueists learned the game.

Across the way in the imposing Town Hall cut-stone building, two clubs catered for billiards and snooker enthusiasts. The Workmen's Club, at the rear on the first floor, boasted only one table while to the front of the building the Social Club proudly provided two tables, where at that time snooker was a real minority sport.

For almost half a century Johnnie Riddell was the No. 1 billiard player in Ballinasloe, representing both the Workmen's and Social Clubs in the Inter-towns' competition that featured teams from Loughrea, Athenry, Gort, Banagher and Portumna, which ran up to the early seventies. Later he was again No. 1 in the Midlands and West of Ireland billiards and snooker championship, which was run in the Social Club and sponsored by cigarette manufacturers, P.J. Carroll & Co.

Johnny learned the game at an early age when his later father used to bring him to the Workmen's Club. Soon his skills on the baize cloth were recognised and inside a few years he was representing the club. "We used to travel by taxi, usually Billy Shanley, to the away inter-town games. We shared the price of the taxi between us but it was a honour to represent your town"

said Johnny. He cited the best opponents and good friends he clashed with over the years as Tommy Martin (Edenderry), Richie Dunne (Edenderry), Joe Kinneen (Mechanics), Padraic Murray (Portumna), Christy Barrett (Athenry), Mike Tierney (Loughrea), Tom Lambert (Gort), Paddy Oliver (The Claddagh) and Mickey Murray (Ballinasloe).

Having played soccer with Ballinasloe Town for many years, Johnny decided to take up refereeing and was the 4th official for an under 18 international between Ireland and Wales, played in Galway. But he still continued playing the game up to the age of 42, showing a remarkable stamina for his years. A life-long pioneer, Johnny was a "fitness fanatic" always keeping in shape for all his sports.

For over thirty-five years he was "the man in the middle" on the Roscommon playing fields, which saw him to honoured with a Roscommon Sportstar for refereeing in 1981.

Recalling the days of three billiard clubs in the town, Johnny said "It was all billiards then, you would hardly ever seeing anybody playing snooker. But Alex "Hurricane" Higgins changed all that when he came and played in the Social Club, just after winning the world title in 1972. He was an amazing player and a great honour for the Social Club to get him play there. Most of the young lads are now playing the game but I still prefer the billiards and try and get in a few games every week" concluded Johnny, who still remains on cue.



*Johnny is presented with the Galway Sports Star Trophy, in 1972, by legendary Commentator Micheál O'Hehir. Also pictured is Johnny's wife Betty.*

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# Reaching Out To The Local Diaspora

**Writes Ruairi Moore**

Famed for its wealth of local history and broad global connections, the town of Ballinasloe could soon see itself swept up in an exciting pilot project that seeks to reconnect with the Irish Diaspora worldwide.

Ireland Reaching Out (IRO) is a revolutionary government-sponsored programme based on the premise of taking the initiative in actively inviting those of Irish ancestry around the world to come and trace their heritage, rather than waiting for them to come to us. "It has real potential for all of us in so many ways," says Theresa Scott, a Clontuskert local and IRO volunteer. "After all, it's often said that we're a country of 5 million, but a people of 70!"

As co-ordinator of the Clontuskert centre, Theresa played an instrumental role in the inaugural "Week of the Welcomes", which recently saw those contacted by IRO invited to a formal tour of the West of Ireland to trace their ancestry. "It was really heart-warming to see how

overjoyed they were," says Theresa. "One girl from the States didn't even know she had Irish ancestors until she saw the IRO website, and one man got the chance to stand on the foundations of his great, great, great grandfather's farm."

As well as these obvious social and cultural benefits, this project also presents opportunities of an economic nature, according to journalist and economist David McWilliams. Speaking at the Week of Welcomes launch, he advocated tourism as key in Ireland's economic recovery, and has championed

*IRO's potential to impact the industry for the better, as well as leading to a more open and culturally inviting nation.*

*But though Ballinasloe may well be one of the first encompassed in the project's next string of towns, the project cannot succeed without volunteers. Theresa urges absolutely anyone interested to get involved. "If you would like to learn more about where you live, about the land, the history of locals sites, or even just get to know your parish better, Ireland Reaching Out is a great organisation to be involved with, because reaching out, connecting people - that's what it's all about."*

To learn more about Ireland Reaching Out and get connected with your local history, visit [www.irelandxo.org](http://www.irelandxo.org)



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Source Irish Independent, Tuesday, 14th June, 2011.

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# Young Ballinasloe Footballer Captains the Galway Minors



**Writes Colm Croffy**

**An alumni of Creagh NS and now Athlone College, local footballer John Shaughnessy was recently chosen as captain for the Galway Minor Team at the age of 18. Ballinasloe Life interrupted his busy training schedule and had him answer a few questions.**

**When did you first start playing football? Were there any key mentors who taught you the love of the game?**

I first toggled out for a football game at U12 level, which now seems late enough with the brilliant U6 and U8 structures currently in place in town. I first got interested in Gaelic football in primary school and then I got the chance to train under coaches like Seán Riddel and Godfrey Gibbons, who got me even more interested.

**And how did you get involved at a county level?**

I was lucky enough to have been involved with Galway football since U14, and there was always a good atmosphere within the teams. The Ted Webb competition two years ago was the first time we experienced any sort of real inter-county matches. A lot of the same players from those U14 and U16 team are on this year's minors, so we all know each other well.

**You then went on to be selected as captain – could you tell us how that happened, and how it felt?**

It wasn't any big occasion or anything - it was just announced to us after training in the dressing room by the manager Tommy Joyce. I might be the captain but to be honest, any one of the thirty odd lads could be captain. It's a great bunch of players and they are all leaders in their own way. I was shocked first of all, but honoured at the same time. Shane Maughan was elected as vice captain so he takes a bit of the responsibility as well! I knew that because I was captain I would have to set an example to the rest of the players and couldn't be seen to be soft or weak in any way, which isn't easy.

**What kind of a training regime is involved? Does playing at this level require much sacrifice?**

We're training three times a week, twice during the week and then on the weekend. Gym work is cut down to an extent when a big match is close but we are told to keep ticking over in the gym because it helps prevent injuries. We are told of the importance of eating the right food, not a diet as such, but definitely no snack boxes! There's some sacrifice, but nothing major. The trek to training is probably the hardest thing, especially for one player from the Aran islands! We can still socialise with friends and go out in town, but obviously nothing overboard.

**What lies in store for the team in the coming season?**

Despite losing out in the Connacht Final, we're looking forward to playing Cavan on the first Saturday in August in Longford, and hopefully if we win that we'll meet the winners of the Dublin/Cork game!

**You've just finished your second-level education: what do you hope to do now?**

I'm just finished the Leaving Cert so I'm trying to relax a bit! Hopefully I'll get the points to get into St. Pat's to study Primary Teaching. I'm not working at the moment but I'm trying hard to find a job!

**The training sounds tough – how do you unwind when you are not in the gym or on the field?**

I enjoy hanging around with my friends or playing the xBox or a bit of guitar. With a busy training schedule like this, rest is just as important as training. It was hard to unwind during the Leaving but it's easy enough now!

**What advice have you got for aspiring young footballers?**

The same as always, train hard and you'll get your reward. There are great coaches involved in Ballinasloe with the young kids and if they listen to them and train as hard as you can I'm certain there will be plenty more Galway players from the Town in the years to come. 

# Three Generations of Ballinasloe Community Games

Writes Ruairi Moore

**Though rich in a variety of clubs and societies which have brought varying levels of success to the town, few organisations can claim the longevity and glittering track record enjoyed by the Ballinasloe Branch of the Community Games.**

An independent voluntary organisation operating in local communities throughout Ireland, the Community Games were founded in 1968 with mission statement: "to provide opportunities for children and young people to develop in a healthy and safe environment through experiencing a wide range of sporting and cultural activities, and to encourage and foster community spirit and co-operation."

Founded just five years after the establishment of the games on a national level, Ballinasloe have since gone on to see literally hundreds of its children take part down through the years, winning scores of gold, silver and bronze medals and representing in a number of finals.

"We first became involved in 1973," remembers Carmel Greally, who has served as secretary for the Ballinasloe Branch since, as well as vice-president at a national level. "We went on to win silver at the national finals in Under 12's mini-rugby, and we had a swimmer named Mary Walsh who won bronze. Not bad, for our first year!"

Ballinasloe have gone on to distinguish themselves in a variety of events in the 38 years since. "We have always been very strong in the rugby, very strong in the swimming, the athletics as well.



**Ballinasloe's first Community Games Rugby Team**, who won silver at the national finals in 1973. Back Row (L-R): Alfie Walsh, Niall Ryan, Laurence Gavin, Noel Mannion, Noel Walsh, Alan Walsh. Front Row (L-R): Gearoid Geraghty, Willie Burke, Paul Hickey, Paudie Brennan, Seamus Grealy, Paudric Houlihan

We've stayed so long at it because we've had a dedicated committee each year, and well as some great sponsors." These sponsors include the Credit Union on a local level, plus the HSE on a broader national level. Why does Carmel think that it's important?

"A lot of people will tell you that competition is bad for children. I think it's good for children - they learn how to be part of a team. They learn the winning and they learn the losing, which is the foundation of life because you cannot

win everything, but you don't run away from it because you're beaten. You pick yourself up and you get on, you move on."

Carmel is also adamant about all the Games have to offer to children's lives.

"It's not just a sporting event," she explains. "Many who aren't familiar with it don't realise that. It's a sporting and cultural organisation, so that means we have the art, the singing, the model-making, and we've become very strong in the chess- there's a whole programme of lovely events that truly has something for everyone. Every single child has a god-given talent, and you'll find that some who may not be too good at the sporting events could be very good with their hands. We've been every bit as successful on the cultural side as on the sporting."

True enough, as Ballinasloe saw 11 medals return from the first national final in Athlone last May in events such as model-making and chess. And all of this with the second national final yet to take place in August.

"It became so big that they run the indoor events first, and save the outdoor ones for the summer, so it really is a year-long cycle of preparing, training, taking part."

The growth in size aside, does Carmel think Community Games have changed in the years since its foundation?



**The Ballinasloe U11 Mixed Mini Rugby Team** who were crowned HSE Connaught Community Games Champions after defeating Ballina in the final: Back (L-R): C. Grealy, S. Reilly, M. Devine (Managers), M. O'Grady, Middle (L-R): J. Carey, L. Darcy, S. Mannion, S. Jennings, O. McCormack, F. Finneran and O. Dooley. Front (L-R): M. McDermott, D. Connelly, A. Reilly, M. Devine and C. Lohan.

**The Ballinasloe Community Games U16 chess team that have won the National final for fifth time in-a-row. Front (L-R): Conor Kelly, Billy McKenna. Back: Luke Moran, Daniel McMorrow, Ruairi McKenna Carroll (Capt) Jack McKenna, and Shane Bleahene.**



"I suppose some of the children are a lot more professional about it now, they'd do a lot more training and receive a lot of encouragement and support at home. While we love to see them get so enthusiastic about it, we have to be very careful about making sure that all the kids stay involved, and not just the ones winning the medals. No matter how good they are, they can't win a relay race on

their own. That's not what the Community Games is about." This family aspect is an important factor to the games, as former athletes often stay on to help train the next wave, or even send their own children in turn.

"We're on our second, maybe even our third generation," muses Carmel, whose own son was a member of that fateful first

rugby team who went on to the national final in 1973. "It really has become a lovely tradition." As well as being a family tradition, the games do all they can to get the entire community involved, drawing from five primary schools in the area. While she finds it difficult to estimate the hundreds that enter each year at a local level, it's clear that the response is often huge, with over 800 entries to this year's art competition alone, and five heats staged in athletics to deal with the number of entries.

But while gaining the interest of the children themselves has never been a problem, Carmel has had some recruitment issues in the past.

"While we're lucky to have about 80 volunteers who give us their time each year, the problem is that the programme is just too big," she explains. "It's physically impossible to take part in every event, much as the kids might want to. We have no tag rugby, no rounders, no hockey - all events which I think we could be really good at, if we just had the volunteers to come along and make it available to the kids."

"While we're lucky to have about 80 volunteers who give us their time each year, the problem is that the programme is just too big," she explains. "It's physically impossible to take part in every event."



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# Special Olympians

**Writes Kitty Tierney**

*"Let me win, and if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt." So goes the oath for the Special Olympics, and it is one that five athletes from Ballinasloe certainly fulfilled when they returned from Athens in July, each with a medal slung around their necks.*

*Friends and family travelled from Ballinasloe, Ahascragh, and Woodlawn to welcome home their very own sporting heroes, when they arrived victorious into Dublin Airport fresh from the 2011 Special Olympics World Summer Games in the Grecian capital.*

*John Loughnane of the Ballinasloe Eagles Special Olympics Club won a gold medal in the Equestrian Working Trails, placing fourth in the English equitation while Emma Finneran, Christine Kelly and Fionula Treacy of Creagh Training Centre represented Ireland on the 5 a-side ladies football team, defeating Italy 4-0 in their final match to claim the bronze medal.*

*Jonathan Griffin from Woodlawn, who bowls with the Corrib Special Olympics bowling club in Oranmore, took gold in the doubles and team events and placed*

*fourth in his own singles event. Having left Ireland with the rest of their Irish team-mates on Monday the 20th of June, the athletes travelled to the island of Rhodes for their Host Town programme. Here the Irish team had the opportunity to spend five days on the beautiful island training, relaxing and acclimatising to the intense heat before moving on to Athens for the opening ceremony and eight days of competition.*

*Each athlete returned in absolute awe of their adventures, citing the opening ceremony in Athens one of the most memorable experiences of their lives.*

*The athletes were treated to a Garda escort into the city on their return to Dublin, where they met friends and family and celebrated late into the night.*

*Kitty Tierney of Ballinasloe Special Olympics expressed the deep gratitude and pride felt towards each of the returning athletes and all they have accomplished. "We're so proud, and everything that they've achieved only goes to show that with hard work and a never give up attitude anything is possible."*



*Local artist Martin Ward is responsible for the lovely new mural which greets visitors as they enter Ballinasloe.*

*Padraig Lyons, co-ordinator of Canal House, praised Martin and all his other learners at the centre "for their outstanding work in the Tidy Towns preparation in Ballinasloe".*

*See also the range of FETAC courses offered at Canal House with a wide range of human development supports. Phone: 090 9643231*

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# From Boarding School to Day School: Garbally College Begins a New Journey



**Writes Seamus O'Brien**

**Set amongst 300 acres of some of the most spectacular scenery in the country, Garbally is one of Ireland's oldest secondary schools with a foundation tracing back over two hundred years.**

As a boarding school its hinterland was primarily provincial, but Garbally's halls have seen the passage of students all from over the midlands and well further afield until the boarding facility closed recently, opening the way for it to become the day college of choice for East Galway/South Roscommon.

The transition to an all day boys' school saw millions of Euros expended in upgrades and renovations. Several modern facilities now augment the school's aged facade, adding to an already very extensive infrastructure, not least amongst which are the new dining hall, sports courts, a newly pedestrian-ised internal courtyard

as well as enhanced facilities for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Moderate to Severe learning disability.

The curriculum, benefitting from over 50 fully-qualified educators to deliver it, includes the Leaving Cert Established, Vocational, and Applied Programmes, and all business, science, language, practical and social/scientific subjects are offered to higher level.

A particularly strong feature of the colleges' philosophy is the emphasis on extra curricular activity. Traditionally a rugby school with such famous luminaries as Noel Mannion, Kieran Fitzgerald and Ray McLoughlin as past pupils, the school now actively encourages all students to participate in the vast array of pursuits offered, spanning football, rugby, soccer, hurling, tennis, basketball, athletics and many more.

"These extra curricular involvements are a matter of huge pride for all in our school community. We firmly believe in the veracity of the adage "Mens sano

corpore sano", or 'A sound mind in a healthy body'," enthuses school Principal Seamus O'Brien.

"This involvement extends, of course, to cultural and intellectual pursuits such as public speaking, debating, acting, artistic endeavours, enterprise and music."

The school's ethos of hard work, co-operation, ambition and optimism is paying rich dividends, with enrolment figures increasing significantly.

"This coming academic year will see close to 500 pupils in the college, maximising on the 420 enrolled three years ago, when boarding finished," continues Séamus. "Our results place us inside the top 30% of secondary schools in the country. There is a huge sense of pride in being associated with the Garbally tradition and in the progress we have made since we began on new journey. We are well positioned to build on our tradition and our recent success. We face the future with confidence and great hope."

Aras na mBuachaillí



### New Autism Centre Opens

Garbally College marked a significant new development in the school's educational journey recently with the official opening of a new purpose-built Autism Unit on its Ballinasloe campus.

The College currently has ten students in the Autistic and Special Learning Needs categories, and this new venture is part of the college's inclusion policy to ensure students with special needs are educated in a conventional school environment. The new facility is the most modern of its type in Ireland; located at the edge of the forested area near the college's

main entrance, it blends in magnificently with the adjoining existing buildings. It contains a tuition room equipped with the latest I.C.T. facilities, bathroom and shower and hot press as well as an Arts and Crafts Room and a magnificent Multi Sensory Relaxation Room.

The students follow a FETAC programme, which includes English, Maths, Arts and Crafts, Horticulture, Food Appreciation, Metalwork, Music and Woodwork. The centre has expanded from one pupil when it began in 2007 to a projected enrolment of 15 students for the next academic year 2011-2012.

Sinead Kennedy is the director of the programme, and she has completed post graduate course in this area and is ably assisted by teachers and two specially designated Special Needs Assistants.

The official opening was attended by a host of local dignitaries, including Mayor Pat O'Sullivan. The new facility was blessed by Mullagh P.P. Fr Niall Foley himself a former Staff member and Vice President of the college.



Prospective Students meet the Garbally Dragon



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# Foreign Students Perspective on Living in Ballinasloe

Writes Ruairi Moore

Often colloquially referred to as a town of “blow-in’s”, Ballinasloe’s situation on the River Suck and Grand Canal terminus have seen the feet of thousands of all nations, cultures and creeds tread its streets, truly earning the moniker “The Gateway To The West”.

The Association of Irish Festival Events (AOIFE), a long-standing network based in Creagh, has upheld this international welcome for the past nine years, routinely recruiting students from all over the world to work as interns and immerse themselves in the local culture.

“My first impression was that I had arrived in a real quiet Irish village,” shared Valentina Bonazzi, a student of Arts Administration from Parma, Italy. “I was prepared that it was not a city, without a lot of the same entertainments, but with all the essentials. And a peace you cannot find in any city.”

Virginia Carolfi, another Italian student of the Arts & Cultural Management from Bologna, had a similar impression. “I arrived on a dark, dreary night, and when the taxi got lost it only reinforced my initial impression of a small, quiet town in the middle of the bog.”

“It was quite an adjustment to go from a city with half a million people to a town of just over 6000,” remembers the third AOIFE intern, Dutch Event Management student Martine Smit. “When my first day involved hours of desperate cycling, I thought I would never get used to this town.”

Though all the girls’ first impressions seemed to reflect a sense of alienation, all agree that these opinions were quick to shift once they had met the locals. Martine became a member of the Ballinasloe Musical Society when she helped out with the staging of South Pacific, while Valentina and Virginia both found the people of the town to be exceptionally friendly in comparison to their hometowns. “Everyone here is genuinely interested in foreigners and our stories not like other big tourist destinations and that is charming” cites Virginia .

“From the time you leave for work in the morning to the time you leave the office, all the people you meet say hello, and are as polite as if it’s the first time they’ve met



*Pictured on a recent visit to Leinster House (L-R): Dutch Student Martine Smit, Bolognaian Student Virginia Carolfi, Parma Student Valentina Bonazzi with local Senator Michael Mullins.*

you,” smiles Valentina. “I’m living with this kind of gregariousness and cordiality for the first time in my life!”

And Ballinasloe only went on to impress each of them all the more, though in different ways. Valentina cites the lack of cutthroat competition between local businesses and pubs to be one of the most surprising and endearing aspects of the town for her, while Virginia and Martine both agree that Ballinasloe afforded them the opportunity to see the “real” Irish culture in an un-distilled, un-commercialised, and thoroughly genuine form. Martine explains.

“Some of the nights in local bars for me showed me the Ireland as I imagined it, a table full of musicians playing instruments where everyone is welcome to join in. A place where the town comes together to have a break from the working life.”

Though each in their own way became enamoured with the town and its qualities, each also had concerns about the town’s accessibility to newcomers which they felt, if remedied, would bring a new lease of life to the tourist trade as well as a better quality of life for residents.

“I was so sorry to see that when you leave the office at six and walk down the

town, the centre is empty and dead ,” lamented Valentina. “There is no one on the streets, nothing going on, and often I had no choice but to go directly home.”

Virginia’s is a similar complaint, as she bemoans the lack of a vibrant artistic entertainment centre. “I think the Town Hall Theatre can definitely become a significant cultural spot for the area.”

“Tourists visit the popular spots and big cities to discover the “real” Ireland, and it’s here that you can find it! in spades ”

Between them they spent from late February until the middle of July working on various European and Irish Festival tasks as well as local events like the Ada Symposium, Bootcamp and Summerfest.

A particular highlight for them all was when Senator Michael Mullins kindly agreed to give them a private tour of the Oireachtas, where they got to meet Minister for Finance Mr. Michael Noonan,

“This would never happen in Italy or Holland, our Mothers are so proud that we got a tour from a Senator and met such high ranking politicians”, you have a great attitude and a wonderful outlook - we will be all back to Ballinasloe”. 

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# October Fair Countdown Begins!

**Writes Charlene Bloe**

**Just around the corner is Ballinasloe's main event of the year - the annual Ballinasloe Horse Fair & Festival. With just over eight weeks to go to the opening weekend, the festival committee are busy putting a finishing touch to various aspects of the programme, headed up by new chairperson Cllr. Timmy Broderick.**

Speaking about his new appointment, which took place at the June AGM in Gullane's Hotel, Mr. Broderick said:

"I am delighted to have been selected as the new chairperson of this event. With the support of the committee and the community; I will give this role 100% to further its success for the future. I am looking forward to the challenge of bringing all the community together to enjoy this event which is worth approximately €7 million to our local economy. I also believe that now, more than ever, we need to welcome the many people who make this event a success by visiting our town during the nine day event."

Cllr. Broderick continued to thank the outgoing Chairman, Brendan Bradley, on behalf of the committee for his

commitment and valuable work to the Ballinasloe Fair & Festival over the past four years.

The festival, which takes place from Saturday 1st to Sunday 9th October, is annually launched with a touch of glamour in the form of the selection of the Carlton Shearwater Hotel Queen of the Fair, who will be chosen to attend all the events during the nine days, as well as qualifying for selection as the Galway Rose next year.

"We need to keep our traditions alive so we in the Ballinasloe Fair & Festival invite candidates from Ballinasloe and the greater area to come along and enjoy an experience that's unique to Ballinasloe and will leave any girl with treasured memories and a sense of pride in an event that attracts 50,000 people into the town on the opening Sunday alone!"

This year's selection will be held on Saturday, September 17th. There is no entry fee and nominations are open to females over 18 years. If you have a business, pub/hotel or think your daughter might benefit by taking part and representing her town as an ambassador and maybe even reaching the Rose of Tralee - then contact Mary Phelan on (087) 2071869 or email your details to [info@ballinasloeoctoberfair.com](mailto:info@ballinasloeoctoberfair.com).

For the men, following on from the

success of last year's campaign, the King of the Fair is a good fundraising initiative for any local event or club. In 2010, Barry O'Connor was crowned the Ballinasloe Fair & Festival King of the Fair from former King of the Fair, Nigel Sammon (who represented the Ballinasloe Musical Society in 2008). The King of the Fair is an amazing opportunity for our local clubs and societies to fundraise with a difference.

If your club are looking for something different to raise funds in 2011, maybe you've done your fair share of table quizzes, flag days and dinner dances, then why not get your potential King ready! All you have to do is register with the Ballinasloe Fair & Festival by calling us on 087 1339054 or emailing us at [info@ballinasloeoctoberfair.com](mailto:info@ballinasloeoctoberfair.com) before Monday 8th August.

The calendar for this year's Ballinasloe Horse Fair & Festival is as packed as ever, with all equestrian events taking place on Sunday 2nd, Monday 3rd & Saturday 8th October. The Fair Green will see an array of horses on the opening Sunday take part in the Ballinasloe Credit Union Horse of the Fair lunging competition, open to all 3-year-olds. This year there will be no qualifiers required, therefore entries will be taken on the Fair Green on Sunday 2nd October. However, Monday 3rd October will see both the AIB Pony



of the Fair & Hayden's Hotel Cob of the Fair lunging competitions take place. Qualifiers for these events will be held nationally prior to the fair. There will be local qualifiers held in Creagh Equestrian Centre on Saturday 10th & Saturday 24th September. The nine day celebrations will kick off with the 172nd Ballinasloe Agricultural Show in the Showgrounds on Saturday 1st October.

Popular non equine events during the nine day festival include free street music on Sunday 2nd, Monday 3rd & Saturday 8th October. On Sunday 2nd and Monday 3rd October Ballinasloe's main streets

will be the sights of a huge market where you could find anything from a saddle to a crepe! The popular Domac Plant & Tool Hire Tug of War Competition takes place on Tuesday 4th to Friday 7th, as well as the long established Singing Pubs Competition. Supermacs Monster Fireworks Display will shine at the marina on Friday 7th October after the final of the tug of war. The closing weekend of the fair will host the Country Fair Day with over 100 stalls in St. Michael's Square and La Gaelach on the Soundstage. The annual Mare & Foal Fair will also take place on Saturday 8th October. The nine day festival will conclude on Sunday 9th

October with the increasingly popular Premier Proteins Open Dog Show and Gullanes Hotel Vintage Day.

Watch this space for more news about this year's Ballinasloe October Fair & Festival, in the meantime keep up to date follow us on Facebook and online at [www.ballinasloeoctoberfair.com](http://www.ballinasloeoctoberfair.com)

The Ballinasloe October Fair is the town's most lucrative and definitive event, and each years success is down to the volunteers involved. To help out in the run-up to the festival or during the nine days, contact (087) 1339054 or email [info@ballinasloeoctoberfair.com](mailto:info@ballinasloeoctoberfair.com).

*The Fair & Festival committee is a voluntary group of local people who give up their free time, to ensure we have a festival, for our town, built around the oldest Horse Fair in the world. The committee welcomes new members.*



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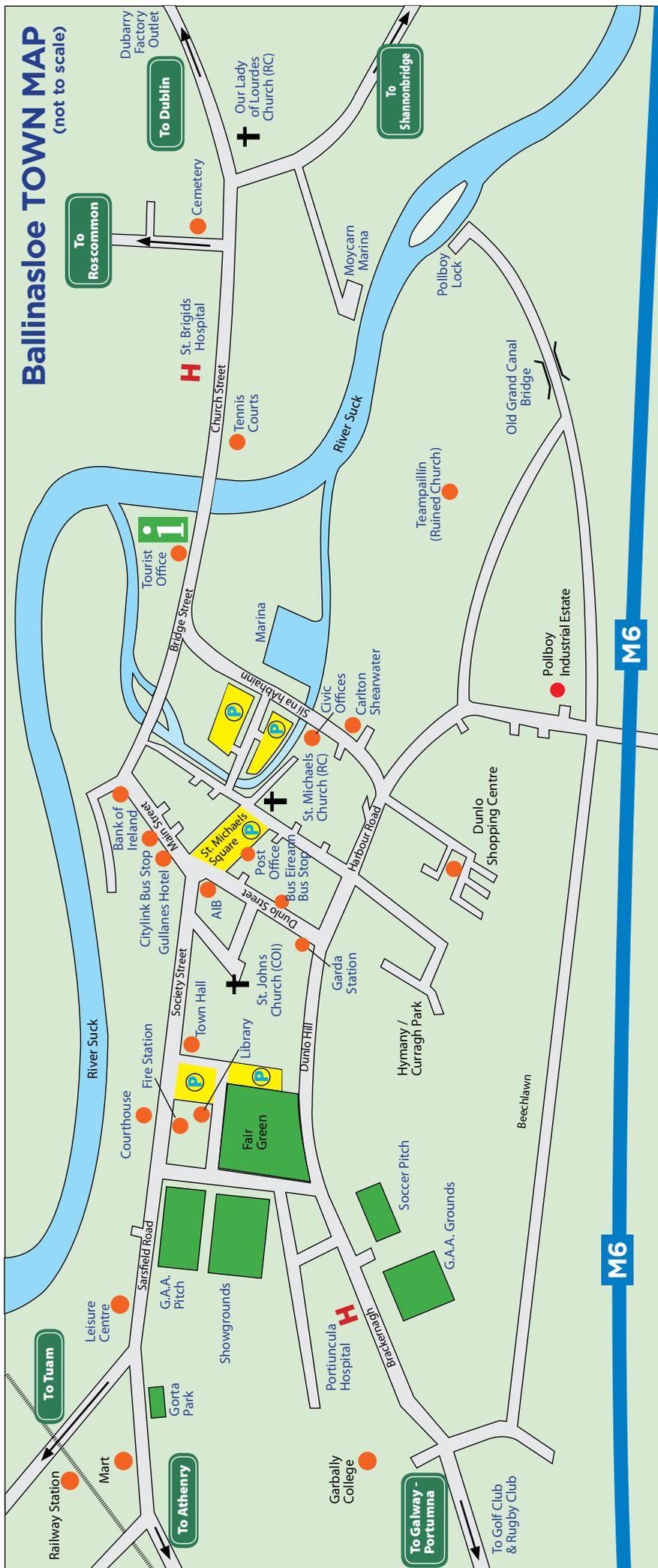
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# Ballinasloe TOWN MAP

(not to scale)

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## Creagh Equestrian Centre

Creagh Equestrian Centre is situated just four miles outside of Ballinasloe town. Their qualified instructors provide horse riding lessons for people of all ages. Horses and ponies for all ages and levels are available. Lessons are priced at €15 an hour. Hats are supplied by the centre. It is advised that the rider wear boots, such as riding boots or wellies. **Lessons are held Monday- Friday at 6, 7 and 8pm. Saturday at 10 & 11am, 12, 2 & 3pm Tel . No. 087 2254227.**

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## Flowerhill Equestrian Centre

Situated in the village of Killimor roughly 20 miles outside town, Flowerhill has long been a haven for horse-lovers both local and visiting alike. The centre offers horseriding lessons as well as hunting, clay pigeon shooting, fly fishing and much more, all amongst the beautiful scenery of Killimor. **For more information on location, pricing and opening times, visit [www.flowerhill.net](http://www.flowerhill.net) or call +353 (0)9096 76112**

## Can't See Your Club / Organisation / School?

News to share about your local club organisation, but can't see it listed anywhere? Fix it! Please forward any local club or society news for inclusion in the next edition to [thballinasloelife@hotmail.com](mailto:thballinasloelife@hotmail.com) as soon as possible.

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