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BALLINASLOE LIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 5 Issue 6: Feb '16 - March '16

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Photo by Robert Riddell

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PAUL CONNOLLY - OUR MAN IN DAVOS



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AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 5 Issue 6: Feb '16-March '16

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REAMHRÁ

As we brace ourselves for the orgy of congratulatory commemorations that will pinnacle in this republic (the fourth declared on the island) acknowledging its debt to the rebels in a chiefly Dublin insurrection; the good people of Cork and Roscommon are up in arms again (metaphorically at least) over the apparent desire of the Dail Eireann based authorities (as opposed to the Castle ones) to change people's birthright no less!

The effective decision by the Dept. of Environment to alter local authority boundaries and to place local administration under different Councils – Cork County to City and parts of South Roscommon to Westmeath County has caused paroxysms of rage among normal sane citizens, as in essence they believe they will no longer be known as x from a certain location. How Pearse, Plunket et al must be chuckling in their tombs that cherishing all our children equally can't fill a hotel ballroom in Cork or Roscommon but campaigning against the renaming or reassigning of a tract of ground originally demised by the Castle Authorities as Shires, has even men and women of the cloth grabbing the loud hailer!

These administrative units or Counties were not around when the Great Earls took flight from Kinsale in the early part of the 17th Century. In France the Regions were not codified into Administrative units or prefectures till the 1790s – each of their Five Republics have modified or changed the way the resources of Normandy, Brittany and their peoples are governed and managed WITHOUT ever diminishing what makes a Norman from Cherbourg or indeed a Cork person from Cork or a Rossie from Roscommon. UL's Founding President Ed Walsh argued as far back in 2003 that to counter balance the expansion of Dublin it would be necessary for the three cities on the WESTERN seaboard – to merge and share their government, structures & resources and become an Atlantic Technopolis or else the western region and midlands would just continue to be a weekend playground and weekly kindergarden for the rearing of the DUB Cubs to work inside the M50 Greater area. Apart from tapping the Shannon for water for Dublin have we made much progress in the last 15 years?

What better legacy to the fallen of Easter Week – than for us all to get real – let's keep our GAA colours and counties yes but let us also realise that the local governance structures as they currently exist will not help us cherish anyone in the 21st century. They are coming for our votes – don't opt out, opt in – debate, challenge, question - people lay dead in the ditches for our right to self determination . Our prospective TDs are profiled – the choices for representatives and government are ours to make - not Merkel's!

Le Gach De Ghui
COLM CROFFY, Editor



We are now into a new year and you all have a great chance to renew and enact all those New Year resolutions by taking part in BALLINASLOE'S FIT TOWN initiative. Details of the comprehensive list of events happening from 1st February to 13th March are enclosed with this edition of Ballinasloe Life. A big celebration party will take place in Ballinasloe GAA Clubhouse on the last day and hopefully many of you will want to continue with your own particular initiative to make Ballinasloe the Fittest town in Ireland. Well done to Marian Ruane and her team.

On an economic front the town continues to struggle in many areas so that is why we cannot say often enough to shop local first for your needs. This supports local employment, keeps businesses afloat and generates satisfaction in knowing you are playing your part in supporting the local economy.

The town team will be launching the Sports Hub initiative in the next few weeks, promoting the town as a sports destination and you will be able get information as it happens on Ballinasloe.ie

The AGM of your Company, Ballinasloe Area Community Development, is provisionally fixed for 10th March and is open for you to attend.

As this is the last issue of Volume 5, we wish to acknowledge and thank all those who support us firstly with advertising revenue and secondly all the community organisations and individuals who provide us with articles. For a town of this size it is incredible the volume of good things that are happening and a positive final note I say long may it continue.

SEAMUS DUFFY, Chairman,
Ballinasloe Area Community Development.

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For submission of articles, please email ballinasloelife@hotmail.com. Deadline 11th March.

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW? PAUL CONNOLLY

BY CIARA BERESFORD

Ballinasloe native, Paul Conneally (He spells his surname the original way, not the way we would refer to it locally!), who specialises in communications, media management and technologies, has worked for the International Red Cross and is currently employed at the International Telecommunication Union with the U.N.

He has put these skills to beneficial use and has achieved much success and improvement in many developing areas of the world.

Paul is currently based in Geneva, living across the border in France, and is travelling more or less every month. After working for 13 years or so with the International Red Cross, he moved to the UN to an agency called the ITU (International Telecommunications Union) which specializes in promoting access to information and communications technologies (or ICTs).

Paul's move was in part for a change of scenery and a new challenge, but also because the job he took up – head of corporate communications and partnerships – meant he would be working a lot with private sector technology and ICT companies such as Google, Microsoft, Cisco, Facebook, Ericsson and the like, and this was an opportunity he would not get with the Red Cross.

“Private Sector need to be part of the solution when it comes to addressing development and humanitarian challenges, as does technology, so this was an opportunity to pursue something I was very keen about – leveraging new technologies for social and humanitarian good – and so far, so good after four short years”, he stated.

Son of Jimmy and Angela - Paul was brought up in the Dove Bar on Dunlo Street, which he admitted was a fantastic education and experience for him, “we attracted quite the intellectual bunch and debate and discourse (and the odd argument) was the order of the day.”

“I loved every minute of it. We spent our whole lives outside, playing football, up the bog, down by the Suck and generally running amok with the odd trip to Salthill thrown in for good measure. It was a very close-knit community where I met many inspiring people and made many close and life-long friends.”

Paul has always enjoyed the profession of communications, and how it can be used to influence behaviour, engage with audiences, mobilise action and advocated for important causes, “It has always been about the strategic nature of communication – the tricks and tools you pick up along the way change, but the strategic imperative remains the primary focus” he added. “I am also very passionate about how new technologies and increased connectivity are enabling more and more people to have a voice and the changing shape of media and communications is one of the major shifts in the world today and very exciting to be part of that as well as to try and anticipate new developments.”

Without hesitation, Paul admits he owes his success and would credit his parents for this. “They always encouraged curiosity and instilled a love of learning in me and importantly, supported whatever decision or direction I took.” He of course also gave credit to his teachers who inspired him through his younger years, “I remember particularly John Boland and Mattie Gantly in St. Grellans, and Mike Lally and Fr. Allman in Garbally – these were very inspirational people, and very innovative in their approach to teaching and again they cultivated a love of learning which to me is the greatest gift to give because it keeps on giving” he stated.

Paul awards his wife, Linda as being the greatest supporter, as she has been by his side during most of his career including the difficult stations like Sudan, Eritrea and Israel/Palestine. “I think we have a very similar outlook on the world and she has provided me with amazing advice and guidance over the years for everything from managing conflict in the workplace to surviving actual conflict in a war zone”, he added.

Paul admits he always had a serious urge to travel and remembers very well getting a globe of the world from his uncle, Son Murray at the age of eight years old. “I decided early on that I wanted a job that involved travel, but not to travel somewhere for a few days or even weeks but to live there over the course of a few years, immerse yourself in the

local cultures, challenge yourself and learn from others” he added. This attitude has taken Paul to many different places including; Afghanistan during the realm of the Taliban and when Bin Laden roamed around with impunity, to Chechnya during the war with Russia, to Darfur (especially in Gaza), to Haiti during the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake as well as the Balkans, Central Asia, Pakistan and other incredible countries and cultures.

“For me it has been a great adventure and education and above all a real privilege to be able to share some of my time here living and working with people from all walks of life. In many of

the places I have been, I understandably get asked a lot if I have witnessed awful things and if they have affected me – I always answer this by talking about the incredible acts of humanity I have had the pleasure to witness even amongst the most horrendous conditions; there are enough people out there swapping war stories – we need to swap more stories about incredible kindness and generosity that often lights up the darkest of places. All in all I think these experiences have left me with a strong sense of justice and equality because you quickly realise how much we all have in common and how the lack of knowing other cultures creates fear and misunderstanding so the more we can do to get to know other cultures, learn languages, and share experiences – the better off the world will be” shares Paul.

When returning to Ballinasloe, Paul most enjoys meeting up with his family, “I love seeing my parents of course, but also seeing my nieces, Sonya and Sarah and their growing families of soccer players



Paul Conneally speaking about digital humanitarianism on behalf of International Red Cross at a TED event

and ballerinas! Always great to meet old friends, though the choice of drinking establishments seems to be reducing every visit”, he mentioned.

Paul has many fond memories of Ballinasloe; the few that particularly stick out in his mind include the October Fairs, “As pub owners this was a busy but incredibly exciting time; when Conor Hayes brought the McCarthy Cup to Garbally; the Community Games and the likes of Carmel Greally and Micky O’Grady doing so much for the kids of the town and setting us all on the right road; Summers by the Suck; the Youth Club discos and the wonderful formative years of supporting the local pubs!”

When asked about his views on the future of the town and its development, Paul was slightly reluctant to answer as he believes it is the fulltime residents who need to be listened to first and foremost, “I do regret though when I come home to see how the centre of town has become so quiet – no more butchers or bakers and so many great shops and pubs shut down. It seems that the likes of Lidl and Tesco and Aldi have literally sucked the life out of the downtown and anything that can be done to remedy that would have to be a good thing. Ballinasloe is a great location – gateway to the West with the mighty river Suck roaring through, and that is something we could probably market a lot more, not just for tourism but for a place to do business” he believes.

From a work point of view, Paul is preparing for a very busy new year. He is coordinating a session in Davos

on connecting the unconnected, and then on to Kuwait for a global conference looking at using new technologies more effectively during humanitarian operations.

“I am also leading a project on digital content which is extremely interesting and we hope to have that up and running by the end of 2016 – essentially it will be a complete overhaul of how and what we communicate, how we develop our content, and how we reach and engage our main audiences and communities” Paul concluded.



Paul Conneally, Head, Communications and Partnership Promotion, ITU, and Ms. Sarah Parkes, Chief, Media Relations and Public Information, ITU, presenting the Remote Press Briefing, from the ITU TV Studio in Dubai.



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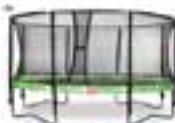
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BIG DIG GRINDING ALONG – PROGRESS AND DISTURBANCE IN EQUAL MEASURE BY



BRIAN CIEPIERSKI

Due to bad weather and the flooding the big dig project is a couple of weeks behind and for the business community of Brackernagh they had a very difficult winter with wholesale disruption with the traffic contra flows.

There are two main elements being undertaken during this project, the Water-main Rehabilitation and the Sewer Network Upgrade Works. In more layman's terms means that the water-mains and sewerage piping in town is being dug up, as many have already seen taking place throughout the locality, taken out and replaced with new ones.

The Council planned to have completed the laying of the main pipes around town by the 2nd week of January, which was done outside the fronts of shops disrupting business, and has been unsurprisingly behind schedule. While this will still be going on there will be minor works on Brackernagh and Harbour road to complete the 'consumer connections'. There will also be small crews of council workers working on the road gully crossings and these works, fingers crossed, are planned to be completed by mid-February. Also the works on the storm water situated at the gates of the Council Offices will be worked on once the river levels have reduced to a more manageable level.

After this part of the project is complete the council will have a cooling off period to ensure all the trenches made from the digs to settle. Once this has happened the entirety of the footpaths and streets of Brackernagh and Jubilee Street will be resurfaced to premium condition, which is planned to start in March or April. In the meantime there will be small sections of footpath to be resurfaced along Brackernagh Street and part of the road from Garbally to the Health Centre will be redone later in the year.

One wonders if the Council and the contractors have had any key learnings from this first phase of the project – as it will invariably wind its way into the principle three commercial streets of the town centre.

"It had an enormous effect on my business, it was awful. It was like a tsunami struck the area. There was a huge drop in the sales. No matter where on the street the digs were, the business was still affected. For almost three weeks the road was completely closed off and locked up. Only foot traffic could get near my shop. One thing I would change would be to do the digs at night, which I think they tried but the residents complained about the noise. It was a necessary evil that we had to endure. I hoped that they would have had more men employed. The only good thing was that they took a break over the Christmas holidays." – said Peter Kelly, owner of Kelly's Newsagent.

"The work should have been done in the summer months to avoid the traffic from the schools and get rid of the long queues at the lights. The longer evenings would allow them to work longer hours. There could have been more workers and working longer hours until 11pm, by rotating shifts. The sales were down by about 65%,"

the shop was blocked off for 2-3 weeks. It didn't matter where they were located on the street, people just avoided the area altogether by going around it." stated Kevin Reynolds, Manager of Reynold's Butchers.

Hopefully the disproportionate impact suffered by the Brackernagh businesses does not have to be visited upon their town centre colleagues, with better liaison and understanding.

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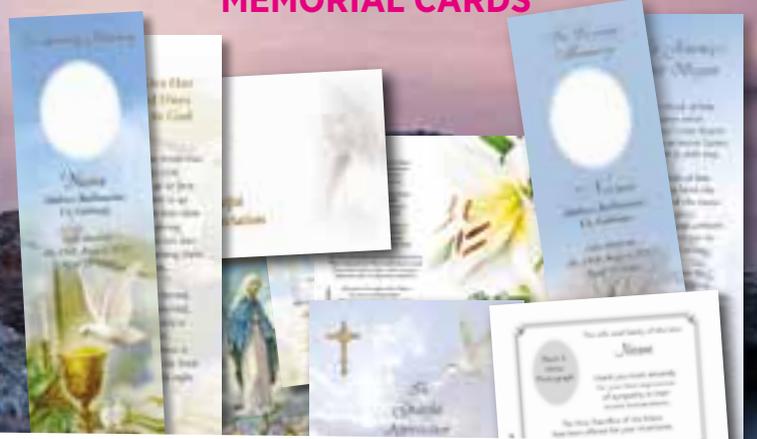


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TALKING HEADS HAIR & BEAUTY – NEW PREMISES

Talking Heads – the successful hairdressers ran by the talented Jacinta Keane, has moved from Dunlo Street to a newly refurbished premises on Main Street.

Jacinta has been hairdressing for the past 26 years, and took over Talking Heads from her brother, Michael in May of last year. Having introduced a line of beauty services to her business, Jacinta quickly realised she would need a larger premises to accommodate the services she had to offer.

Jacinta successfully achieved the move right in time for Christmas, with a talented team of staff

behind her including; stylist and makeup artist Charlene Carr, stylist Maria Bermingham and junior stylist Clare Walker.

Jacinta works with some well recognised makeup brands such as, MAC and Inglot and also offers Shellac nails and semi-permanent eyelashes. "We are now a one stop salon for all your weddings, parties and special occasions, providing package deals and monthly offers", added Jacinta.

Opening hours are Tuesday to Saturday 9.30am - 6pm. For more information, follow their Facebook page at Talking Heads Hair & Beauty.



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21 YEARS OF TREE SERVICES FROM NOBLES



BY BRIAN CIEPIERSKI

In 1995 the Noble Tree Service was set up after the founder George Noble drove a hedge cutter for a local agricultural contractor.

From this they decided that 'maybe there was a living to be made from hedge cutting'. They bought their first Ford tractor with a hedge cutter attachment shortly after. Though it was slow for them at first to get recognition and to create a strong business name. But at that time Rural Environmental Protection Scheme came into being and it spurred the farming sector.

Building from that, they were able to upgrade to a John Deere tractor and a long reach saw machine. This allowed the Noble Tree service to secure a contract with Irish Rail clearing vegetation on the railway lines. After they then secured a contract with ESB to do clearance underneath power

lines, and to accomplish this they had to hire their first employee.

At this point the Celtic Tiger was 'starting to roar' and seeing the opportunity for more contracts, they focused on training their company in agriculture and became NPTC certified. They bought an 'all train hoist and a wood chipper' to complete the ESB contract and the multitude of new contracts from other governmental bodies that their actions had opened to them.

To meet the demands of the many contracts from bodies such as WHB, OPW, BNM, and County Councils, Noble Tree service increased their number of employees and was able to purchase a new 'fleet' of 20 series John Deeres. This added greatly to the company's reliability and safety.

After several years of good business the recession struck the country and as it did most businesses it affected theirs as well. With the government cutting back on spending they

found their machines 'at home for long periods'. Though as with most strong businesses they survived, with the private and farming sector needing their services. And more recently local authority budgets are back using their services as well.

To meet with the new forms of work the company purchased excavators which have timber grabs for handling large trees and branches to put them through a high output wood chipper. Their new machinery and changing of times has led to them becoming a greater friend to the environment too. Supplying wood chip for bio energy, animal bedding and fire wood sales to keep local home fires burning.

So this strong company feel the future is bright and promising and as a company George Nobel the MD "thanks all their customers over the years, big and small for helping us, without them we would not be where we are'.



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22 SPRING SEASONS PREPARING FOR NEW GROWTH!



BY BRIAN CIEPIERSKI



Gerry and his wife Maura

For over 22 years Gerry Croffey Lawnmowers has been an award winning, family run business found by Killure Castle, 5 km outside Ballinasloe. The business in the past dealt solely with repairs and had only Gerry

himself working there but has evolved to a place of work for 5 others and now provides a wide range of services, from repairs and servicing to selling the top brands of gardening equipment from the likes of Honda, Stihl, Viking and Johnsenred, to the population of Ireland.

This ability of the company to adapt and change speaks volumes towards its success and its continuation through a recession which has put countless others out of business. Simply type in Gerry's name onto the internet and you will get numerous sites advertising the company. From gardening equipment to mechanical services to farming equipment, from top brand items to more in the budget well maintained second hand items to even go karts, this company has looked to be accessible to all those who could need it's services. They now even sell landscaping equipment to professionals! This has made the company competitive in an otherwise more hostile market to the family run businesses. Explaining how they won the 2007 Honda dealer of the year award for both Ireland and Northern Ireland!

They can also look to the top quality employees as well to their continued success, with their excellent knowledge of the machines they are selling and friendly and welcoming atmosphere causing customers to keep coming back! All this has led to an increase in customers and the increase in demand of their top quality machinery and services, ensuring special deals and new top of the line models

being offered.

So if you are looking for gardening and farming equipment, a family run business with 22 years of experience which survived the recession, provides good deals which caters to all incomes, is the one place you should definitely go. From 9-6 on Mondays to Fridays and 9-4 on Saturdays, there's time for everyone to visit this great store!

For more information on their great deals visit: www.gerrycroffey.ie

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BALLINASLOE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT...

BY CIARA BERESFORD



L/R: Patricia Tierney, Mary Frances Aherne, Johnny Walshe, Bernie O'Brien and Ann Hill.



L/R: Patricia Tierney (Ballinasloe Training For Employment Ltd), Nuala Kerr (Academic Director with Equal Ireland), Dermot Cavanagh (External Examiner) and Ann Hill (Ballinasloe Jobs Club)

Every town has people who will go the extra mile to help but a major distinction is that there is a group of people who took the decision some years ago to invest their knowledge, commitment and activity and began studying for an Honours Bachelor Degree in Business, Social Enterprise, Leadership and Management.

These people include; Johnny Walshe - the ever active community representative, Ann Hill of Ballinasloe Jobs Club, Patricia Tierney DSP CE Assistant Supervisor with Ballinasloe Training for Employment, as well as Bernie O'Brien, Mary Francis Aherne and Trish Burns to name but a few. Each participant successfully graduated from Athlone Institute of Technology with their Honour Degrees recently.

Today, they are back in the community working on behalf of worthwhile endeavours and enterprises, all of which have the aim of improving the quality of life of the people locally, which is a great example of giving back to the community.

"So how did it happen that a group of local people, many of whom left school early, could successfully reconnect with education and self development? Well the answer is hard work, commitment, self-determination and EQUAL Ireland", stated Ann Hill, Jobs Club.

EQUAL Ireland is a successful, community based, 'not for profit' charitable trust. It designs, develops and delivers accredited high level programmes locally, which are grounded in business, community and enterprise. Founded by Community Activists, Social Partners and Academics, it seeks to provide education and training programmes to people who, for whatever reason missed out on earlier opportunities. It does this on a cost basis thereby making the programmes far more affordable.

Once these participants met up with EQUAL Ireland, the learning journey ahead became clear. They began with the Essential Skills Certificate (a level just above the Leaving Certificate) then moved through a Higher Certificate then on to a Bachelors Degree in Business, Enterprise and Community Development and just recently received their Honours Degree in Business, Social Enterprise, Leadership and Management.

"The journey started in 2006 for some and they tell me it has not yet finished, EQUAL Ireland have just announced plans for a Masters in Social Enterprise and Community development which they fully intend to sign up for", mentioned Ann.

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GETTING THERE WITH DEGREES.



EQUAL Ireland depends utterly upon local communities and local funding agencies to enable its success. Organisations including; Galway Rural Development and Ballinasloe Jobs Club and people such as; Gerry Scouler, former Jobs Club Manager, Stephen Connell, Chairperson of the Ballinasloe Community Resources Ltd and Ita Hodgins were, and are indispensable as they helped to make the dream a reality for so many people. On occasions, the support from the Department of Social Protection was crucial, as was the assistance of the Social Partners SIPTU and IBEC.

"Were it not for the Academic Staff of Athlone, Galway Mayo and Letterkenny Institutes of Technology as well as NUIG there wouldn't have been any programmes on offer from EQUAL Ireland in Ballinasloe. Without tutors of the calibre of Ivan McPhillips of GMIT, Michael Donnelly of NUIG or Marc Cashen of AIT, just to name a few that come to mind, these programmes would not have been available"; stated Ann.

According to Stephen Connell, Ballinasloe Jobs club, who was present at the outset back in 2006, "There were two main reasons we got involved with EQUAL Ireland. First we knew there was a need for 3rd level programmes to be delivered here in the Town and secondly we knew the EQUAL Ireland people, Eddie Higgins and Nuala Keher. We knew they would deliver on their promises and sure enough they did!"

Ann Hill added - "Say what you will the quality of the EQUAL Ireland Lecturing Staff, their positive and appreciative approach to adult learners and their seemingly endless reservoir of support and interest was absolutely crucial to our success!"

"You have to understand the flexibility involved. Lectures are delivered locally. There are no traditional exams. Part-time learning. Great supports and tutors. You couldn't ask for more!" states Johnny Walshe.

And leaving the final word to EQUAL Ireland itself, Nuala Keher the Academic Director added, "Ballinasloe and its people, especially our participants and the organisations who supported them and us, are something in which EQUAL Ireland takes real pride. The relationship is exceptional and it will continue so if you the reader, are interested yourself or know someone who might be why not get them to TEXT 'EQUAL B'Sloe' to 087 2237231 and we will do the rest"

PROGRAMMES WHICH ARE SOON TO BE ON OFFER IN BALLINASLOE INCLUDE:

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- Higher Certificate and BA in Business, Enterprise and Community Development
- BA (Hons) in Business, Social Enterprise, Leadership and Management
- Masters in Social Enterprise and Community Development
- Learning to Train

For any more information, visit their website at www.equallireland.ie or contact Ballinasloe Jobs club directly on 090 9643057.



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GRENHAM'S FUNERAL DIRECTORS SIX DECADES OF SERVICE

BY BRIAN CIEPIERSKI



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Grenham's business was first established in 1909, when Ellen and Martin bought a bar and grocery business on Main Street, making it the oldest business in the town. Sadly Martin Grenham died in 1910 at a young age, leaving Ellen a widow to carry on alone. She did this with great courage and tenacity and was eventually joined in the business in the late 1920's by her son Joe.

In the early 1940's, Joe's first involvement in undertaking arose by selling coffins through the business, where he mounted and lined them. He then started to conduct funerals in the early 1950's, setting the business on another path that it has followed with great success.

the skills and developing the business. They purchased a convenient premises in St. Michael's square, to be the first funeral home in the town .. Joe sadly died in 1989 leaving Peter to continue in the undertaking business. Peter's son-in-law Niall Aylward joined the firm in 2009 and is now involved in all aspects of the business.

They recently completed an intensive refurbishment, bringing it in line with present day funeral requirements, which is conveniently located in St. Michaels Square. "Our aim was to create a comfortable and intimate setting that one would experience in the family environment. We want our visitors to feel welcome and comfortable in which they can arrange/conduct a funeral or discuss their needs," mentioned Niall.

Peter and Niall thanked everyone involved in ensuring the funeral home was saved from flooding these past few weeks. The funeral home remained open all during this time, thanks to the much appreciated help they received.

The Funeral Home can be contacted by email at info@grenhamsfunerals.ie or by phone on 090 9642152. or www.grenhamsfunerals.ie

LITTLE RASCALS CRECHE UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

BY BRIAN CIEPERSKI

In August of 2015 the Little Rascals crèche was reopened and is now under new management.

Having undergone extensive refurbishment, both inside and out, the premises has now become a larger, brighter, and a more inviting space which is very child friendly and equipped to the highest standards.

The new management team, consists of Miriam Murphy and Claire McGreal, who are no strangers to the field of childcare and have almost twenty years of experience in this area. Little Rascals originally opened in Kilgarve Gardens in 1997. It then was on the move to the Pines in 1998 before finally finding its home in its current location on the Shannonbridge Road since September 1999. Claire and Miriam both worked together in Little Rascals for several years in the past and are delighted to have the opportunity to work together again.

Having both recently upskilled, they are very excited about current developments within the sector, "standards are improving all the time, for both children and staff and childcare is becoming an increasingly professional field of practice" states Miriam. The extension of the ECCE scheme, which provides two years free pre-school for children aged between three to four years is "a welcome development" from the ladies point of view.

Furthermore, the introduction of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, has prompted a move towards a much more holistic approach to early years care and education. Little Rascals is offering and providing a broad ranging, child-centred programme of learning which is informed by the principles of Aistear and reflects each child's individual strengths and interests.

Little Rascals is committed to delivering the best quality service at very competitive prices and plans are in place to continue to expand and develop the business. There are more renovations planned for the Summer and it is also hoped to transform the outdoor area. Both Claire and Miriam are strong advocates of the benefits of outdoor play for young children and there is a large, secure garden to the rear of the premises. The children access this outdoor area as often as possible and it is hoped in time to include a poly-tunnel to let the children grow their own plants and vegetables. There is a total staff of five full-time workers in the crèche at the moment, all of whom are experienced and qualified to a very high standard.

They are currently taking enrolments for their ECCE free pre-school year, for September 2016. Should you require any further information please feel free to contact Claire/Miriam on 09096 44577.



ST. BRIGID'S COULD AGAIN BE AN ECONOMIC DRIVER

BY CIARA BERESFORD



Local TD, Denis Naughten has called on the IDA to redouble its efforts to promote Ballinasloe to foreign investors in light of the fact that there is now 8,000 square metres of potential serviced offices on the St. Brigid's campus.

The old admissions building and nurses home would be ideally suited to develop as office accommodation for an international investor who requires office space with high speed broadband access.

The site of the hospital has the State-owned Metropolitan Area Network broadband cable running at the front of the building and the Irish Rail and Bord Gáis networks to the north of the site. All three of these networks are now being managed by ENET, which would allow a new enterprise to tap in without large up front charges.

With the availability of natural gas and the upgrade of the water supplies in both Co. Roscommon and Galway, and with massive spare capacity in the new sewerage treatment plant in Creagh (enough for an additional 1200 population), the town of Ballinasloe is in an ideal position to capitalise on some of the infrastructure problems on the East Coast.

"Recently PayPal, which employs 2,400 people in Dublin and Dundalk, asked staff to make spare rooms available because of the dire shortage of homes and apartments to rent. This would not be a problem in Ballinasloe and the surrounding towns and villages." Stated the local Drum based T.D.

There have also been reports of IT and software businesses based in Dublin that have stalled their expansion plans because of the lack of office space. With the availability of the St. Brigid's campus, this now provides Ballinasloe with a competitive advantage.

"With the infrastructure in place and with a population of approximately 80,000 people within a 30 minute drive of Ballinasloe, I believe the IDA has the material to make a major play for new investment in the town," concluded Denis Naughten.



HOSPITAL WATCH

BY CIARA BERESFORD

Confirmation has been received from the HSE that an Emergency Department consultant post has been approved for Portiuncula Hospital. The post will be filled on a temporary basis while the HSE seeks approval to create a permanent position. This investment is crucial given the wide catchment area the A&E at Portiuncula serves



Director of Elections Dr John Barton, Minister Varadkar and Roscommon County Councillor Maura Hopkins.

"It's essential to ensure that the hospital is adequately funded, given the current demand on the health service", says Roscommon County Councillor, Maura Hopkins, who recently paid a visit to the hospital alongside her Director of Elections, Dr John Barton and Minister Varadkar, where she impressed upon him the need for continued investment at the facility.

The Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) has found, following an analysis of its Trolley and Ward Watch figures for the month of December 2015, that the level of overcrowding nationally has decreased by 13% compared to December 2014. However, a year on year analysis found that there was an increase of 21% in overcrowding from January to December 2015 compared to the same period for 2014.

Although the level of crowding, annually and nationally has increased by 21%, Portiuncula Hospital has seen a significant drop in Trolley and Ward Watch figures from 126 in 2014 to 32 in 2015, which is a drop of 75%. Meanwhile in University Hospital Galway, there has been an increase from 421 to 502 in 2015, a slight increase of 16%.

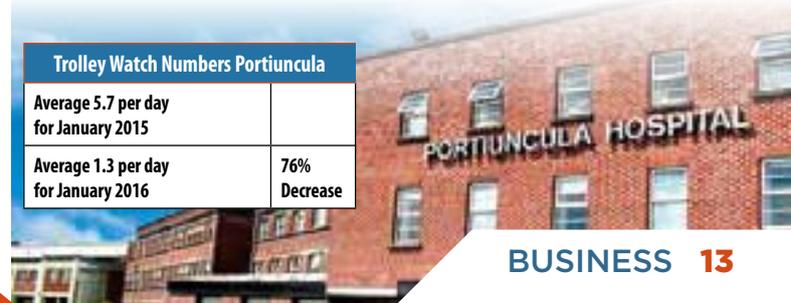
The INMO publishes these figures following the recent introduction of a significantly strengthened, escalation policy designed to assist with ED overcrowding. The new framework is intended to support Hospital Groups and Community Health Organisations in developing integrated escalation plans so that capacity and patient throughput is appropriately managed at a time of excess demand on emergency and acute services.

The combination of the Ministerial Directive and the revised escalation policy now clearly prioritises the pressures within the Emergency Department above other elective (routine) activity within the hospital. This is an absolute requirement if we are to reduce ED overcrowding and improve the environment for patients and staff working in these departments and throughout the hospital.

"It is now absolutely vital that the HSE, at national level, and at senior level within all Hospital Groups, immediately commits to fully operating the revised policy. Their priority must be to reduce overcrowding and ensure that nurses can practice safely within a manageable working environment so that we never see these figures again", added Liam Doran, General Secretary INMO.

"While the new measures to tackle overcrowding are welcome, the longer term solution to solve the ED crisis is for the Government to, once and for all, provide proper funding to reverse the severe cuts over the past number of years and prepare for the future needs of our sick and vulnerable. There is a clear need for investment in beds, both hospital and community, primary care services and staffing", he concluded.

Trolley Watch Numbers Portiuncula	
Average 5.7 per day for January 2015	
Average 1.3 per day for January 2016	76% Decrease



CHRISTMAS ILLUMINATIONS PROJECT 2016



BY CIARA BERESFORD



Traditionally a project of the now dormant Chamber of Commerce the Town was perilously close to not having Christmas lights this year but it clearly became a priority short term project of the Town Action Team.

Planning meetings in summer gave way to the welcome decision to designate the town; one of the REDZ pilot towns and a substantial block of funding was secured to part fund the new campaign which had at its epicentre the new Central European Wishing Tree.

A wonderful crowd amassed for the Festive gathering on the last Saturday in November for the Community Person of the Year Tom Quinn to say a few words and throw the switch on the new installation and the Fire Brigade brought a very special visitor from the North Pole to see if kids were being naughty or nice.

National Schools Scoil na Chroí Naofa, Creagh NS, Taughmaconnel NS, Scoil Uí Cheithearnaigh Gaelscoil and Laurecetown NS, along with wonderful MC; Pat Vaughan AKA Dame Beatrice from the Hansel & Gretel Panto kept spirits high throughout the gathering on the Fair and Festival sponsored sound stage, even with the blustery weather conditions.

Town Team Facilitator Jacinta Divilly paid tribute to Engineer Liam Loughrey, Master Carpenter John Concar and Carpenter Paul Kelly, with Martin Conlon and Gordan Rafter from Creagh Training for Employment Centre. Along with electrician Liam Kenny and his team, who all worked some very unsociable hours in order to provide the town with the new lights and magical Christmas wishing tree.

All the businesses who subscribed towards the promoters funds for the project were circulated with a full income and expenditure statement on the project along with a full listing of the full amounts their 80 colleagues paid towards the costs. The recommended subscription was €150.

Twice they were all offered a final opportunity to contribute as the projects promoters wished to acknowledge publicly the Town Teams thanks to the businesses that were in a position to do so.

BACD Chairman Seamus Duffy thanked James Burke for his huge effort

LIST OF BUSINESS CONTRIBUTORS:

AIB	Brodericks Pharmacy	Divillys Carry Out	Photography	John Dolan	KPW Printers	Noonan & Cuddy	Sheridan Stores	The Hair Gallery
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Ballinasloe Opticians	Chris Daly Shoes	Fletchers Expert Electrical	Haydens Hotel	Jorenas	Menswear	Panache	Paul Byron Shoes	Tranquillity Beauty Clinic
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in calling and collecting from the business community and to the almost 80 firms who supported the underwriting of the costs" No matter where public funding is secured, the project promoters must have their own funds and between the towns centre businesses and Galway County Council we were well placed to draw down the funding which will hopefully allow the lights project to be self sustaining for the next few seasons. We thanks all those who paid for, helped build, erect and help celebrate the Christmas season in our town."

Aside from the positive commentary – the online reaction to the Festive Gathering on facebook and you tube was a staggering 92,000 of a reach and the iconic photo of the bronze horse and man going to the Fair aside the new look tree in the dark had a huge amount of shares, likes and interactions at home and abroad !!

COSTS:

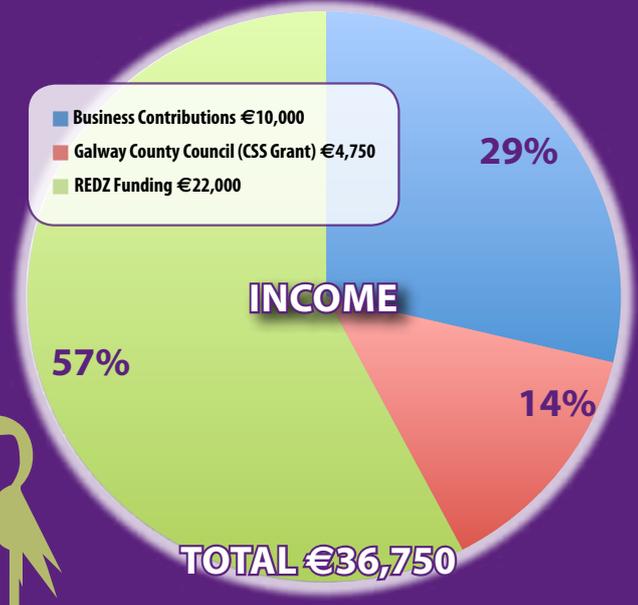
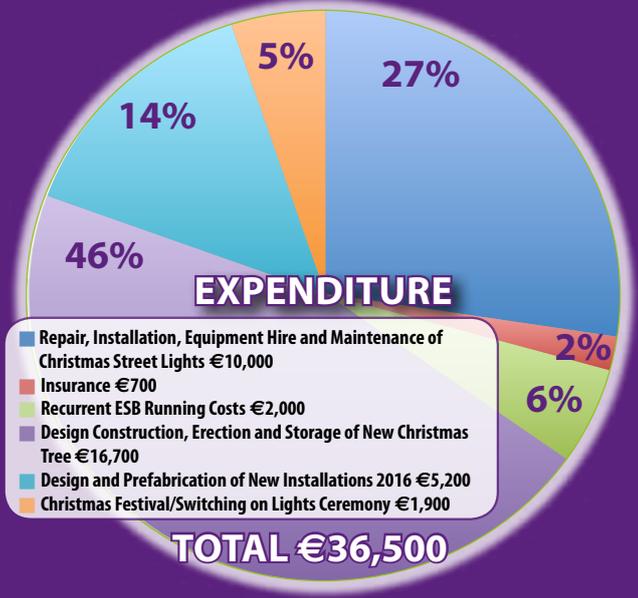
Repair, Installation, Equipment Hire, Maintenance of Xmas Street Lights	€10,000
Insurance	€700
Recurrent ESB Running Costs	€2,000
Construction, Erection & Storage of Central European Xmas Tree	€16,700*
Design and prefabrication of new installation 2016	€5,200
Christmas Festival/Switching on Lights Ceremony	€1,900
Total	€36,500

*approx €13,000 of these costs are non-recurring capital costs of building the tree, (expected lifespan of tree is 10 years).

INCOME:

Business Contributions (to date*)	€10,000
Galway County Council (CSS Grant)	€4,750
REDZ Funding	€22,000
Total:	€36,750

*Any Business that hasn't yet made a contribution can still forward payment to BEC and will be acknowledged in the next edition & included in the detailed breakdown being distributed to all contributors.

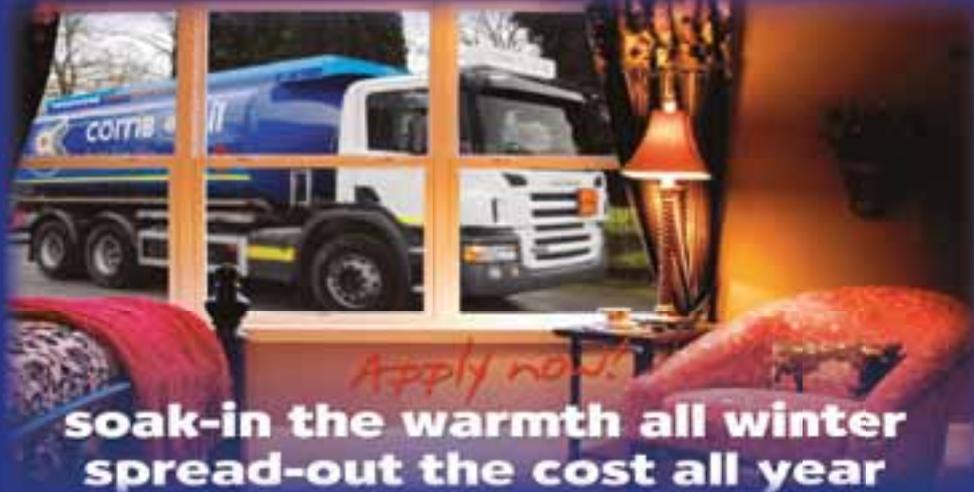


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MARATHON MAN FOR CANCER FUNDRAISING

BY BRIAN CIEPIERSKI



Aiden Sheridan after running his first marathon of the 52

Cancer has effected most, if not all of us at some point in our lives. Through loved ones, friends, neighbours, relatives being afflicted with this terrible illness.

For Aiden Sheridan it was his youngest sister Jennifer. Aiden speaks of this "devastating blow" to him and his family and about the "profound effect" it had. In response to this and to the wonderful care Jennifer has been receiving from Galway Breast Clinic, he has decided to run marathons throughout the year to help raise money for Breast Cancer Ireland through the donations from people who have been inspired by this feat and those who hate this horrible disease.

Jennifer was struck by this disease in May of 2015. He describes the difficulty of the chemo sessions and the impact they had on his sister stating "To watch Jennifer struggle as

she endured numerous session of chemo and having to deal with the loss her beautiful long hair was tough enough but she also had the misfortune of experiencing a host of other side effects which took its toll on her". This on a woman, who worked with children on a daily basis and loved it, and was so full of life and vigour added to the blow.

Her main help through this tough time, aside from her family and friends, is the Galway Breast Clinic whose staff and amazing care have helped her immensely. Aiden stated that in honour of their "due diligence" he was going to run 52 marathons in 52 weeks across the country to help



Aiden and his sister Jennifer

raise money for Breast Cancer Ireland and to raise awareness about breast cancer as well.

Having already completed a few marathons at this stage, Aiden is well underway on tackling this 52 week colossus task. Showing the same strength and love of life as his sister, he will undertake

many challenges in his busy schedule. Just as an example, he will be competing in back to back marathons, ultra-marathons and in a Full Iron Man in Galway on the 26th of June!

But Aiden needs our help too! He needs as many people to know about this as possible, to help raise awareness and to help get sponsors. All of this for the fight against cancer and to make people more knowledgeable about breast cancer. If you want to help Aiden, Jennifer and all Cancer Research visit this link www.mycharity.ie/event/52marathonsin52weeks/ to donate or visit his Facebook page '52 Marathons in 52 weeks in Aid of Breast Cancer Ireland' to see updates of his journey.

His goal is to raise €5,252, and with the help of the great community here in Ballinasloe it is a goal that can be reached!

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FLETCHERS
OF BALLINASLOE



Believe in better

GRATITUDE WILL KEEP OUR CHIN UP FOR 2016..!

BY MAUREEN CAHALAN

The sudden and unforgettable floods brought us all together to limit the devastation of this disaster. Panic stricken by this unbelievable gushing of water almost closed parts of the town for a few days.

Despite all of that negativity accompanied by a lot of fear, the spirit of the Community inspired our individual selves to help each other in every possible way. The Council and

their marvellous and generous employees, under the guided and safe hand of Engineer Adrian Headd, got the sand and the sand bags in place and to their aid came the Army from Athlone and the Red Cross as well as a wonderful group of youth from the sporting world of Ballinasloe.

Everything in place and water under control, even today the community live with a tingle of fear that it will happen again before the promised measures are put in place. However, the promises made by Minister Harris, on his recent visit, gives us great hope and trust that prevention measures are going to happen.

Ballinasloe sprung back into action for the Christmas trading and things went very well. The most important thing of all was that the majority of customers who said they would, did shop local. Shopping local helps everybody, the business houses as well as the families who will later be rewarded in the future with part-time work for their children or spot prizes for their functions. There was something for everybody so yet again Ballinasloe has shown that shopping local is a great investment for everybody. Business houses are doing well now and are giving generous discounts to their Customers for their loyalty. Shopping local keeps our town healthy.

Cahalan Jewellers are embarking on a renovation product promotion with lots of excellent discounts, as we are re-arranging our shop to make way for a very unique and special department. Plans are being prepared so please bear with us while we prepare for a fuller and better shopping experience.

Thank you for your support in 2015. I wish you all health, wealth and happiness for 2016. We are a great town because we have a unique community spirit. Enjoy your day...!



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NATIONAL SPORTS BROADCASTER - DARREN FREHILL

BY CIARA BERESFORD

From contributing to Galway Bay FM at a young age to broadcasting at huge events all over the world, RTE sports broadcaster Darren Frehill caught up with Life when he was the Master of Ceremonies at the People of the Year Community Awards before Christmas.

Darren, originally from Laurencetown, attended primary school in Aughrim where his mother was a teacher. He then moved onto secondary school in Garbally College where his talents really began to flourish, as he was asked by his teachers to work as a liaison with Galway Bay FM to supply them with scores from all of the school matches. He started calling in those results, but after a while got the opportunity to report on some of the bigger events. "It was a great experience and gave me the chance to get some early on air time at a very young age", he added.

Darren went to college at the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology before taking up a job with TV3 in 1998. He now lives in Dublin with his family where he works as a sports broadcaster with RTE 2006 presenting the Sunday Sport and is also one of the main sports anchors on Morning Ireland on RTE Radio 1.

Working in sports broadcasting obviously originated from a love of sport, which was sourced at a young age for Darren, who played hurling and football for Kiltormer,



Darren Frehill as MC at the recent People of the Year Awards held in the Shearwater Hotel.

and soccer for Laurencetown FC, but also got involved in rugby, golf, cycling, and swimming.

"It was my dream to become a professional sports person, unfortunately I was never good enough to make it so I turned my attention to broadcasting, I thought if I can't play sport, working at these events would be the next best thing", shared Darren.



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He would spend most of his time in the garden hitting a ball against the back wall of the house, which he did to practice his skills, but would end up commentating on himself too. "I guess it all paid off. I was better at the commentating than the sport!"

"I think my best attribute is that I'm not afraid of hard work, broadcasting is something I have always wanted to do so I felt I would try and give it my best shot", said Darren, who added that it's been an eventful journey for him, as there is no direct path to working in sports media. "I've been lucky to have very supportive people in each of the organisations I have worked in too. Television and radio is a team effort so you are only as good as the people around you", he stated.

Darren has been blessed to meet some of the biggest names in the business and has worked at some of the biggest sporting events in the world including; the Super Bowl, The US Masters, The European Championships, Paralympics and Champions League finals. "But my favourite event is All Ireland final day. I hope one day I can work at a big decider which Galway win! I live in hope."

Darren considers the world of media as one of the toughest professions to break into. "I certainly had no idea how much work it would be when I started out all those years ago. There were times when I wondered if it would ever happen, but I guess that the same as other jobs too. I don't think there is any one thing that makes it tough. It's a long and winding road, but if you want something bad enough, you just have to keep going", he added.

Darren's job is far from your typical 9-5 job, as he arrives in the RTE studios at 5.30am each morning to work on the Morning Ireland show on Radio 1. He presents sports bulletins throughout the morning period from 6.45am to 11am, where he shares updates on the latest sports news and also invites various guests to talk about breaking news, or look ahead or reflect on one of the big events or matches. "Every day is different. I leave work at lunchtime, but I would always have an hour or two to prepare for the next day that evening - you always need to be switched on to what is going on in the world of sport", he mentioned.

Looking back on 2015, it has been one of the busiest years ever for Darren since he got involved in broadcasting. He has no long term plans at the moment but is looking forward to a busy 2016, with events such as, the Allianz Leagues and the 6 Nations in the spring, and with the GAA championships, Euro 2016, the Olympics, and Paralympics keeping him busy during the summer - "I love working in sport, and if I keep doing my best, I know the future will look after itself."

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HELEN HELPS TO LIGHT UP AUGHHRIM



BY KEN KELLY

A lifetime ambition by a local woman to see her village lit up for Christmas became a reality this time around, thanks to support from the local community, friends and sponsors. Undaunted by the task that lay ahead, Helen Mannion was optimistic from the outset that she would get the support and monies to see her native village lit up for the Festive Season.

The village of Aughrim was the envy of the county over Christmas and the New Year as over 7,300 lights illuminated the historic area for the first time ever. And it was all thanks to the dynamic Helen, who spearheaded the venture with the help of local businesses and sponsors. "It was a real community effort-everybody lent a hand and we got great support. I'm delighted with the outcome" declared a jubilant Helen.

It cost over €3,000 to purchase the 400 metres of illuminations that lit up the village as well as a huge open-air crib, which was also aglow at night, attracting curious visitors from many parts of East Galway. On 8th December Rev. Fr. Gerry Geraghty PP was joined by Church of Ireland Rector,



John Burke and Helen Mannion alongside the open air crib in Aughrim.
Photo: Gerry Stronge.

Rev. John Godfrey in blessing the crib and turning on the lights, while children from the three local schools took part in the carol singing and were supported by hundreds of parents and parishioners. Afterwards they were all invited to participate of refreshments in St. Catherine's Hall.

"I just thought it would be nice to light up our village for Christmas. I spoke to business man John Burke and it just took off from there" explained Helen Mannion. "We got money from a fund-raising event as well as sponsors and private donations. Then Galway Co. Council generously provided the electricity supply while John Burke provided the crib. It was a great community effort and it's the first time we ever had Christmas lighting in Aughrim. It gave the place a great lift" added Helen who wants to thank everybody involved in helping her achieve her goal.

To herald in the New Year, locals gathered around the crib singing carols and partaking of refreshments. When local business man John Burke used the school bell for the final countdown at midnight, all present joined in the singing of "Auld Lang Syne" to welcome in 2016 as the lighted turf torches complimented the strings of street lights in illuminating the village for the first time ever.

LIONS CLUB CHRISTMAS COLLECTION

Over the period of Christmas giving, the Ballinasloe Lions Club collected €2,500 worth of food, which was generously contributed by customers of Tesco and Dolan's Supermarket and Garage. Creagh, Eyrecourt and Killure National Schools. plus Ardscoil Mhuire also made collections within their schools.

The Club followed these donations with their annual church-gate collections, which raised almost €2,000 as well. Joe Hayes Meats and Arrabawn Creamery were

also very supportive in supplying the club with meat and butter at favourable cost - all of this enabled the Lions Club to pack 107 hampers of varying size to distribute to needy families and individuals in the greater Ballinasloe area.

The club estimate that, in total, thanks to local generosity, an excess of €7,000 worth of food was distributed by 10 Lions Club members and helpers in the couple of days before Christmas. "Thanks to everyone who got involved in any way", William Duthie Chair of the Club.

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EXCITING PROJECT FOR CANCER SURVIVORS & THEIR FAMILIES

BY CIARA BERESFORD



The East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support Centre is the first in the country to offer a new health fitness programme to their members.

Marie Murphy is a woman who has excelled in many aspects of life - in her career, as an athlete and also as a person. Through many years of hard work, research and experience, Marie has put together a full programme of physical activities, called 'The Murphy (METs) Programme', which is specifically designed to cater for each cancer patient and their restrictions and to reduce the chance of recurrence from 50% up to 90%.

In Marie's earlier days as an athlete in Ireland, she was awarded a track and field scholarship to America. While living stateside, she was devoted to athletics both in college and to her Olympic ambition to represent Ireland, which she accomplished as a marathon runner in the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

Marie graciously wanted to give back to her sport, therefore took a job as an athletics head coach in St Louisville High School in Los Angeles, a private girls' school, which is affiliated with the St Louis High School in Rathmines, Dublin, "I felt right at home."

The following number of years were spent primarily in the field of breast cancer during which she consulted Dr Susan Love - an author and researcher of breast cancer - which opened many doors for Marie from a medical aspect and she went on to hold positions as Cardio Vascular & Strength Consultant for UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine and Consultant Exercise Specialist Simms-Mann UCLA Centre for Integrative Oncology.

In 2009, Marie returned home to Ireland. Within a few months her programme 'The Murphy (METs) Programme' was picked up by the Irish Cancer Society, where she was contracted to carry out five pilot studies - three in breast, one in bowel and one in prostate cancer. The successful results of the first three studies, 'The Murphy (METs) Programme: The Irish Experience of Delivering Physical Activity for Cancer Survivors' has since been published and acknowledged by the American Institute of Cancer Research (AICR) in 2012.

Once Marie compiled the full programme and training manuals, she got in contact with Jacqueline Daly, Director of the East



Chairman Liam Loughrey, and Marie Murphy alongside Director Jacqueline Daly, Ailish Ryan and Anne Bruen, who received their certificate in METs Cardiovascular, Resistance and Nutrition training.

Galway & Midlands Cancer Support Centre here locally.

Marie arrived in Ballinasloe to present her full 'Murphy (METs) Programme' to the Centre, where they have all been trained adequately to facilitate their patients with the programme. Currently using a multi purpose space; "A purpose gym will eventually be built on site to help implement the new programme both easily and conveniently for all members", stated Jacqueline.

Because Marie is dealing with patients who are restricted with the type of treatment they're receiving, she alters and designs the programme around each individual patient. The programme consists of cardiovascular activity, which is a walking programme where the patient walks for three days a week. It also includes resistance training, consisting of 10 upper and lower body exercises using a form of weight, as well as nutrition plans. "What I love about it is it's so do-able, it's not rocket science. The nutrition plans use ordinary food - there's no fancy supplements required", added Jacqueline.

"I have worked towards this moment for many years; to finally teach others to teach my programme safely and effectively and it is my goal for the 'Murphy (METs) Programme' to expand to other centres across the country so that a greater number of cancer survivors can reap its benefits", concluded Marie.



Jacqueline Daly, Director, Marie Murphy and Liam Loughrey, Chairman signing forms for the Murphy METs Programme.



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CEILIÚRADH – MEMORIES OF ST. CUAN'S FROM

THE 40'S BY CIARA BERESFORD

This year marks the 67th anniversary of the founding of Cuan's College, therefore it was felt appropriate by past pupils that a book should be published to mark the occasion. As a result of informal meetings among the students, a book was compiled and published with the title, Ceiliuradh.

The 1940-50's were years of limited opportunities in Ireland. In the field of education, schooling for the vast majority was confined to primary level, where secondary and third level education were reserved for the privileged few.

The vocational schools or 'techs' as they were called, were also in operation but the curriculum at that time catered mostly for the trades. Study up to Leaving Certificate level wasn't available to technical pupils until much later.

It was in this era that Máirín Melody decided to set up a school that would bring secondary education to those who couldn't afford to attend the established institutions. She was assisted by Hilda Fitzgerald and Eileen Naughton and classes in Home Economics were provided by Mona Lally and Eileen Ryan, with Music lessons from Miss Kenny, Ballygar, and Tom Fitzgerald, Caltra.

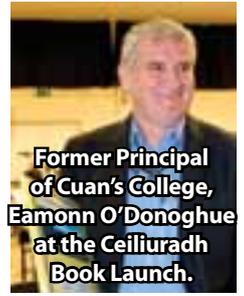
Máirín and her team saw the school grow from a mere twenty pupils in 1949 to an elaborate educational complex catering for hundreds of students at present. St. Cuan's began in Ahascragh but later moved to Castleblakeney. At this point Máirín retired as principal and the College was run by The Sisters of The Presentation of Mary for almost three decades but she and her colleagues continued to teach there for many years afterwards.



The committee that compiled Ceiliuradh. L-R Teresa Mitchell, John Corbett, Katie Naughton, Michael Kilgannon, Anne Ward and Joe Treacy.

Ceiliuradh contains a brief history of St. Cuan's College, its environs, plus an eclectic collection of stories poems and reminiscences which will appeal to all readers, especially those that have connections with the college.

Ceiliuradh is a beautifully bound hard-back publication, printed by KPW and is available at a price of €20 at local outlets including Salmons and Kenny's Galway (email: desi@kennys.ie). So far, the demand and success has by far exceeded the expectations of its compilers.



Former Principal of Cuan's College, Eamonn O'Donoghue at the Ceiliuradh Book Launch.



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VOTE 1

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KELLY**

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Credit Union Art Competition



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BY CIARA BERESFORD



Back: Libby Mulary, Rebecca Cruise, Klaudia Bryriak, John Lydon, Eoin Coleman, Gavin McGuinness.
Front: Lucy Carroll, Kayleigh Corcoran, Aisling Dillon, Ailish Carrig, Jonathon Fahy, Jane Naughton.



Back: Jack O'Connor, Aoife Larkin, Lydia Whyte & Ava Whyte. Front: Philip Fitzgerald, Hanna Anette, Ronan Mc Donagh, Shentelle Hodgins, Priscilla Cawley.



Back: Libby Mulary, Rebecca Cruise, Klaudia Bryriak, John Lydon, Eoin Coleman, Gavin McGuinness.
Front: Lucy Carroll, Kayleigh Corcoran, Aisling Dillon, Ailish Carrig, Jonathon Fahy, Jane Naughton.



Under 7 - Back: Hanna Salmon, Lauren Naughton, Jessica Webster, Simon McGuinness, Leah Galvin, Aoife Concannon, Isabelle Ward, Abby Alyward. Front: Kevin Swan, Arya Treacy, Carly Hyde, Kelsey Finneran, Philip Costello, Aleksandra Wdwiak, Victoria Plakisy.



Pupils from Scoil Ui Cheithearnaigh joining in on the competition.



8-10 - Back: Blaithean Mc Cann, Alex Kenny, Alisha Hanlon, Chloe B Ward, Roisin Dolphin, Ava Mulry, Ellie Gohery, Sinead Daly, Ciara Lohan. Front: Keley Spellman, Nial Concannon, Eve Larkin, Cian Maloney, Kieve Molloy, Molly McDermott, Tiernan Bowes.

BATTLING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE



Photographed at the meeting is Soroptomists President, Eileen Darcy with the Longford Women's Link Speakers, Tom Meagher, Michael Hennessy with Gardai Conor Madden and Tom Horkan.

White Ribbon Ireland, in conjunction with Ballinasloe Soroptomists, had a very successful community discussion on the social and cultural roots of gender based violence and male violence against women, which was recently held in the Shearwater Hotel.

Event MC for the night was Soroptomists President, Eileen Darcy. The speakers included; Tom Meagher, National Advocate of White Ribbon Ireland,

Charlotte Web from Longford Women's Link and our own Gardai - Inspector Conor Madden and Sgt Tom Horkan.

There were also contributions from Lynn Tilley Women's Refuge Athlone and Amy Donohue an Outreach worker from Cope Galway Waterside House.

The meeting was well attended, and highlighted all areas of support and assistance for victims of domestic violence.

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CHOIR RAISES OVER €9,000 FOR WORTHY CAUSES

BY KEN KELLY

The annual Carol Singing session on Christmas Eve by St. Michael's Folk Choir and friends outside Gullane's Hotel in Ballinasloe raised over €9,000 to be shared between two local groups, St. Teresa's Special School and the Galway Hospice.

Thanks to the generosity of the general public and a dedicated band of volunteers and collectors, suitably dressed in festive costumes, this collection around the town on one day, set a new record. This was the 13th year the Choir had performed for charities and have now raised more than €62,000 which has been shared by nominated charities, organisations and groups each year. Annually two bodies are selected and this year's beneficiaries

were St. Teresa's Special School and the Galway Hospice, each of who received €4,500.00.

At a function in Gullane's Hotel, at which the cheques were handed over to representatives of both bodies, MC Sean Og Hurley thanked all the people who helped in staging the event as well as those who participated over the years, each Christmas Eve. "For us in the Choir it's something we look forward to and we are delighted to help local groups. We are particularly thankful to the generosity of the general public who contribute so graciously every year as well as the volunteers and collectors who give of their time for one special day" said Mr. Hurley who also paid tribute to Tomas Gullane and his staff for the facilities and refreshments provided during the day.



Photo: Gerry Stronge



MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR REV. GEORGE FLYNN

There will be a memorial service for Rev. George Flynn in St John's Church Ballinasloe, on Saturday 6th February at midday.

Led by the Bishop of Limerick, Killaloe and Ardfert, the Right Reverend Kenneth Kearon, this special service is an opportunity for the whole community to celebrate the life and work of Reverend George, whose ministry here as Church of Ireland Rector and hospital chaplain, from 2008 to 2014, enriched the lives of so many people. All are welcome.

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THE FRIENDS OF PORTIUNCULA HOSPITAL ESTABLISHED



BY CIARA BERESFORD

The Friends of Portiuncula, a new group established to provide supports for patient and family comforts that fall outside the daily budget of the hospital.

The Friends (a registered charity) comprising members of the public supported by ex hospital staff has been set up with the following key objectives:-

- Raise the profile of services provided by Portiuncula I Hospital to its catchment population.
- To provide medical equipment, facilities, services and patient comforts in the Hospital which would not otherwise be available from ordinary HSE funds.
- To enable the structured targeting of monies raised by fundraising initiatives in the community to those services in most need and yield greatest benefits.

The Friends of Portiuncula are similar to other groups in the Saolta University Health Care Group in Sligo and Letterkenny which have had great success in fundraising for additional supports.

Funds raised from the event in the Shearwater will go towards providing additional electric profiling beds for the Stroke Unit and Intensive Care Unit at Portiuncula.

The Board of the Friends is made up of individuals from both business and community backgrounds and includes Denis Gunning (Chair), John Burke, Rosaleen Cahill, Catherine Croffy, Mr John Flynn, Muirne Hurley-Goode, Liam Keane, Brendan J Kelly, Declan Kelly, Sister Chad McCollum, Michael McCullagh and Dessie O'Brien.

The Friends had a very successful Men's Awareness Night in the Shearwater Hotel on 1st December last. With almost 150 in attendance, a hot buffet meal was followed by talks pertaining to health issues that concern men by Mr Eamon Rogers, Consultant Urologist, and Mr Brendan Harding, Consultant Gastroenterologist. Surgeon John Flynn acted as MC on the night. The evening ended with a raffle and music by the Guinness Jazz Band.

Other events are planned throughout the year. Events will be promoted through the Ballinasloe.ie and facebook. For further info – contact any committee member.



Front Row: Dr John Killeen, Mary Lane Heneghan, Maurice Power (CEO Saolta Health Care Group), Muirne Hurley Goode, Denis Gunning, Brendan J Kelly. Second Row: Mr Eamon Rogers, Marita Fogarty (Director of Nursing and Midwifery), Declan Kelly, Dr Michael Brassil, Maire Kelly, Mr. John Doyle Third Row: Liam Keane, Mr John Flynn, Dr. Eugene O Beirne, A.N Other, Mr Brendan Harding, Dr Michael Cassidy



Declan Kelly, Fr Brendan Lawless, Denis Minton, Fr Colm Ailman, Dermot Salmon



Martin Stack, Tony Broderick, Denis Naughton, Mary Lane Heneghan, Seamus Duffy, Pat O'Sullivan

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OUT AND ABOUT IN BALLINASLOE



Pictured is Olga Barrett presenting Ballinasloe Bridge Player of the Year trophy to Angela Connolly.



Pictured at the Laboratory in Portiuncula Hospital are members of staff who helped to raise €500 in aid of the Ballinasloe Sunflower Chernobyl Appeal. L-R Cathy Cutler, Martha Hill, Olive O'Beirne, Aoife Cronin, Brendan Fallon, Malcolm Little and Nolleen Burke.



Claire Walker, Maria Bermingham, Jacinta Keane and Charlene Carr at the launch of the new Talking Heads Hair & Beauty premises.



Engineers Ireland West Region hosted an event on the Revised Standard for Agricultural Vehicles in Gullanes Hotel. L-R Donnie Frehill, Shane Dolan, John Paul Butler, Justin Martin, Giaran Mahon, Mervyn Cooke and Kevin Whelan.



Alison King (Carla from Coronation Street) with two books written by Sheila Bugular, on her visit to Ballinasloe.



Alison King (Carla from Coronation Street) paying a visit to the staff of Fletcher's Expert.

OUT AND ABOUT IN BALLINASLOE



Oisín McConville with some of the Ballinasloe Response Group at the annual Public Address held in Haydens Hotel.



Pdraig Lyons, Oisín McConville and Phyllis Shaughnessy at the annual Ballinasloe Response Group's Public Address in Haydens Hotel.



Tom Costello manager of An Tain receiving his award for Best Singing Pub 2015. He is joined by Rachel Walker Queen of the Fair 2015 and Adrian Ahern.



Professor Tom Bolger of UCD presenting an Entrance Award to Shane Bleanehe, Garbally College, for his exemplary grades.



Professor Tom Bolger of UCD presenting an Entrance Award to Eoin Stack, Garbally College, for his exemplary grades.



Sharon Naughton with her parents Phil & Joe Higgins. Sharon is displaying some of the essays written by Joe in 1937 for Schools Folklore Commission Scheme.



Gerry Devlin organiser of the Young Writer's Competition, Dermot Salmon, sponsor of the competition and guest of honour, Joe Higgins who contributed to the Schools Folklore Commission Scheme in 1937.



Smiling faces of the successful Young Writers.

FEBRUARY EVENTS GUIDE

February 1st Monday

Yoga	Gullanes Hotel	6:30pm
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8:30pm

February 2nd Tuesday

Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5:30pm
GA Bingo	Haydens Hotel	8:00pm
Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9:00pm

February 3rd Wednesday

Active Retirement	Gullanes Hotel	3:00pm
Mike Denver	Plaza Suite, Shearwater	8:00pm
Trad	An Táin	10:00pm

February 4th Thursday

Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	10:00pm
Open Music Night	Maud Millers	10:00pm

February 5th Friday

Com.Hearts Seminar	Gullanes Hotel	12:00am
Rugby Club Table Quiz	Gullanes Hotel	9:00pm
Evan Blake	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm
Joe Wynne	Canal Bar, Shearwater	10:00pm
Live Music	Maud Millers	10:00pm
Buzz the Agent	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm

February 6th Saturday

Country Market	Town Hall	9:00am
Crystal Healing Workshop	Gullanes Hotel	10:00am
Jive and Waltz Class	Haydens Hotel	2:00pm
The Hoppy Bar Stars	Canal Bar	9:00pm
Sean Crehan	Killeens Bar	9:30pm
Last Man Standing	Haydens Hotel	10:00pm
No Bodder	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm
The Fanzines	Maud Millers	10:00pm
Live Music	The Pillar House	10:00pm
Live Music	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm

February 7th Sunday

Crystal Healing	Gullanes Hotel	10:00am
Pillar House Trad	The Pillar House	6:00pm
Trad	An Táin	7:00pm
Anchormen	Maud Millers	8:00pm
Johnny Brady	Plaza Suite, Shearwater	9:00pm
The Stone Throwers	Downeys Bar	9:00pm
Live Music	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm

February 8th Monday

Yoga	Gullanes Hotel	6:30pm
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8:30pm

February 9th Tuesday

Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5:30pm
GA Bingo	Haydens Hotel	8:00pm
Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9:00pm

February 10th Wednesday

Active Retirement	Gullanes Hotel	3:00pm
Bsloe Flower & Garden	Gullanes Hotel	8:00pm
Trad	An Táin	10:00pm

February 11th Thursday

Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	10:00pm
Open Music Night	Maud Millers	10:00pm
Singers Circle	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm

February 12th Friday

Kids Indoor Hurling	Ard Scoil Mhuire	6:30pm
Quiz Night	An Táin	8:00pm
Sean Nós Class (Teens)	GAA Clubhouse	8:00pm
Beggars Velvet	Maud Millers	10:00pm
Amy Brennan	Canal Bar, Shearwater	10:00pm
DJ Johnny F	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm
The Dunlo Trad	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm

February 13th Saturday

Country Market	Town Hall	9:00am
Walk & Talk	Beechlawn Organic Farm	11:00am
Jive and Waltz Class	Haydens Hotel	2:00pm
Photo Exhibition	Ballinasloe Library	2:30pm
One in a Minion	Town Hall Theatre	3:00pm
Rain Dance	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9:00pm
Checkers	Killeens Bar	9:30pm
Imposter	Maud Millers	10:00pm
Live Music	The Pillar House	10:00pm
Valentines Ladies N. + DJ	An Táin	10:00pm
The Crime	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm
Buck Eye	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm

February 14th Sunday

Pillar House Trad	The Pillar House	6:00pm
Trad	An Táin	7:00pm
Live Music	Maud Millers	8:00pm
D.Egan&SweetSensations	Downeys Bar	9:00pm
Liam's Country Road S.	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm

February 15th Monday

Yoga	Gullanes Hotel	6:30pm
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8:30pm

February 16th Tuesday

Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5:30pm
GA Bingo	Haydens Hotel	8:00pm
Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9:00pm

February 17th Wednesday

Active Retirement	Gullanes Hotel	3:00pm
Trad	An Táin	10:00pm

February 18th Thursday

Dance and Drama Class	Town Hall Theatre	10:00am
Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	9:00pm
Open Music Night	Maud Millers	10:00pm

February 19th Friday

Dance and Drama Class	Town Hall Theatre	10:00am
Kids Indoor Hurling	Ard Scoil Mhuire	6:30pm
Quiz Night	An Táin	8:00pm
Ken and Steve	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9:45pm
Evan Blake	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm
Hoppy Bar Stars	Maud Millers	10:00pm
The Dunlo Trad	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm

February 20th Saturday

Sean Nós Class (Adults)	GAA Clubhouse	11:00am
The High Reel	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9:30pm
Bennett sisters	Killeens Bar	9:30pm
Gentleman John	Haydens Hotel	10:00pm
Joe Wynne	The Pillar House	10:00pm
Red Tape	Maud Millers	10:00pm
NightOwls	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm
The Livewires	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm

February 21st Sunday

Jive and Waltz Class	Haydens Hotel	2:00pm
Pillar House Trad	The Pillar House	6:00pm
Trad	An Táin	7:00pm
The 2 Loves of Gabriel F.	Town Hall Theatre	8:00pm
Jimmy Buckley	Plaza Suite, Shearwater	8:00pm
The Nudie Suits	Maud Millers	8:00pm
Shane Moore	Downeys Bar	9:00pm
Billy Ward	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm

February 23rd Tuesday

GA Bingo	Haydens Hotel	8:00pm
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February 24th Wednesday

Trad	An Táin	10:00pm
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February 25th Thursday

Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	10:00pm
Open Music Night	Maud Millers	10:00pm

February 26th Friday

Kids Indoor Hurling	Ard Scoil Mhuire	6:30pm
Quiz Night	An Táin	8:00pm
John Molloy	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9:00pm
DJ Johnny F	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm
Loose Rooster	Maud Millers	10:00pm
The Dunlo Trad	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm

February 27th Saturday

Country Market	Town Hall	9:00am
'Walk & Talk'	Beechlawn Organic Farm	11:00am
David McGuire	Killeens Bar	9:30pm
G2	Canal Bar, Shearwater	10:00pm
Shane Moore	Haydens Hotel	10:00pm
On Rail	The Pillar House	10:00pm
Tradstone	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm
Macey South	Maud Millers	10:00pm
Too Tall Paul	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm

February 28th Sunday

Pillar House Trad	The Pillar House	6:00pm
Trad	An Táin	7:00pm
Lee Matthews	Plaza Suite, Shearwater	8:00pm
A Bunch of Funkin' Apes	Maud Millers	8:00pm
Night Owls	Downeys Bar	9:00pm
Shane Moore	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm

February 29th Monday

Yoga	Gullanes Hotel	6:30pm
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8:30pm

MARCH EVENTS GUIDE

March 1st Tuesday			March 12th Saturday			March 21st Monday		
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5:30pm	Rain Dance	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9:00pm	Yoga	Gullanes Hotel	6:30pm
BMS - The Producers	Town Hall Theatre	8:00pm	Take Time	Killeens Bar	9:30pm	Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8:30pm
GA Bingo	Haydens Hotel	8:00pm	Shane Moore	Haydens Hotel	10:00pm	March 22nd Tuesday		
Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9:00pm	No Bodder	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm	GAA Easter Camp	GAA Clubhouse	TBC
March 2nd Wednesday			G2	The Pillar House	10:00pm	Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5:30 p.m.
Active Retirement	Gullanes Hotel	3:00pm	Red Tape	Maud Millers	10:00pm	GA Bingo	Haydens Hotel	8:00pm
Tráth na gCeist do Dhaltáí Bunscoile	Gullanes Hotel	7:00pm	DJ & Live Music	An Táin	10:00pm	Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9:00pm
BMS - The Producers	Town Hall Theatre	8:00pm	Live Music	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm	March 23rd Wednesday		
Trad	An Táin	10:00pm	March 13th Sunday			GAA Easter Camp	GAA Clubhouse	TBC
March 3rd Thursday			Captains Drive In	Ballinasloe Golf Club	All day	Active Retirement	Gullanes Hotel	3:00pm
BMS - The Producers	Town Hall Theatre	8:00pm	Fit Town Celebration	GAA Clubhouse	TBC	March 24th Thursday		
Open Music Night	Maud Millers	10:00pm	Country Market	Town Hall	9:00am	GAA Easter Camp	GAA Clubhouse	TBC
Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	10:00pm	Pillar House Trad	The Pillar House	6:00pm	Mass Lord's Supper	St. Michaels	6:00pm
March 4th Friday			Trad	An Táin	7:00pm	Mass Lord's Supper	Creagh	8:00pm
Kids Indoor Hurling	Ard Scoil Mhuire	6:30pm	Macey South	Maud Millers	8:00pm	Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	10:00pm
BMS - The Producers	Town Hall Theatre	8:00pm	Robert Mizzell	Plaza Suite, Shearwater	9:00pm	Open Music Night	Maud Millers	10:00pm
John Molloy	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9:00pm	The Legends	Downeys Bar	9:00pm	March 25th Friday		
Evan B	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm	Bojangle	Killeens Bar	9:30pm	Good Friday	St. Michaels	3pm & 8pm
Live Music	Maud Millers	10:00pm	Liam's Country Road Show	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm	Good Friday	Creagh	3pm & 7pm
Buzz the Agent	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm	March 14th Monday			Tunnel Tigers	Canal Bar, Shearwater	10:00pm
March 5th Saturday			Yoga	Gullanes Hotel	6:30pm	Good Friday Celebrations	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm
The Hoppy Bar Stars	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9:00pm	Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8:30pm	March 26th Saturday		
Com. Hearts Seminar	Gullanes Hotel	11:00am	March 15th Tuesday			Easter Vigil Mass	St. Michaels	8:00pm
BMS - The Producers	Town Hall Theatre	8:00pm	Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5:30pm	Easter Vigil Mass	Creagh	8:00pm
Take Time	Killeens Bar	9:30pm	GA Bingo	Haydens Hotel	8:00pm	Joe Wynn	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9:00pm
Treblemakers	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm	Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9:00pm	Toxic Twins	Killeens Bar	9:30pm
Night Owls	Haydens Hotel	10:00pm	March 16th Wednesday			The Crime	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm
Live Music	Maud Millers	10:00pm	Active Retirement	Gullanes Hotel	3:00pm	Donnie O	Haydens Hotel	10:00pm
Chris Nash	The Pillar House	10:00pm	Trad	An Táin	10:00pm	Live Music	Maud Millers	10:00pm
Live Music	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm	March 17th Thursday			Paul Drysdale	The Pillar House	10:00pm
March 6th Sunday			Corn na Féile	Ballinasloe Golf Club	All day	Live Music	An Táin	10:00pm
Country Market	Town Hall	9:00am	Aifreann Ghaeilge do Lá Fhéile Phadraig	Conradh na Gaeilge, Bhéal Átha na Slua.	9:00am	Paul Burns	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm
Pillar House Trad	The Pillar House	6:00pm	St. Patrick's Parade	Fair Green	1.30pm	March 27th Sunday		
Trad	An Táin	7:00pm	Live Music	Auld Sod Bar	Early & Late	Country Market	Town Hall	9:00am
Anchormen	Maud Millers	8:00pm	Trad Session	The Pillar House	5:00pm	Easter Mass	St. Michaels	9am, 11am, 12:15pm
Live Music	Downeys Bar	9:00pm	Trad	An Táin	5:00pm	Easter Mass	Creagh	10:30am
Live Music	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm	Buckeye	Maud Millers	7:00pm	Sinn Fein Easter Commemoration	St. Michael's Square	2:00pm
March 7th Monday			Live Music	An Táin	9:00pm	Pillar House Trad	The Pillar House	6:00pm
Yoga	Gullanes Hotel	6:30pm	The Blaggards	Killeens Bar	9:30pm	Trad	An Táin	7:00pm
Tráth na gCeist do Mhic Léinn Mheánscoile	Gullanes Hotel	7:00pm	Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	10:00pm	The Nudie Suits	Maud Millers	8:00pm
Derek Ryan	Plaza Suite, Shearwater	8:00pm	St. Patricks Day Trad	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm	D.Egan & Sweet Sensations	Downeys Bar	9:00pm
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8:30pm	March 18th Friday			The Blaggards	Killeens Bar	9:30pm
March 8th Tuesday			Ken and Steve	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9:45pm	Live Music	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5:30pm	Evan B	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm	Shane Moore	Haydens Hotel	10:00pm
GA Bingo	Haydens Hotel	8:00pm	Beggars Velvet	Maud Millers	10:00pm	DJ	An Táin	10:00pm
Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9:00pm	The Dunlo Trad	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm	Too Tall Paul	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm
March 9th Wednesday			March 19th Saturday			March 29th Tuesday		
Active Retirement	Gullanes Hotel	3:00pm	The High Reel	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9:30pm	Hurling Easter Camp	GAA Clubhouse	TBC
BEST Awards Night	Plaza Suite, Shearwater	6:00pm	The Chillbillies	Killeens Bar	9:30pm	Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5:30pm
Bsloe Flower & Garden C.	Gullanes Hotel	8:00pm	NightOwls	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm	GA Bingo	Haydens Hotel	8:00pm
Trad	An Táin	10:00pm	Enda Cassidy	Haydens Hotel	10:00pm	Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9:00pm
March 10th Thursday			The Fanzines	Maud Millers	10:00pm	March 30th Wednesday		
BACD Ltd. AGM	Ballinasloe Enterprise C.	8:00pm	On Rail	The Pillar House	10:00pm	Hurling Easter Camp	GAA Clubhouse	TBC
Kevin Rohan	Haydens Hotel	10:00pm	Live Music	An Táin	10:00pm	Active Retirement	Gullanes Hotel	3:00pm
Open Music Night	Maud Millers	10:00pm	Live Music	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm	Trad	An Táin	10:00pm
11th Anniv. Singers Circle	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm	March 20th Sunday			March 31st Thursday		
March 11th Friday			Country Market	Town Hall	9:00am	Hurling Easter Camp	GAA Clubhouse	TBC
Comórtas Ghnólae Gaeilge	Béal Átha na Slua	9:00am	Pillar House Trad	The Pillar House	6:00pm	Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5:30pm
Amy Brennan	Canal Bar, Shearwater	9:45pm	Trad	An Táin	7:00pm	GA Bingo	Haydens Hotel	8:00pm
DJ Johnny F	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm	Imposter	Maud Millers	8:00pm	Tea Dance	Gullanes Hotel	9:00pm
Loose Rooster	Maud Millers	10:00pm	Lisa McHugh	Plaza Suite, Shearwater	9:00pm	March 31st Thursday		
The Dunlo Trad	The Dunlo Tavern	10:30pm	Shane Moore	Downeys Bar	9:00pm	Hurling Easter Camp	GAA Clubhouse	TBC
			Billy Ward	Auld Sod Bar	10:00pm			

CELEBRATIONS AND EVENTS



TOPE Resource and TOPE RT held an Art Exhibition entitled "My Favourite Thing" in the new Church Gallery. Front Row: Blraithnaid Hurley, Colette Colleran, Laurie Ward, Derek Kelly, Paul Cawley. Middle Row: Adam Clogher, John Joseph, Joan Dillon, Nicola Kelly, Joyce Little (Art Tutor), Triona Larkin, Nathan Murray, Michelle Garvey, Nathan Hall. Back Row: Thomas Dillon, Mark Quinn, Rachel Lyons, Kieran Willmore.



Mrs Maureen Hogan formerly of Dunlo Street, celebrated her 100th Birthday with family and friends at Millrace Nursing Home. She was presented with a presidential letter and cheque by Fr John Garvey.



L - R: Arthur Carr (G.E.L.S), Kathryn Gibbons and Conor Flaherty (student in Special Class, Garbally) at a recent fundraiser held in the Pillar House Bar in conjunction with G.E.L.S, where they raised over €350 for each charity.



Joseph Tumulty showing some of the work he completed in Garbally Special woodwork class



Father, son and daughter, Jude, Conor and Niamh Slevin were also invested. Being scouts with St. Marys Athlone they bring a lot of experience to Moore Scouts. Their charm and friendliness meant they immediately fitted in with the Moore Scouts family.



On the build up to Christmas Moore Scouts organised a hamper collection for St. Vincent de Paul, and Athlone Simon Community. These were presented on the night also.



Beaver Section Leader Clare Kelly investing Katie Glynn into Beaver Scouts.



KILTORMER NS ANNUAL XMAS TIME VISITS

By 3rd & 4th Class Students

Every Christmas we go to Kiltormer Nursing Home to entertain the elderly people.



Kiltormer NS pupils performing at the Kiltormer Nursing Home.

Everybody in the school visits the Nursing Home. We all wear high visibility jackets and walk there. The Nursing Home is about one kilometre from the school. The Sixth Class walk with the Junior Infants. Older brothers and sisters walk with their younger brothers or sisters and we bring our tin whistles and our dancing shoes.

When we get to the Nursing Home we ring the bell and Gordon or Derek welcomes us in. We leave our coats on a big chair and walk quietly up the corridor to the big sitting room, where we say hello to all the people who are there.

We stand in a large group and play our tin whistles and fiddles. The teachers play instruments too, guitar, tin whistle and low whistle. Mrs Dooley directs the children especially the younger ones. This year the older girls danced. After the music and dancing, we sang Christmas Carols. Sometimes the people join in and one lady sings for us. Some children have friends and relatives in there and we like to chat to them and cheer them up.

At the end of our entertainment Gordon and Derek treat us to sweets and drinks. Sometimes Santa comes to visit while we are there. It is always great fun.

NEWTOWN PUPILS REVIEW BUSY FIRST TERM

by Senior Room Pupils

Our first term at school this year has been very busy and enjoyable. Our school took part in lots of local events and competitions, held various in-school activities and had visits from interesting and important people. We had keep fit activities, sporting competitions and training too.



Ambulance team visits Newtown NS



Roscommon county players come on county bus



Scór na bPáistí Competitors

Taking part in community events is important to Newtown N.S. and so far, we entered the Credit Union and Musical Society Art competitions. As always each year we performed on the Gig Rig for turning on the Christmas town lights event. We took part also in Scor na bPáistí competition in Lecarrow. Our junior room visited the new town library to listen to some stories.

We do our best to help others, so in the first term we raised money for Temple Street Children's Hospital with our Halloween Dress Up and games day and we also read lots of books to gather money for M.S. by taking part in the M.S. Readathon.

During the first term all pupils from 1st to 6th took part in football and hurling training and our senior football team reached the semi-finals of the Sean Meade tournament. 1st to 3rd classes had swimming lessons and 4th to 6th classes attended Tommie Costello's Bootcamp. We also took part in the inter schools athletics competition and enjoyed a great day out in Roscommon.

Lots of visitors came to Newtown during the first term. The Fire Brigade and firemen, the Ambulance and paramedics, the Irish Defence Forces



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and officers with the Irish flag and a local hairdresser visited the Infant Room and gave some free hairdos. Some members of Peares GAA minor panel called to show us their county trophy.

Apart from all our usual classes we had computer lessons, we learned how to do meditation and we now do this every week and we play the tin whistle. We participate in the Credit Union Sammy Stamps saving scheme and we have a fruit stall and stationery shop twice a week, which is run and managed by 6th class pupils. We had a book fair just before Christmas which was just great.

Our Christmas event was called 'A Santa Walk' and because we are working for our Travel Flag everybody dressed up in Christmas jumpers and Santa Hats and walked with Santa all around Peares GAA club walking track. It was really good fun in the dark. We also sang Christmas carols and songs, had a little drama and some tin whistle tunes followed by a magician and a disco. We all had lots of treats and hot chocolate too.

Newtown NS Open Day for New Enrolments is Tuesday, February 16th from 1-3pm. For more information call 090 9643043, email on newtownnatschool@eircom.net or visit their website at newtownros.scoilnet.ie.

BIZWORLD AT SCOIL AN CHROI NAOFA

By 3rd & 4th Class Students

After the Christmas holidays, Mr Rynne's 5th and 6th class pupils in Scoil an Chroi Naofa took part in a two day workshop, called BizWorld, sponsored by Bank of Ireland. We learned about money management and enterprise in fun and creative ways.

We had four facilitators including; Aidan, Paula, Laura and Daniel, who really helped us on our educational journey. We were divided into groups and each group had to come up with an original idea for a product we would theoretically sell. We had to come up with a slogan and logo to go with the product.

My group came up with 'Chairs 4 Stairs' which was a safety chair for the elderly to go up and down the stairs. Another group invented 'Security Bag', which was a bag with a coded lock which kept your personal items safe. 'Isabellas Umbrellas' was an umbrella rental service where people could rent an umbrella for a deposit of €5. When the umbrella was returned they would get back €2. The last idea was called '2'n'1'. They invented a ladies shoe which had a removable heel so women could change from heels to flats very easily.

We carried out market research in Miss Glynn's 4th class in our school, to help us decide the pricing and colours of our product.

On day 2, we had to present our ideas in the Dragons Den! We hoped to be offered "BizBucks" to help start our fictional companies. The 'Dragons' were Ms. Connor (our principal), Bernie Kilbane (from the local Bank of Ireland) and Brendan Kelly (local entrepreneur - KPW Print). After some tough negotiations all four companies were given a loan from the Dragons.

We did this workshop to help us think like entrepreneurs because we are taking part in the Junior Entrepreneur Project (JEP). We will have to come up with a practical idea or product to sell in the local community. We will have to do our market research and present our ideas to the dragons again. We are really looking forward to this and the BizWorld workshop definitely gave us a great head start.



Meng Ou, Martyna Florek, Emily Riddell and Jakub Piskorski presenting their "Security Bag" idea to the Dragons.



Zeyad Fouda, Leona Donelan, Klaudia Bryniak, Tiejane James and Ceanna Bolton posing with the Dragons after doing a deal for "2'n'1!"



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ST. AUGUSTINE'S N.S. CLONTUSKERT- FIRST IN IRELAND

BY KEN KELLY



In recent years, St. Augustine's N.S. in Clontuskert have been honoured for their achievements in various fields of education and sporting prowess but now they have been awarded the supreme accolade of being the Republic's first in its field of learning.

The school is the first in the Republic of Ireland to be selected as a Microsoft Showcase School for its excellence in transforming its learning environment to deliver more personalised education to students, using mobile and cloud technology to better prepare students for success as lifelong learners.

St. Augustine's School, Clontuskert, joins an exclusive community of over 400 premier schools from around the world recognised to celebrate their truly pioneering efforts and innovation in rethinking teaching, learning and assessment in order to drive deep 21st century competencies.

Last month, Tom Jackson, Education Business and Program Manager, Microsoft in Education Ireland visited the school to officially honour Clontuskert with this award. Guests of honour included Lara Dubbagh and Gareth Callan of Claregalway College who joined Mrs. Kate Murray, Principal of Clontuskert, in the ranks of Microsoft Expert Educator Fellows this year. Tommy Maher of 365 Learning who helped set up Office 365 in Clontuskert also visited. The guests were treated to a tour of the school with a celebration in the school hall afterwards.

"Being selected as a Microsoft Showcase School is an amazing honor and recognition of the passion our teachers, Ms. Scott, Ms. Baynes, Ms. Egan, Ms. Stokes and Ms. Heinrich have for creating the best learning environments possible," said Kate Murray. "We look forward to sharing our experiences with other schools in our community and the world to continue finding innovative ways to equip our students with the proper tools needed for success inside and outside of the classroom."

In fact, last year the school was one of twelve schools globally chosen to develop a module on the 21CLD MOOC. (21st Century Learning Design Massive Open Online Course.). This resource will be available for teachers across the world to help aid implementation of 21st Century competencies.

In Clontuskert podcasting, blogging and filmmaking are consistently used to record lessons, events and evaluate student progress. These have been actively used in the School Self Evaluation process. The school uses Office 365 to communicate with other schools and the outside world in a secure and protected environment; to share ideas and information

and to encourage collaboration between classes and students. Clontuskert uses robotics and coding as a tool to enhance curricular engagement and ensure students cultivate lifelong learning skills. This term there will be a pilot school for MindRising which will develop understanding of the 1916 Rising through use of Minecraft. The school's website has won numerous awards over the years and the school is constantly engaged in interschool collaborations both nationally and internationally including a number of Comenius projects in Europe, and cross curricular collaborations with schools in the USA and Canada. For more information on the school's use of ICT, visit <http://clontuskert.scoilnet.ie>

As a Showcase School, Clontuskert will work closely with Microsoft to lead innovation in education and communicate a vision for education enabled by technology. "Microsoft Showcase Schools are shining examples of those applying purpose driven innovation in a variety of ways to build connection, motivate students and to create community in and out of school," said Anthony Salcito, Vice President, Worldwide Education, Microsoft. "These schools are truly transforming learning and providing more personalised education to students empowering them to achieve more."



Front L to R: Ciara Frehill, Rory Lyons, Ethan Colohan
2nd Row L to R: Gareth Callan Claregalway College, Mariam Melaadi, Rebecca Bleahen, Cormac Frehill, John Madden, Tom Jackson, Microsoft, Oscar Hayes, Matthew Lyons, Jack Scannell, Amy Colohan, Lara Dubbagh Claregalway College
3rd Row L to R: Sarah Lyons, Ben Bleahen, Ella Scannell, Kara Tevlin, TJ Higgins.
Back L to R: Fr. Michael Finneran, Chair BOM, Jennifer Stokes, Teacher, Kate Murray, Principal.

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PLANS UNDERWAY FOR ANNUAL ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

BY CIARA BERESFORD

Preparations are well under way for this year's St. Patrick's Day Parade which will assemble at the Fairgreen at 1.30 p.m. on the National Feastday – Thursday 17th.

The annual parade with a topical theme of "Commemoration and Celebration" will begin at 2 p.m. at the Fair Green car park on Society St and make its way through Main St and Slí na hAbhann onto Dunlo St. and will come to an end at the St. Michael's Square Review Platform.

There will be lots of fun outdoor activities and street entertainment for spectators to enjoy on the day, including music performances from local musicians both before and after – on the Fair and Festival Gig Rig.

This year's organising committee are especially targeting school groups, underage sports clubs and dancing clubs to participate.

The organisers are appealing to the business community to assist in sponsoring the costs of the parade and the prizes.

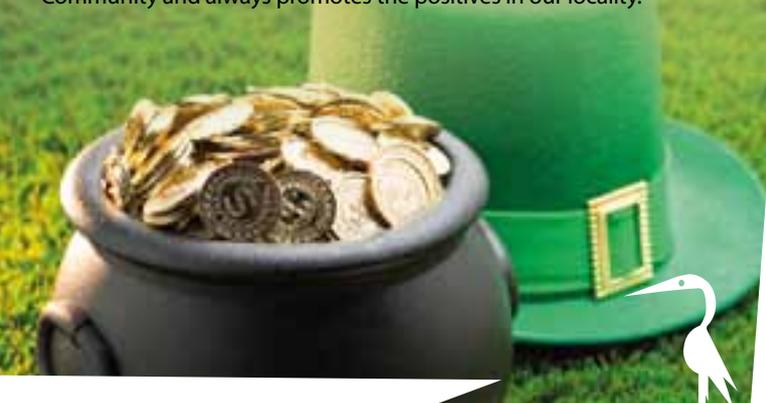
For those interested in getting involved, it is free to enter and entries should be to the committee in advance of March 13.

Participants may choose from categories such as Education, Culture, Voluntary, Sport and Commercial with other categories to be announced.

Everyone is encouraged to come along on the day and join in on the celebrations – it's a lively day of commemoration and celebration for the Community and always promotes the positives in our locality.

"We really are hoping that the Schools will again come to the fore in their participation in the parade this year and perhaps it will be another School that continues the winning ways of the Gaelscoil from last year – who took Best OVERALL prize" said Johnny Walsh – Parade Chairman.

For further information contact Carmel on (087) 6207477 or Johnny (087) 9973008.



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FLOOD ALLEVIATION PLANS NEARING COMPLETION

BY CIARA BERESFORD

With the recent and quite serious flooding and its ensuing media circus of national and regional publicity – it was reassuring somewhat to see the CFRAM roadshow in the Civic Offices to undergo a public consultation exercise on the options of permanent flood defences that the OPW will be building for the town.

This increased funding allows considerable progress has been being made by Irelands first flood management plan Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) programme, set up in 2011, and the Office of Public Works.

The main plans of CFRAM and OWP's are to prevent the flash flooding which occurs in areas of the Shannon basin. They have created a long term forecasting and flood prediction system and propose the use of demountables in towns, due to their effectiveness.

Building on the Engineering and levee type works that were successful for the Derrymullen and Ashfield drive residents – the OPW Consultants posted 5 plans and got affected business owners and flooded or impacted residents to comment on them. The price tag is in the region of €6.8 to €10 million to give the town similar defences to a Fermoy or Kilkenny which worked pre Xmas and this money is apparently secured from Govt. Most of the proposals focused on getting two additional flood eyes on the east bridge as

a preventive method to the flooding.

When adopted by OPW and County Council these defence works will have to go to planning and therein lies the rub. There is no immediate respite from a potential flood even with the work of CFRAM it will be some time before there is. The Business Flood Action Group are pressing their case with all agencies and representatives – given the scale of the commercial devastation caused.

Pat Finn Chairman of the Ballinasloe Flood Action Group – “The town and our business were badly flooded in 2009 and there has been nothing done since. The longterm plans won't happen for years. We want immediate changes including an Alarm System between 24-48 hours, Non-Return Valves put on the existing pipes and a flood barrier - which can all be put in place quickly and easily. Faster processes and cost effective.”



Peter Madden carries some gas cylinders through the floodwaters in Ballinasloe

Members of an Chead Cath from Renmore Barracks help with preventing the flooding from spreading



CREW CHANGES AT LIFE

We'd like to say a huge thank you to Ms Ciara Beresford, the Dungarvan native and UL Undergraduate who has toiled at the coal face of missing captions and long call backs from sheepish PROS since July. She steered LIFE through four issues during her co-operative placement and when not running 10ks or training was always a wonderful young reporter to work alongside. We wish her well in returning to campus and finishing her Degree.

LIFE's Trainee Crew has been involved in a lot of the behind the scenes multi media work for the REDZ Town & the Action Town Team programmes and various other BACD initiatives and we would not have had

a snowballs chance in hell of completing any of the ambitious on line social media campaigns if it were not for Limerick man Steven Tynan who too has been on U.L. Co-op in the Theatre since June. A huge thanks to all his video editing and film making skills and for keeping us all musically entertained during his time here.

The new victim to the LIFE and AOIFE team is Brian Ciepierski. Fresh faced at 20 years of age from Castlegregory, Kerry via Allentown, Pennsylvania, USA, he is a UL undergraduate studying

Psychology and Politics when not golfing or dancing !! He will be taking up the role of LIFE Reporter and AOIFE Press Assistant. Brian can be reached at ballinasloelife@hotmail.com. Editor Colm Croffy.



Sinn Féin

Standing Up for Ballinasloe

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GENERAL ELECTION CANDIDATES 2016

ROSCOMMON/GALWAY CONSTITUENCY

At the time of going to press, LIFE attempted to make contact with all known candidates contesting the three TD seats in our new constituency. Despite our best efforts, the following replied with supplied text. Others have been profiled by us.

ANNE FARRELL - RENUA

Anne Farrell is the candidate in the Roscommon Galway area for the fledgling RENUA party. From Ballintubber, Roscommon this mother of 3 has strong feelings on education and health "my passion and belief is that everything begins with education but health is our wealth." As well as this, she is promoting new housing, business and banking programmes.

Her healthcare plans focus on an innovative holistic model focusing on prevention and patient care. She also plans on a strategic mental health plan for the future to help deal with the growing mental health issues in the country, and to make mental health less of a societal stigma.

Plans on education focus on concentrating resources in the early intervention stage for families. This is to prevent

and to tackle some of society's most pressing issues and as a result create a stronger society. Furthermore she plans on improving the SNA structure in schools and on implementing resilience building programmes in schools. She also wishes to provide affordable and family centred childcare through expanding on community crèches and by providing tax relief, divided 80/20 between the parent and childcare provider.

Anne aims to bring out a 5 year mixed housing programme to address and deal with the current housing crisis and to assist in her vision of intergenerational communities. Plans are to have this programme funded by the private sector and to be implemented by the local authorities.

Her business policy focuses on the assisting of small enterprises in local towns and the creation of more jobs. This is to be accomplished through the implementation of a tax reforms, such as 23% tax certainty, and social security reforms. As well as the investment into high speed broadband which she states that "investment in areas such as broadband would enable new businesses to flourish."

The introduction of a fair banking system is key for her. This system is to be fit for purpose and inclusive of the unbanked community, which needs to empower the small enterprise sector with a credit network based on low cost peer to peer lending.

MICHAEL FITZMAURICE - INDEPENDENT

Michael Fitzmaurice T.D. was born on the Roscommon/Galway border in the small parish of Glinsk / Cregg. From a small farm in rural Ireland, he has lived and experienced most to be had from the small towns of the country. Michael fights for the small town and rural constituents as an Independent candidate to reverse the injustices that have been done to them.

On issues of health he is fighting against the downgrading and closure of General, Mental and Maternity health services. He has pointed to the closure of Ballinasloe's Mental Health Services, which took 700 jobs away from the town, as an example of where this took place and has called it 'unacceptable' and 'wrong to target the most vulnerable in our society for cut-backs'.

In terms of business he pushes for the reinvigoration of Irish industry. This being

the decrease in the importation of goods which could be otherwise home grown and the creation of jobs to where resources are, rather than transporting them to factories across the country away from the towns. "Recent proposals to pipe water from the Shannon to Dublin to support jobs in the capital are a case in point."

His stance on farming may be of some interest to those here as he battles with the EU and Irish Law on issues on spreading slurry, dairy CAPs and EU taxes and regulation prices. Believing that the small farmer has been at a disadvantage with the rise in price of running a farm, the 'monopoly of Beef Barons' and how they are not being properly rewarded for their rearing of an 'excellent product'.

Michael also has a strong stance on the right of people to cut turf on their land. Chairperson of the Turf Cutters and Contractors Association he disagrees with the EU and Irish laws on turf cutting and uses the slogan of "Cut their Own Turf, for their Own Use, in their own Bogs".

One can contact him at Castle View Terrace, Roscommon Town, Monday to Saturday 9.30am to 5.30pm or by ringing 090-6628479 or emailing michael.fitzmaurice@oireachtas.ie.

MAURA HOPKINS - FINE GAEL

As a young woman passionate about this region, I believe the next five years offer huge potential for our rural communities and towns. The economy is moving in the right direction and with more people back at work, we will have extra resources to invest in essential public services like healthcare and Gardai, to invest in creating more employment in the West and to support our communities in rural towns and villages. We need a Dáil representative to ensure our voices are heard and to fight for our fair share of resources and investment.

It is essential that we have a stable government and properly managed economy in order to build upon the progress achieved. If elected to Dáil Eireann, I

will be a hard-working, energetic and positive representative; I am very optimistic about the future of this region. My focus will be on helping new businesses to grow in our region, building on farming supports and improving service provision in the community and in hospitals. I worked as an Occupational Therapist for seven years before becoming involved in this campaign and I am aware of the huge deficits currently within our health services. This needs to change

I believe in this region and I believe in the people of Galway and Roscommon who have a lot to offer this country. I am proud to be from the West of Ireland and I think each and every person, both young and old, should be able to choose to live and work in this community without having to sacrifice a better wage or a better quality of life. I have met hundreds of people from the area over the last two years who are highly educated, enthusiastic and experienced and want to be able to settle in their hometowns and villages. As our economy improves, we must do more to promote farming as viable and profitable businesses, to attract new businesses to the area and to bring our young emigrants home.

JOHN KELLY - LABOUR

Senator John Kelly has lived in Roscommon his entire life and has had a strong presence in politics since the early 2000's. He was first elected as an Independent candidate in the town of Ballaghaderreen in 2004, was then elected Mayor of County Council with 2,230 votes in June 2009 and was elected to the Seanad in April of 2011. He joined Labour Party in 2010 and is currently a Senator in Leinster House. With his background as a Community Welfare Officer for twenty eight years he has been "totally community focused"; is avid about promoting sports, schools and education and more recently has been campaigning for rural communities and farmers in the Roscommon/Galway area. He believes that the people of both Galway and Roscommon deserve a TD who is in government, and not in the opposition.

Having a deep understanding of Social Welfare issues in Ireland the Senator has already made great inroads for the people of Ireland. The JobsPlus scheme, which in essence offers incentives to businesses who hire long term unemployed people, implemented recently was originally his idea. "I was proud when the Tanaiste Joan Burton took on board my JobsPlus idea".

In terms of community work he has shown great success. In Ballinasloe with the help of the local representative Johnny Walsh, they brought John Delaney of the FAI down which helped "secure considerable sports grant aid for the town". He has helped the local communities through school funding, they brought funding to the €5million new school at Cloonacilla, Athlone. Also he plans on continuing his continue work having the wind turbine setback distance from family homes increased and raised the idea of now introduced Postcodes, with Communications Minister in June 2013.

For business in Ireland he has focused on protecting the small to medium sized businesses. Evidence of this with securing reduced rates for the publicans of Roscommon for 2016, having the focus put on their turnover rather than size of premises and pursuing the same deal for Galway publicans for 2017.

EDDIE CONROY is a member of the Anti-Austerity Alliance People before Profit Party. He was born and raised in Boyle, Roscommon and graduated from NUI Galway. He has worked at Trojan IT from 1996 to now. He has been married for the last 6 years to Sharyn.

He is a well-known community activist in North Roscommon and has been campaigning since stating his intention to run in this year's General Election in August.

Miriam Hennessy has been living on and off and having a very active role in Knockvitor, Roscommon for the last 15 years. The Dublin born Green Party candidate is known for her Activist role throughout the country. With her lobbying against Fracking meeting great success with Minister Pat Rabbitte, it is of no surprise to hear she is a passionate environmentalist. She is also concerned with the community, seeing homelessness, social housing and societal integration as key issues. She said that as she campaigns around the Galway/Roscommon area, she is seeing 'the soul of the community being sucked out' and that she wants 'to bring the life back'.

CLAIRE KERRANE - SINN FÉIN



Roscommon born Claire Kerrane is a 23 years old honours graduate from NUI Galway. With a degree in Sociology & Political Science and English; she is currently studying the Professional Masters of Education in NUI Galway. Despite her youth, she has great experience in the world of politics. Having been involved in numerous Local and General Election campaigns with Sinn Féin already in both Roscommon and Galway, working alongside Cllrs Michael Mulligan, Martin Kenny and Dermot Connolly. Also working with Luke Flanagan MEP as a Secretarial Assistant has given her practical experience in outreach to rural groups and organisations and in co-ordinating successful campaigns and projects. She has received some support in Ballinasloe already, with her posters being seen in shop windows.

As part of her campaign she is promoting the development of rural infrastructures to promote job growth and public services and transport in the West and the rest of the country. And is also looking to quell the high numbers of young adults emigrating, as she believes it is due to the austerity approach taken by the country's current government. As well as this she is campaigning to have the government to look towards those who are still being affected by the flooding.

In terms of housing she is promoting the abolishment of the new Water charges and of the property tax. She also plans on putting a limit on interest rates banks can put on mortgages, providing rent security and on delivering 100,000 social and affordable homes.

Claire aims to increase spending on healthcare by €3.3 billion, moving away from the current system into universal healthcare to deal with the trolley crisis, offer free GP care and prescriptions. She also plans on restoring the AE services in Roscommon County Hospital. The issue of working families is another she wishes to approach.

Claire emphasises that "Rural Ireland has had enough and now is the time for change."

EUGENE MURPHY - FIANNA FAIL



Eugene Murphy is a native of Roscommon and is the Fianna Fail candidate in the constituency. Having ample experience as a local authority member, being the youngest ever member of the Roscommon County council in 1985, he is entering his first General Election with a clear goal and a strong stance on issues. Being heavily involved in volunteering roles and in community work, he believes that it is the communities that are keeping Ballinasloe and its surrounding area functioning and not the government. He states that "Ballinasloe has been totally rejected and now needs to make a clear statement about its future" and that he is looking forward to meeting and talking to the locality.

One of the first matters that he will be addressing is the creation of better Health Services, looking to the downgrading of Portiuncla Hospital as his main example. The Fianna Fail man has argued that the policy of moving all our services to Galway is utterly unacceptable, and that the mental health services in the area must be upgraded.

The councillor has also pushed for the creation of jobs in the region, acknowledging that "Ballinasloe has been left behind industry wise in recent years and I look forward to meeting the business people over the coming weeks to listen to their views of promoting the town and attracting jobs to the area." He plans on rejuvenating small towns and villages which have been affected by the economic climate just like this town through reduced rates to small and medium businesses, as well as the maintaining of the local public services, such as the Garda Stations and the Post Offices.

He is also looking to the small farming families. With plans for a radical new deal for these families, he is hoping to ensure the future of the family farm and to gain fair prices for them.

DENIS NAUGHTEN - INDEPENDENT



Ready to stand up and be counted with the people, is Independent TD Drum native Denis Naughten. He is looking forward to working on behalf of the town's and hinterlands of Roscommon and Galway and on making things better for tomorrow and for the future. He is planning on putting forward credible, real solutions to deal with the problems facing Ireland and the people he represents.

Pushing for more jobs to cross the Shannon, he aims to promote local towns to foreign investors to bring in business. Pointing to Ballinasloe as an example with the St. Brigid's campus ideally suited to develop as office accommodation for an international investor who requires office space with high speed broadband access. He also notes that there is great potential in the locality too. "With the availability of natural gas, the upgrade of

the water supplies and massive spare capacity in the new sewerage treatment plant in Creagh I believe the IDA has the material to make a major play for new investment in the town."

Having notably fought against the government actions taken to Roscommon Hospital and also in relation to the wider health services, including Portiuncula Hospital and St. Brigid's he has proven that he is dedicated to maintaining and bettering the community. Showing this even more he is putting an emphasis on key areas such as farming, agrifood and small businesses which he feels have not received the recognition they deserve, which has been the case in this town and its surrounding area, and believes that this injustice and negligence needs to change.

The TD has been also running a weekly clinic in Gullane's Hotel since the new constituency was established. There he has been offering assistance to any who ask. The Drum man has emphasised the need to support these communities, rural towns and those who want to help themselves, understanding that people want a hand up not a hand out.

"I am committed to working to make that happen and to improve the future for this constituency and its people."

SPORTS HUB MARKETING UNDERWAY

The Ballinasloe Sports Hub is an initiative set up by the Town Action Team, with the ambition to create the local area as a sporting / Training go-to destination, by utilising the various sports facilities we have to offer. The steering committee overseeing to the project include; Ger Tully, Christie Burke, Jacinta Divilly, Seamus Duffy and Colm Croffy.

The vision is to present the town as a sporting destination to many teams from different codes and organisations around the country. The teams can organise to visit the town for a weekend and stay at one of the hotels we have to offer. Team building activities, friendly matches, training camps and tournaments will be organised using the local sports grounds, gyms and boot camps. The Sports Hub is available for any type of sport, from anywhere and of any age.

By creating the Sports Hub project, it will not only present Ballinasloe as sporting destination but it will also enhance the social and economic fabric of the town by generating more business but also enhance the sports prowess of our local teams with visitor challenge games at all levels.



Just before Christmas the steering committee presented a draft of their plans and online marketing collateral to a very representative and large attendance from all the sports clubs in the town centre and hinterland from all codes.

The reaction was most encouraging with many speakers on the night expressing their admiration for the concept and the need to invigorate and utilise the plethora of fantastic facilities in the locale. Lot of offers of practical help and connections were made on the evening and a formal launch is being planned which will create marketing Ambassadors in different codes. The Hoteliers present were all very supportive of the idea.

This project is currently underway with marketing strategies being put in place, and will be developed throughout the year. Nicola Patton (pic) - an Events Management student at the Belfast Metropolitan College, from Bangor, Co Down - has been appointed the Marketing Coordinator for the Sports Hub project and will liaise with the clubs or organisations

wishing to visit Ballinasloe and steer leads back to the relevant teams, managers and facilities providers.

The Sports Hub can be contacted on 085 1352241.

FIT TOWN PROJECT UNDERWAY BY CIARA BERESFORD

With the arrival of 2016, and the passing of the traditionally large festive dinners and nightly activities, it is on many people's list of resolutions to get back into shape, partake in new activities and maybe even to shed a few pounds. It is great to hear so that from St. Brigids Day 1st of February the Ballinasloe Fit Town 2016 event will begin!

Introduced last year by the Galway Sports Sponsorship this project is aimed to get the community more involved in social activities and sports. Ballinasloe has entered the race for the Fit Town (Pobail Aclaí) title 2016! The competition, which is run by the Galway Sports Partnership, was developed in 2015 to encourage communities to come together with a view of increasing participation in physical activity and building on the good work that is already taking place within the town.

The Fit Town Co – ordination Team chaired by Marion Ruane, consists of, Noel Mannion, Lyn Donnelly, Eoin Hurley, Garbally College and Laura Finn, Ard Scoil Mhuire.

So far it has been met with a great response by all societies and organisations around the town! With the local food businesses, the Ballinasloe Credit Union and the new Ballinasloe Library getting involved. The local food businesses have collaborated with the Fit Town Team and are offering great healthy food to the community! Furthermore the Fit Town Team have stated that this offering of healthy food will extend beyond the 6 week period, meaning that we will get this great food for longer! Also with the aid of the Fit Town Team, Ballinasloe Credit Union and Library teamed up to create events to get the local students involved. An art competition for primary school students and a 6 word story competition for post

primary students all under the theme of healthy little me to help include all and to pass on this super message the Fit Town Team are sending out!

This great initiative has something for everyone it seems. With the list of events launched recently we see that not only are there sporting activities for all, but there are also amazing art, yoga, dancing, self-defence classes and more events for those of all ages to take part in. The Majority of the fit town events are free, however discretionary fees apply to some events (to cover costs and overheads etc), this can be confirmed at time of booking. So make sure to sign up quick for these openings!



Back: Noel Manion, Front: Lyn Donnelly (Ballinasloe Enterprise Manager), Laura Finn (Student Rep), Marion Ruane (Chairperson of the Fit Town program), Eoin Hurley (Student Rep)

To top off this amazing 6 weeks planned by the Fit Town Team, they have also organised a party at the end of this programme! This Fit Town Celebration Day will take place on Sunday, 13th of March in the GAA Clubhouse and will celebrate community and acknowledge individual achievements.

This plan of action carried out by these people is a great way to start off the New Year in great style

and a magnificent way to have fun and build community spirit proud to be from Ballinasloe!

Get up, get out, get active! Further Info - www.ballinasloe.ie/fittown
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SOUTH ROSCOMMON VINTAGE NEW SEASON

BY CIARA BERESFORD

Chairman of the South Roscommon Vintage Club, Dermot Coyle thanked all members who helped out at the 2016 Annual Auto Jumble, which took place at the Taughmaconnell Community Centre in late January.

Again this year, the Auto Jumble saw traders from all over the country in attendance. Dermot went on to say that he is deeply thankful for the valuable help received in past years from the vast majority of members.

"Our well supported Christmas Dinner Dance took place at Hayden's Hotel with live music provided by Simon

Casey and his band, which was a huge success for our club", added John Roche, Club PRO.

The club held many other successful events in the past year including the Michael Lyons Memorial Road Run, which ran from Roscommon Town to Strokestown, East Roscommon. Following the event, a cheque was presented to Cancer Care West for €2000 at Hamrocks Pub in Brideswell. The club also headed to Belfast for their two night Annual Outing.

For further details on upcoming events please contact Liam Keogh on 087 7565147.



Pictured at South Roscommon dinner were Damien Leonard, Shawn Ward & Philip Commons

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MUSICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL PRODUCTION!

BY CIARA BERESFORD



It's that time of year again! The Ballinasloe Musical Society are back with an incredible line up of cast and crew members for yet another show stopping production. For the first time ever, they will be performing Mel Brooks 'The Producers'. After racking up an impressive four awards at last year's Association of Irish Musical Societies (AIMS) ceremony for their production of the Addams Family, it's sure to be a sell-out show.

The play will run from the 1st to the 5th of March in the Town Hall Theatre, which will be invaded by Storm Troopers, Failed Broadway Producers, Accountants, Sexpot Secretaries, Horny Grannies and an array of other enticing characters.

The musical includes an all-star cast that of some local favourites such as; Patrick Byrne (Leo), Seamus Feerick (Franz), Sarah Corcoran (Ulla), Bernie Dudgeon (Hold Me Touch Me), Brian Derrane (Roger), Mike O'Reilly (Mr Marks) and Galway based Nicky Lawless (Carmen) to name but a few.

The show also includes a very talented support cast as well with; Declan

Finn (Kevin), Eoin Quinn (Scott), Catherine Madden (Shirley), Diarmuid Leyden (O'Rourke), Carl Devlin (O'Reilly), Robyn Newton (Warden), Greg Blackwell (Judge) and Declan Finn (Blind Fiddler) all expertly coached by their three wise heads - Director Paul Norton (Leo), Musical Director Shane Farrell and a newcomer to the society, Choreographer Aoife McClafferty. It includes all the ingredients to be a hilarious and entertaining night of Musical Theatre.

The Society are finalising their list of patrons and supporters and are reaching out to anyone that can help to underwrite the costs of this mammoth show requiring over 20 scene changes to help in any way they can ! Chairperson Gerry Sweeney said " We rely on our patrons and supporters to underwrite the 40% of the costs of our production and we hope that this year our regular supporters will be joined by new, to keep alive the tradition of Musical Theatre locally".

Tickets go on sale Monday, February 22nd at the Credit Union, the Town Hall Theatre and at Gerry Stronges Photography, and are priced at €15, with €12 for concessions. For further details please contact 083 1085544.

For more information on the Musical Society please visit their website at www.ballinasloems.ie, where they host an archive of all previous shows or keep up to do with events on their Facebook page at Ballinasloe Musical Society.



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THE LEGEND BEHIND THE KNACKER WALSH CUP

BY SEAN TULLY

In 1962 a legend of football in Galway and of Ballinasloe, passed away in New York. Michael 'Knacker' Walsh was considered to be one of the best players to come out of Ballinasloe and Galway.

In tribute to this great legacy the Knacker Walsh cup has been awarded to teams only twice. First was in New York by the late Michael's wife Kathleen in 1965 to Cyril Dunne and Sean Meade of the Galway team when Galway were in New York for the National Football League final in Gaelic Park.

The next was more recent in 2015 to the U 12 Clan na Gael team who edged out Ballinasloe in the final. The man will be remembered down the years, both through memory and history, as one of the best players from the early 1900's.

Born in 1890 in Portumna, he first arrived to Ballinasloe with his 2 brothers, Richard and Paddy and 2 sisters Baby and Nellie in 1902 living first in Mountpleasant then Cleaghmore. He began playing with the local football club and made an immediate impression. In the Street League competition set up by Reverend Father Broderick CC and Tom Keating, his talents came to fruition and to prominence as he played in centerfield.

He was a tricky and nimble player. He had a great pair of hands and an eye for a score. A very stylish player and as he was referred to back then a knacky footballer - explaining the origins of his nickname.

From then on he played as an influential and outstanding centre forward and midfielder for the Ballinasloe and Galway teams. He was on the great Galway team which found its way to the All-Ireland final in 1919, which unfortunately just lost out to a strong Kildare side. But found success with the county club and with great style to boot! In 1925 he captained the Galway side to victory in the Connacht final against Mayo. In a tight match he showed his class and maturity as captain and scored the match winning goal to put the score at 1-5 to 1-3.



Picture: Presentation of Michael 'Knacker' Walsh Cup in New York. The cup presented to Cyril Dunne and Sean Meade, members of the victorious 3-in-a-row senior football team, in May of 1965. Presentation made in May of 1965. (L-R) - Stephen O'Connor (Ballinasloe), Con Duggan, Cyril Dunne, Miss Kathleen Walsh, Sean Meade, Paddy Lynch and Chris 'Natie' Goode.

His footballing career ended however in 1926 when, with his wife Kathleen and brother Richard, he moved to New York City. And as he adapted to life in the US his successful tendencies continued as he and his wife opened up a popular pub across from a well-known venue, Madison Square Garden. For nearly 40 years he lived with his wife in the Big Apple, but in 1962 after a long battle with illness he passed away. Honouring his memory his wife donated a cup named after her late husband, which was given to members of the famous 3-in-a-row Galway football team in 1965. His peers often regarded "Knacker" as "the nearest player to Sean Purcell RIP and that's some compliment!" which showed the high regard he was held in.

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FOOTBALL SUCCESS AT UNDERAGE LEVEL

BY CIARA BERESFORD



U8 Footballers enjoying a team trip to Cuckoo Hill Obstacle Course.

The U8 Football Team Managed By Brian Sheppard & Llyod Kelly

Pictured are the U10 Football Team with their winning medals from the St/ Gabriel's Tournament.

Ballinasloe GAA Juvenile football club provide training for ages from under 8, right up to and including under 16, with each age having their own management team. The u8's play other clubs in friendly games and have regular training sessions. The u10 teams have involvement in many tournaments, including the Clan na Gael tournament and also the St. Gabriel's tournaments, which they previously won.

The u12 team plays annually in the County League and also in the Barry Cycles tournament, which is run locally. The u14 and u16 teams also compete in County Leagues and Championships. The u14 footballers recently won a league final which was held locally in Duggan Park, where Ballinasloe successfully beat Loughrea, 1-14 to 1-9.

The club will be sending out a newsletter to all schools and managers, where details on training sessions and matches will be given. The club facilities include three pitches, with all management on a voluntary basis. Everyone is welcome to help out with the teams, and the club will provide coaching courses for those interested. All teams have an end of season party, which nicely concludes a very active and busy year for the kids.

U8 Ballinasloe Footballers who traveled to Croke Park for a stadium tour to mark the end of a successful season.

The u8 team getting mucky at Cuckoo Hill Obstacle Course.

Photographed are the Ballinasloe U9 Football Team

The U14 team captain Odhran Dooley being presented with the League Final Cup in Duggan Park.

The Ballinasloe U14 team who beat Loughrea 1-14 to 1-9 in the League Final, held in Duggan Park.

MINOR SCHOOLS SWIMMERS 11 MEDAL HAUL

BY CIARA BERESFORD

The Connacht Minor School Swimming Championship was recently held, where 22 very talented, young swimmers from Ballinasloe Swimming Club represented various National Schools, with 19 swimmers in individual events and an additional 3 were part of relay teams.

"Our very talented swimmers had the most successful day out at the Connacht Schools than we've had in years", added Monica McKeon, Club Secretary. The club won three individual Gold medals, three individual Silver medals and five individual Bronze medals. Eight of the Ballinasloe swimmers qualified for the National School Championships in 2 strokes and four more qualified in 1 stroke.

Six relay teams qualified for the Nationals with the talented young teams, who all represented Creagh NS winning 2 Gold, 1 Silver and 3 Bronze. "We would like to thank our head coach Brendan Breathnach & his assistant coach Rochelle Stockil Trappe for all the hard work they put in to coaching our very talented swimmers", said Monica. "Well done to everyone who competed - they did themselves proud competing against the best swimmers in Connacht and are a credit to both the club and the school which they represented."

The qualified swimmers will be competing in the National Minor School Championship, which will be held in the National Aquatic Centre, Dublin on February 7th.

To keep up do date with the latest events, you can visit their Facebook page at Ballinasloe Swimming Club.



U10 Girls who represented Creagh NS and won Bronze in the Freestyle Relay - Kayla McKeon, Emma McGreal, Sheenagh Hanrahan, Sarah Dolan.

U10 Boys who represented Creagh NS and won Silver in the Medley relay & Bronze in the Freestyle Relay - Evan McKeon, Liam Martin, Charlie Mooney, Leon McKeon.



U12 Girls who represented Creagh NS and won Gold in both the in the Medley & Freestyle Relays - Tara McKeon, Ailbhe Hanrahan, Ava McKeon, Ruth Dolan.

U12 Boys who represented Creagh NS and won Bronze in the Medley Relay - Hugh Killeen, Conor Hogan, James Mooney, Adam McGreal.



Swimmers from Ballinasloe Swimming Club who represented their schools in the Connacht Minor/Secondary Schools Championship.

Back Row - Hugh Killeen, Adam McGreal, Rochelle Stockil Trappe, Conor Hogan, Conor Harley, Ava McKeon, Rowan Harley, Caoimhe Kennedy, Ethan Moran, Tara McKeon, James Mooney, Katie Naughton, Brendan Breathnach. Front Row - Charlie Mooney, Leon McKeon, Tani McCormack, Daniel Mooney, Aaron Hogan, Emma McGreal, Sheenagh Hanrahan, Sarah Dolan, Kayla McKeon, Ailbhe Hanrahan, Ruth Dolan, Evan McKeon, Liam Martin.

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JUVENILE HURLING SCOOPS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

BY BRIAN CIEPIERSKI

The 2015 season for the Juvenile Hurling teams in Ballinasloe was one of its most successful to date. At the recent annual review meeting of Coiste Iomana na nOg the club was presented with the 2015 Juvenile Hurling Club of the Year award by Michael Hehir, Chairman Coiste Iomana na nOg, for

the exemplary performances carried out by each of their underage teams.

Nearly every one of these teams, from Under 11's to Juniors represented the club and town in a final. The U-16 squad captained by Daniel Potter won the county final and represented the club in a Connacht Final while the U-21s under the leadership of Alan Coffey and Under 13s captained by Phelim Reilly also won county finals.



Michael Hehir Chairman Coiste Iomana na nOg presenting the 2015 Juv. Hurling Club of the Year award to Gerry Seale at the recent annual review meeting of Coiste Iomana na nOg

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BALLINASLOE GAA SET SAIL FOR NEW SEASON

BY BRIAN CIEPIERSKI

The club Executive Chairman Pat O'Sullivan, Secretary Conor Ryan, Treasurer Mairead Mitchell and PRO Donal Fenton took to the top table along with their fellow Committee members at the AGM to reflect on the year gone by and to plan ideas for the club for upcoming season.

The Hurling members were Chairman Brendan Kelly, Tomás Fenton, and Brendan Hayes. The Football members were Seamus Duffy, Vincent Parsons and Aidan Dooley. For the Ladies Football the members were Katheryn Gibbons, Margaret Reneghan and Sean Moclair. The Players Representative was Eoin Fenton and the Child Welfare officer was Janice O'Grady.

Looking back, they reviewed the great successes they had experienced throughout the year and the wonderful support they had received from the community, to the brilliant volunteers in the club and from the dedicated and skilled players who worked hard all season. It saw the reintroduction of the Staff Ruane Memorial Street League in Hurling and plans to introduce a Football Street League named after the late Barry Brennan.

There were also many great victories and moments by all the teams The Ladies U 16 football team won the Division 2 county championship under the management of Seamus Duffy and Miriam Murphy while for the men the Under 14 team captained by Oisín McCormack won the Division 2A championship and the U16 took the county championship. The standout moment of these great moments for the club was the winning of the 2015 Juvenile Hurling Club of the Year award.

The plans for the start of the new year are just beginning with the senior and junior teams getting back to training and their match fixtures being released. The management of the Junior Hurling and Under 21 Hurling will be done by Tomás Fenton, Donal Tully and Liam Cunningham and the Intermediate Football Management will consist of Dessie Dolan, Peter McCormack and John Shaughnessy.

There are also already some major plans on the board for the community Town programme, going to host and participate in multiple events. Next they are holding Football Easter Camps which begin from the 22nd, 23rd and 24th of March and Hurling Easter Camps from the 29th, 30th and 31st of March, with a flyer to be distributed to the schools around Ballinasloe with more information closer to the date.

Furthermore with the weather permitting, they hope to have the new pitch up and running for juvenile use in the coming months. And are also working to make a new website which will allow members to keep more up to date with the happenings of the club.

The Ballinasloe GAA club have kept their fees for membership same and have developed their grounds in Bracknagh to cater for the increasing numbers of those who want to participate. The club is also looking to work on its history and is extending an open offer to anyone who wishes to get involved with the project.

If you wish submit relevant material for publication or enquire about the club you can contact the club on their Facebook or Twitter pages or you can email the Public Relations Officer at pro.ballinasloe.galway@gaa.ie.



Eric Luwaga Man of Match award in U13.
Under 13 Hurling Capt. Phelim Reilly.

GAA REGULAR FUNDRAISING

Taking place every Tuesday evening at 8 o'clock in Haydens hotel, this well popular and fun event is a great way to both support your club and to meet the community! One woman stated that it was "A great way to meet your friends for a nice quiet fun night" while another Siobhan Larkin said simply that it was "Bloody brilliant!"

The GAA will also be hosting the lotto draw every Friday night in a different pub each week, to help support the club and local businesses. The jackpot has an interesting twist this year, with there being 2 jackpots and they have reduced the number of possible picks to increase your chances of winning! The first jackpot is a fine pay off of €17,500 while the second is €10,300, and it goes up by €100 each week!



Bingo Photo Club Officers helping the Bino Gerry Seale,
Tom Fenton, John Burke



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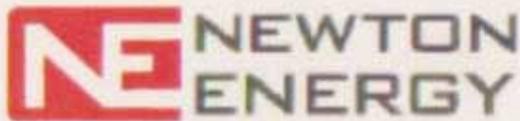
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TENNIS CLUB UPDATE



Tennis Club junior members Fiona and Evelina Zancanaro help out at the club's fundraising shop during the October Fair

After a break from organised activities for Christmas, the tennis club has a full schedule of activities underway for the spring season.

- Junior coaching takes place every Monday from 5-6pm
- Junior supervised open session takes place every Sunday from 12-1pm
- Ladies open night is Wednesdays from 7-9pm
- Mixed open is Tuesday and Friday nights from 7-9pm.
- Singles ladies and gents ladders are ongoing.
- Intra and interclub junior, ladies and gents challenges are ongoing.

The Tennis Club is offering older adults a great opportunity to improve their levels of fitness by trying tennis for the first time or perhaps playing again for the first time in years. There will be a 6 week coaching program commencing Monday 1st February from 6-7 pm with professional coach Robert Johnson, including fun challenges for participants that will cater for all standards, including beginners.

The club has recently become affiliated with Tennis Ireland, which brings many benefits including the opportunity to participate in even more organised challenges and competitions with other clubs for both senior and junior members.

Tennis Club annual membership fees are extremely reasonable at €25 for adults, €15 for juniors and students and €40 for families.

For further information, visit the Facebook page at Ballinasloe & District Tennis Club or call Garry on 085 1124197 or Louise on 087 1353751.

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New coaches to the Rugby Panel; Mike Horan and Ian Bloomer.

Two new coaches have been appointed to the Ballinasloe Rugby Club management team this season, to work in tandem with Director of Rugby, Noel Mannion; a forwards coach in addition to the return of former backs coach, Mike Horan.

Fresh to the panel is Ian Bloomer, who takes over from Kevin Tierney after the latter opted to do some mini coaching for a stretch. Ian comes with a wealth of experience having seen service with St. Marys

and Monkstown clubs in Leinster as well as Old Crescent in Munster. Indeed he also donned the famous Taranaki shirt while living in New Zealand. He won an AIL medal when playing with St. Marys. More recently he has been involved as a Connacht Regional Development Coach.

Ian welcomes the opportunity to coach at Ballinasloe who ply their trade in Division 1A of the Connacht Junior league. "This league is very competitive" he says "and there are some fine individual players involved with a high skill set. I am very impressed with the set up here in and especially with the number of underage players now making their way on to the first team squad. League honours can't be too far away" he adds.

The quietly spoken coach can be observed on match days standing on the touchline with arms folded while he studiously reflects on the action on the pitch. No doubt, he is pre planning tactics and strategies for his pack that will in due course help Ballinasloe take the next step forward. "Maybe that coveted league title is not that far away after all." Ian, a software engineer with VISTA TEC, resides with his family in Portumna.

Mike Horan is no stranger to his post having previously coached the backs three seasons ago. A long-time member of the club, and is also a past President. He took a busman's holiday to coach the club's U18's and Garbally College senior cup team while also being involved with Connacht Regional Squads. He is impressed with the emerging talent in the club's backs. "They are young" he says "but there is provincial, AIL and third level college competition experience in the mix. It will take them a while to bed in but I have no doubt that we will be hearing a lot about these lads in the seasons to come."

"We have been very fortunate with the standard of coaches available to our senior squad over the past four or five seasons" says Noel Mannion. "Certainly they have helped us to reach and maintain our place in Division 1A. Right now Ballinasloe club are in a good place coach wise" he concluded.

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SOCCKER SUCCESS – FROM BALLINASLOE TO WEST PALM, FLORIDA

BY CIARA BERESFORD



Shane McInerney grew up in Kilgarve, Ballinasloe with an ambition to play soccer. At the age of 18, he was awarded a scholarship to an American University, and a year later he took the plunge and moved stateside, where he is currently based playing soccer and studying for the final stretch of his degree.

Shane played with Ballinasloe FC at underage level and also played with the Athlone & District Schoolboys League Team. "I used to train with Tony Coyne throughout my younger years, who played a big part in my development as a soccer player", he added. Shane also played with Salthill Devon FC and Galway United for a few years.

"The main reason I moved to America was for the chance to be playing soccer full time while earning a college degree", admitted Shane. "I got in contact with an agent and was asked to play at a showcase in Dublin - within two weeks I had a lot of scholarship offers from all over America. I signed to a junior college in Rochester, New York for a year before transferring to Keiser University in West Palm, Florida for my final 3 years."

Shane moved to America on his own, at the tender age of 19, "At that point, I was working full time in Medtronic in Galway and playing for the Ballinasloe Junior Gaelic football team. It was a huge decision, especially at a young age and a lot of people didn't think it was a good decision to head stateside, but I knew if I went with the right attitude it would all work out", he stated.

Today, at the age of 23, Shane hopes to graduate from Keiser University this summer with a degree in Business Management. Shane has been playing soccer for his university each year and plays semi-professional during the summer months.

Growing up in Ballinasloe, soccer wasn't the only sport of interest to Shane, who also played Gaelic football and hurling, reaching county finals at u16 and minor level. "I think the GAA helped me with my soccer career as it added a more physical side to my game. Ballinasloe GAA club has produced many county players over the years with the likes of Keith Kelly and James Shaughnessy representing Galway at senior level, not to mention a few players from our minor team playing for Galway minors also", stated Shane.

"With regards to soccer in Ballinasloe, we played in the Athlone and District Schoolboys League. I remember our u10 Ballinasloe team travelled to Liverpool to play against Halewood in the annual Bob Paisley cup, which we won. We also beat a Liverpool academy team on the same trip! There's

definitely a good youth system with regards to sport in the town, as a lot of players have progressed and played at a high level whether it's soccer, Gaelic football or hurling."

Shane has already achieved much success in his soccer career to date including; playing for Ireland at the age of 15 in the Umbro Cup Galway; receiving his first International Cap for Ireland at the age of 18; being Named Defensive Player of the Sun Conference 2015 and also Being Named an All-American in 2015. He hopes to play professional soccer either in America or Europe, "Later on down the line, I would love to set up a scholarship agency for young players from Ireland with an interest of playing soccer full-time in America, while earning a degree at the same time", concluded Shane.



Ballinasloe U10 team with coach, Tony Coyne before a game against St. Francis. (Shane as goalkeeper in the white)

Shane being presented with a signed jersey, as recognition for his individual achievements for the 2015 season representing his University team, Seahawks. (L-R Head Coach - Joe Zakawoizc, Shane, Assistant Coach - Alan McCann)

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FINE GAEL

DERRYMULLEN CRADLE OF LOCAL HANDBALL...

BY BRIAN CIEPIERSKI



In December of 1985 the new look Derrymullen Handball Alley was officially opened. With the 30 year anniversary of the alley passing by, it's interesting to recall the growth and development of the sport, the facilities and the exciting plans for the upcoming year. With a dedicated following and outstanding members it is no wonder why the alley and club has been such a successful one.

The alley's history stretches back to 1926, when the station master stopped a group of young Derrymullen folk from playing handball on the walls of the train station. From this action, bred the Derrymullen Handball Club.

The first meeting being held in a local house, the original 3 officers of the club and a plan to build an alley were formed. They agreed with Mrs Guinnessy RIP to rent a site for £3 per year and planned to build the alley on that ground. From this first letting came the purchase and the projects to build and upgrade the alley as they began to build in 1926, with the raising of the walls and laying of the floor, to the buying of the property for £35 in 1946 and to the adding of a glass wall in the 1950s.

In 1977 after vandalism and complaints from the locality, the Committee decided to close the alley down until a roof and proper security was

applied to it. Planning permission came through in 1983 to do so and a new Committee and Officers for the Handball club were elected.

They decided to raise as much money as possible for the new roof and alley to be 40x20 ft, have showers, a kitchen, seating and changing rooms. This involved some high profile fundraising which showed the dedication from the locality and committee. Pat Joe Guinnessy then Club Secretary recalls "There was a 5 man relay marathon running 60 miles, containing the then Galway football team goalie and other handball members. The famous Clipper Carlton showband made an appearance, famous in the 50s and 60s and as the Tuam Herald reported in 1986. After the renovations in 1985, Bishop of Clonfert Dr Joseph Cassidy even celebrated mass in the alley!"

With such an impressive alley and magnificent support it is of no surprise to know of the success the club experienced during this time. All-Ireland champions plied their craft in this alley, for example Paddy Delaney was a Junior Single and Doubles champion with Eamon Rabbite in 1986. The youths at this time represented the club in a Connacht final too. The club also enjoyed success in the Racquet ball events with Brendan Loughnane winning the inter-firms championship.

The club did fall on hard times in 1990 with the bank threatening to foreclose the alley due to the overhanging debt, but 12 loyal members pooled their resources, got loans from the Credit Union and saved the alley!

Now the 9 committee members led by Officers : Chairman Dermot Connolly, Secretary Cristel Donnelly, Treasurer Brian Moylan and the club are looking to the future.

With a freshly painted alley and a Town Council grant of €27,000 to repair and refurbish, great strides are being made. The club was represented in an All-Ireland semi-final and a Connacht final, and having county champions has shown its class.

County Champions last season were - Peter Mulryan (previous numerous All Ireland Champion , with last success in 2004) doubles were Matthew Kenny and Colin Mitchell. Connacht Finals - Doubles were Matthew Kenny and Colin Mitchell. Also U-10s winner was Matthew Kenny's son, James.

There are plans for a Juvenile club to be created for the 2016 season and the implementation of memorial cups. A bright future lays in store for this club and there is great room to build!

Peter Mulryan is teaching local schools handball, was covered in 2009 by TG4 for 6 episodes.

Anyone interested in joining should contact Cristel Donnelly or check out their fbook page Derrymullen-Handball-Club-Ballinasloe.



Front Row L-R: P.J. Guinnessy, Brendan Loughnane, Sean Kelly, Mike Kennedy, Peter Mulryan, Mike Daly. Back Row L-R: Vincent Earls, John Burke, Padraic Hanrahan (Builder), Paddy Delaney, Tomás O Baoill, Sean Tully, Sean Kelly.

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CAMOGIE CLUB LOOKING FORWARD TO NEW SEASON BY BRIAN CIEPIERSKI

Coming off the back of a very successful and fun year, Ballinasloe camogie club is set for yet another campaign in which to showcase the many talented players from underage to junior.

The 2015 season for the club showed the dedication of the players, coaches, backroom staff and all the volunteers as they were well represented by all players, teams and management. With plans being set and tactics being made, the desire to top their previous achievements is looking like a reality. The club is also pleased with the increase in both numbers and support in and around the community. Currently they have 16 Adults players and just under 90 underage girls involved.

The end of year celebrations were done in quite some style as well, with some the underage teams having a presentation night and a disco held in Gullanes Hotel in conjunction with the Swimming Club. The girls (and few boys who were brave enough) had a fantastic evening dancing the night away!

With coaches and management in place, all our teams are eager to succeed this year and the juniors (under 8s , Under 10s and Under 12s, Under 14s , Under 16s and Under 18s) already have their training

sessions in full swing since early January, training in St. Bridget's pitch every Saturday at 6.30pm. The coming year will also look at the club continuing with their exciting fundraisers. They are hoping to host events such as the progressive 25 in the near future.

The club Chairperson Sinead Kennedy gave a quick and heartfelt message as they acknowledge the wonderful community around them "I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who supported the club last year by attending matches, encouraging the girls and helping with fundraising. As a club, we are excited to see what this year has to bring."

If you are interested in playing or supporting the club, be sure to give their Facebook page (Cumann Camogaiochta Beal Atha na Slua) a like to be informed about training and registration information. They are eager for all to enjoy not just the sport, but the team spirit which comes from playing for such a well-supported, driven and friendly club. So they are calling all to join in on the fun and success!



U-11 team vs Cappataggle

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The Power to Surprise



THE GRAND CANAL

BY BARRY LALLY



The idea of linking Dublin to the River Shannon by means of a waterway had been first mooted as far back as the early 1700's. It was not, however, until 1804 that the proposal came to fruition with the completion of the Grand Canal.

An extension of the navigation to Ballinasloe had been proposed even before the main line had reached the Shannon. In 1807 the canal company decided to apply for a loan to construct a canal to Ballinasloe, which would be a continuation of the existing Grand Canal from Shannon Harbour.

Work began in 1824 with up to 1,000 men employed under the supervision of architect John A. Killaly. The canal was fourteen and a half miles long, twelve of which were through bogland, and had two locks, one at the junction with the Shannon and one at Kylemore. Because of the difficulties presented by the nature of the terrain, the

project excited widespread interest internationally in engineering circles and attracted numerous visitors from abroad. Completed at a cost of £43,485, it opened to traffic on 29th September 1828.

Initially, and for many decades thereafter, the barges were drawn by horses following a tow-path parallel to the waterway. (Grooves worn by the tow-ropes in the stonework are still visible beneath the arch of Poolboy Bridge.)

By the 1840's over 14,000 tons of goods were being carried annually and passenger boats were catering for a large number of travellers. In 1834, fly-boats had been introduced, which were less cumbersome than their predecessors. A boat travelled daily to and from Dublin, with extra services laid on during the October Fair Week. One of these boats could carry up to 80 passengers, with accommodation divided between a first-class and a second-class cabin. Passengers sat facing one another on upholstered benches attached to the walls. A long, narrow table occupied the centre of each cabin.

Second-class passengers could buy stout and cider, but not wine or spirits, which were reserved for their fellow-travellers in first-class. Smoking was prohibited in every part of the vessel.

Meals served on board were substantial, though scarcely calculated to appeal to fastidious palates. In 1843, a traveller on the Ballinasloe boat reported:

"The dinner was a solid meal. It consisted of bacon, legs of mutton, beef, potatoes and beer, and was disposed of in such a manner as to show that those who partook of it must have right good stomachs. After dinner, whiskey punch supplied the place of coffee."

A trip from Dublin to Ballinasloe could be something of an endurance test to judge by the following account in an 1848 novel by Anthony Trollope:

"I will not attempt to describe the tedium of that horrid voyage, nor will I attempt to put on record the miserable resources of those, who, doomed to a twenty-hour sojourn in one of these floating prisons, vainly endeavour to occupy or amuse their minds, but I will advise any, who, from ill-contrived arrangements, or unforeseen misfortune, may find themselves aboard the Ballinasloe canal-boat, to entertain no such vain dreams. Reading is out of the question. I have tried it myself, and seen others try it, but in vain. The sense of the motion, almost imperceptible but still perceptible; the noises about you; the smells around you; the diversified crowd, of which you are a part; at one moment the heat this crowd creates; at the next the draft which a window just opened behind your ears lets in to you; the fumes of punch, and the snores of the man under the table - these things alike prevent one from reading, sleeping or thinking."

Passenger services on the canal were withdrawn in 1852, a year after the opening of Ballinasloe railway station.

The boggy nature of the canal banks meant that they were very vulnerable to malicious attacks, and numerous breaches were made in the 1830's, usually by people living in the area who hoped to be employed in the repair work. The response of the authorities was to arrange for around-the-clock police patrols to discourage acts of sabotage. Three barracks to house the constables were erected at intervals along the route of the waterway. These continued to be manned up the 1860's.

Traffic in general merchandise on the canal ended in 1956. The Guinness barges, however, could still be seen chugging along the waterway up to a year before its closure in 1961. Rumour had it that the thirsty boatmen enjoyed an unofficial perk whereby they levied a toll of a few pints of porter on every cask of Guinness, which in those days was transported in wooden barrels. A gimlet was used to bore a hole, and a measure of beer was extracted, after which the keg was bunged with a sliver of timber hammered home with a mallet.

Today parts of the canal have disappeared in bog workings, the section through Kylemore has been used to lay a light railway, and the Ballinasloe end has been filled in. The shell of the Guinness store, a mooring-ring in a wall, and the ruins of the harbourmaster's house opposite the Shearwater Hotel are all that is left to remind us of what was once a busy traffic terminal and the westernmost limit of the Grand Canal.

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BARRY JOHNSTON CAMPAIGNING FOR EMIGRANTS VOTING RIGHTS



Son of Pat and Johnny Johnston, Barry Johnston of Glantaune, Ballinasloe is running as an Independent Seanad candidate via London.

Having lived in London 3 times within the last 10 years, he has currently been living there since 2011. He has worked a number of different roles with the Department of Justice and Amnesty International Ireland after graduating from NUIG and the University of London with degrees in Psychology, and Dublin City University with a degree in International Relations. He

now leads the political and corporate engagement for the international charity ActionAid UK. With his vast experience on the current issues which have affected global communities and activists he is now focusing on entering the political landscape to deal with the issue of Irish emigrants, and their ability to vote while abroad.

Barry has stated that he felt like a second class citizen, being unable to vote while living abroad. He has pointed out that 25 of the 28 countries in the EU, and 100 other countries give their citizens easy access to voting while living abroad, in comparison to Ireland which has some of the most restrictive rules on overseas voting in the world. He posed the question in terms of the Irish living abroad travelling home to vote on the recent gay marriage bill "why should we be forced to travel for exercising such a fundamental right?". Furthermore he points to the huge numbers of better informed and knowledgeable Irish emigrants than ever before being unable to vote - 130,000.

He recognises the State's attempts to bring emigrants back home with their Diaspora strategy but points out the flaws with them. This being that there is no longer a fixed notion of home and away to the emigrants, as no matter which country they are in they are still abroad. The second problem to him is that the State had not addressed the trauma and anguish caused to the citizens who were forced to leave the country as they had no other choice.

The Glantaune man wishes to get into the Seanad to help bring to light and to tackle this problem of mass emigration and of the treating of these Irish citizens abroad as 2nd class. He calls for the Irish State to make a deal to its citizens abroad. A deal which tackles the issue of voting right, and as he has stated "must address the social and economic drivers of emigration, which affect those who remain as much as those who have left."

SENATOR RONAN MULLEN SEEKING RE- ELECTION



Born and raised in Ahascragh, Senator Ronan Mullen is a NUI Galway graduate, and current Independent Senator.

He aims to be elected for a 2nd term to act as "a watchdog to make sure the Government does not forget these key issues affecting rural Ireland." The Senator believes that after the last 7 years of such economic hardships, it is important to elect a man such as himself, who can ensure that there is planning done by the government to protect the long term economy and rural Ireland.

Ronan has acknowledged though that the majority of foreign investment and job creation will be directed towards big cities and their suburbs. With this in mind he has stressed the importance of the Government having a 'business plan for rural Ireland'. Further stating that as a country we cannot afford to let the smaller towns and country places be bled dry of both families and young people, who are leaving in search of work. With this in mind he has pushed for innovative thinking to reinvigorate rural economic growth, saying that "Things like broadband are critical, but we need real imagination from Ministers and civil servants to support job opportunities outside the big centres."

In terms of infrastructure, he has pointed to the poor state of the availability of rooms, privacy and one on one care in hospitals. Believing that even with the hard and dedicated work of those in the health sector, it is still a shock and a horrifying environment to behold. Wishing to ensure the availability of essential hospital services locally, and securing investments to better the quality of the hospital experience for people with more single rooms and privacy for patients and families for those who need and want it. To him this must be a part of the new government's plan.

He is also pro-life, believing that too many politicians are "obsessed about what the media says about them "and because of this they are" too ready to abandon core values like respect for life, the importance of marriage and family life for communities."

He wishes to protect the most vulnerable and work towards a society which respects all.

"If you are an NUI graduate, or have loved ones eligible to vote for the Seanad on the NUI panel, I would be grateful for your No. 1 vote or highest available preference".

UTAH

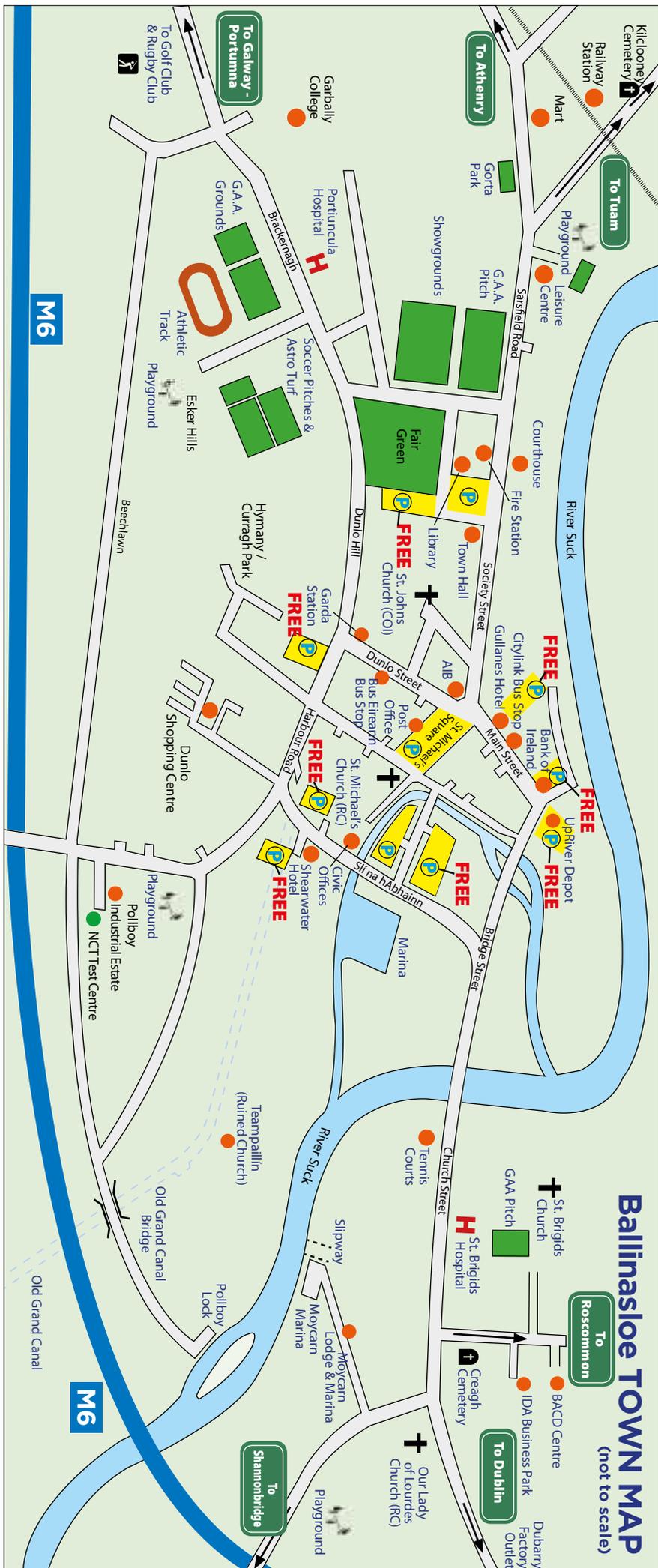


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Ballinasloe History Walk

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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