# BALLINASLOELIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN Vol. 6 Issue 6: Dec '16 - Jan '17



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# BALLINASLOELIFE

### AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN Vol. 6 Issue 6: Dec '16 - Jan '17

### WHAT'S INSIDE **Nutritional Club Summary Activity Report Shop Window Display Ballinasloe Statistics** Flaming Wicked Candles Follow us on Twitter **Bord Bia Approval** @BallinasloeLife UTAH Designer Brands **Commercial Property Outlook Liam Kelly Looks Back** Portiuncula Hospital Award **Hospital Watch Aughrim Lights Up** Passo A Passo Gratitude Battle of the Somme A Ballinasloe Butterfly **Out and About December Events Guide** January Events Guide **Celebrations and Events Giving Locally for Christmas** Fair and Festival Week **Home for Christmas** Siveen Kelly Late Joe Murray **Chalkface Chronicles** Your Personal Loan John Feeley Guitarist Moll for Ballinasloe 'Twas the Night Before Hallowe'en Zombie Walk **Panto Review** SPORT 42 GAA 3 Decades of Memories **Connacht Inter Hurling** Cross Country Champion **Swimming Champio** Shane O'Grady **Birchgrove Conn** Vintage Club Seniors Progress in FA Fit Town Proposal **TOURISM AND HERITAGE** Accessibility Bsloe **Bishop Dignan CREDITS** Editor: Colm Croffy. Reporters: Laura Sheehan, Javi Antón. Contributors: Ken Kelly, Barry Lally, Tommy Wall and various Graphic Design: KPW Ballinasloe. Print: KPW Print, Ballinasloe. Photos: Robert Riddell - robertriddell.com, J&S Photos - jsphotos.ie, Jordans - liamjordanphoto.com,

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### REAMHRÁ

So following the Brexit on our Eastern approaches we are having to cope with a Trump in the Whitehouse on our Western flank for the new – the lyric line "Jokers to the left of me, clowns to the right" seems apt for our land mass and fortunes – "Stuck In the Middle of You".

For someone who spent a great deal of his 20s and early 30s in the formative years of the peace process in Ulster – the one service that

big Ian did for society (prior to his Damascus like conversion and being elected First Minister) was to say out loud what many in that troubled corner of the island were thinking privately. Mr. Trump's campaign has shone the light on aspects of American troubled society that now has to be confronted, challenged and responded to calmly and cogently.

And so "Skibbereen Eagle" like what has this international events to do with the local? Figures from the Census returns since 1911 show that we have always had non Irish people living and working here of every race, colour and creed since the enumeration began. Our National Schools have in excess of 20 nationalities and practically followers of all the great religions of the world sitting jeek by jowl in the desk and schoolyard with the next generation of patriots. We have been a welcoming location since the foundation of the first hospital in 1833. The addition of the second hospital as a Teaching Hospital for Franciscan Missionaries meant that for over 50 decades we had young student Doctors and Nurses of every Third World country, posting letters, buying groceries, playing Tennis, drinking a beer, waiting for a train long before we learned about the concept of Multi Cultural.

To date we welcome some resident emigrants from all over the world – some 15% (the National average is 12%) of our census population is non national. We have never really made headlines about them or should we; as the authorities try and cope with the human flood of misery that will eventually arrive to our streetscapes from Calais and Syria. We will be confronted as a society to implement a lot of the Christmas spirit that can be easily to asted but tougher to practice.

Spare a thought for those families who will gather without a loved one for the first time this Yuletide for them the Ghost of Christmas past is a warmer gift than the present. Try and divert some shopping locally to the supporters of our community, try and dig deep for those who need it most in these stressful times. Welcome home to all those we only see once or twice a year and we hope that in reading this edition you will note how busy we are at forging ahead as best we can but with more reasons to be positive for the year ahead.

Le Gach De Ghui COLM CROFFY, Editor



The company, Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd., which is the umbrella organisation for Ballinasloe Life is run by a voluntary board of directors and is involved and supports many positive initiatives in our Town and catchment area.

From local research it was clear that many people have a limited knowledge of our activities and in order to keep you better informed we will give a brief overview of ongoing developments in every bi-monthly magazine.

Some of you will have noted the ongoing survey in recent weeks conducted by our UK partner People & Place. This is a follow up to our benchmarking report 2 years ago, with the results to hand early in the new year. It will measure changes in the interim across a range of Key

You will note the ongoing Christmas Window display competition and a bigger and better Christmas Tree will be unveiled for the holiday season.

Another initiative we have launched is to make Ballinasloe a Sports Hub for organisations and teams, not restricted to age or activity. You will find details of our brochure online in ballinasloe. ie . Please make friends and relations who visit for the festive period aware that they can come back for an action packed weekend with their club or organisation in your home town.

You will find details of these and more of the ongoing activities in the magazine.

Everyone will see 2016 in a different light but hopefully the positives outweigh the negatives and that Christmas and the New Year will be a time to enjoy ourselves and help others do so as well. On this note and on behalf of the Directors of the Compnay I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

SEAMUS DUFFY, Chairman, Chairman Ballinasloe Area Community Development Limited.

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

# NUTRITIONAL CLUB NEW BUSINESS AT ENTERPRISE CENTRE

Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre's newest business tenant is the Nutritional Club which is run by Kenny Brill and his wife Ann. Kenny is an Athlone native but they now reside in Ballydangan with their three children.

Like many others, Kenny was made redundant in 2011 and took this opportunity to go to college as a mature student to study Culinary Arts. "I loved every bit of the course but nutrition and the merits of a balanced diet really excited me" said Kenny.

When asked why he chose the Enterprise Centre as the premises for his new venture, Kenney said, "We chose the Enterprise Centre for a few reasons. The first was its location. Its position makes it accessible to the town but also the surrounding hinterland". He also stated that the reasonable rent costs attracted them to the Centre as it enabled them to carry out business without passing on the cost to their customers.

"Also Lyn, the Manager of the Centre, was very helpful in finding us a suitable office that will aid us in building our business. I would definitely advise anyone to contact Lyn if you are looking for a space to get your business started" he continued.

He enjoys spreading his knowledge of the benefits of good nutrition and so the Ballinasloe Nutritional Club was founded. "The Nutritional

### **BY LAURA SHEEHAN**

Club was set up to help people gain control of their health" he added. They don't do diets but instead educate their clients on how to eat a balanced diet. There are currently two members of staff, Kenny and Ann, but Kenny said, "we would love to see this grow into something bigger with likeminded people".



Ann and Kenny Brill

The services that they provide are healthy meal plans which will help individuals to lose but most importantly maintain their weight loss, they do nutrition and cooking classes for both groups and individuals. "We at Ballinasloe Nutritional Club will ensure our customers are aware of what they are eating, can make informed choices when shopping without the influence of marketing. This way our customers can take control of their wellbeing" continued Kenny. They also provide a sports products range for those involved in high intensity sport.

Speaking about business in the town, Kenny said "it is a town of tradition and needs investment to secure its industry and its people. This town deserves more than lip service, it needs real investment and elected officials to stand up for the town and make this happen!"

They can be contacted at 086 1544697, Facebook page "Ballinasloe Nutritional Club"







# SUMMARY ACTIVITY REPORT QUARTER 4



Conscious that many don't still know what B.A.C.D. does or who B.A.C.D. is – we will attempt to update our readers every quarter with news of our current activities undertaken as volunteers on behalf of our community.

#### **BALLINASLOE ENTERPRISE CENTRE**

4 New tenants over past 2 months. Centre now has 17 Enterprises based full time in the centre with 6 other enterprises/groups using the facilities (hot desking, training rooms, meeting rooms etc.). Only some 2,200 square feet of space left. Assisting a number of people looking to start up their own firms/services/enterprises.

#### INDUSTRIAL ACTION GROUP

Made submission under new REDZ scheme to undertake international survey on brownfield and new build potential to link in to Athlone/ Galway investment axis. Assist & Engage with Enterprise Ireland and IDA to continue to push for new investment and job opportunities.

#### **AUTUMN BUSINESS NETWORKING**

Over 50 business people attended an AlB/RBK sponsored Business Briefing in Gullanes Hotel –

in an effort to promote businesses and business people locally we try and run 3 events per year around topics and subjects that are relevant.

#### **START YOUR OWN BUSINESS COURSE**

18 participants currently attending 6 week course with Tutor John Power in the Enterprise Centre. (Due to demand another course will be ran in the new year).

### **SPORTS HUB**

Brochures produced and have been circulated to target groups around the country to attract sports teams to use Ballinasloe as a centre for team building/training weekends. If any diaspora visiting for Christmas know of any sporting clubs/teams in their areas that may be interested, brochures are available from BEC. An online marketing campaign will commence new year to squads in pre season training.

#### **TOWN ENHANCEMENT**

Regular 6 weekly meetings with relevant officials in Galway County Council to see how progress is meandering along with the significant investment project. Brackernagh complete and tenders finally going out for town centre with digging to start at end of Quarter 2. Liaison being encouraged on a street by street basis to co–ordinate & minimise disruption.

#### **ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS COMPETITION**

Encouraging business and enterprise in the next generation-plans underway for this year's competition with Garbally & Scoil Mhuire confirmed as entering. Launch date set for December 13th.

#### **TOWN BENCHMARKING FOLLOW UP**

Visit by Chris Wade (People and Places) to carry out surveys, contribution of AIT students to carry our town centre user surveys. Draft report available by January with evaluation and pointers on first 24 months of the Town Team Plan.

#### **TOWN RETAIL GROUP**

2 Business Life produced one in early summer and one in early Nov. distributed 13,400 leaflets delivered to Hinterland promoting centre as a place to do Xmas shopping.

Promoted and delivered Window Display Master

Classes – got the Xmas Window Display competition going-with over 43 business registered for activity. Town Centre all dressed and ready to go for Nov 27th!

Organised the Xmas lights, collection, production and switch on!

### **TOWN MARKETING GROUP**

Life Team continues with publication of weekly Youtube videos of significant community events, over 25,000 being reached weekly through updated Facebook, twitter and TOCIFY–events calendar on a weekly basis through Ballinasloe.ie–now getting 55,000 visitors a year. Starting Social Media Mentoring For All Life Subscribers in an effort to get 100 firms fully operational on Social Media to help launch Town App next year. Xmas Cards for Disapora Connections produced.

TOWN ANNUAL ZOMBIE WALK - See report elsewhere in Mag.!

#### **DIRECTORS**

Willie Burke, Mark and John Flynn at a recent

**Business Networking event.** 

Galway County Council: Donal Burke · Creagh Community Council: Dan Dowling · Ballinasloe Credit Union: Seamus Kelly Membership: Seamus Duffy, Paul Hargadon, & Micheal Dolan Co-opted: Noel Madden, Pearse Keller, Joe Lyons, Anne Conlon & John McKenna

### Sub Group: Town Team:

Jacinta Divilly, Val Colleran, Colm Croffy, Aidan Donohue, Mike O'Brien, Seamus Duffy, Ger Tully, Paula Harley, Lyn Donnelly, Tara Galvin, Carmel Grealy,
Kate Murray & Pádraig Ó Ceithearnaigh.

### **EXPORT ENTERPRISE START WORKSHOP**

If you are currently considering entrepreneurship as a career option, an Enterprise START workshop will help you to understand and evaluate the entrepreneurship process and what it involves.

The Workshop will take place in the Enterprise and Technology Centre on Thursday 1st of Dec and is targeted at individuals with a business idea that has the potential to be scaled up significantly within three years and that is export driven.

The workshops are practical, interactive and thought provoking. Participants will be provided with comprehensive information to understand the business development process including the key success factors and potential pitfalls as well as an outline of supports available.

The Workshop will cover the following:

- **Customer Value Proposition**
- Business Planning
- Business Supports Available
- Case Study Rockfield Medical Devices



The event runs from 9.15am to 3.15pm, If you would like to be considered for a place in this upcoming event, you should request an application form from westenterprise@enterprise-ireland.com

Places are limited so book early to avoid disappointment. It is a free event.

For further details contact Annmarie Flannelly at 091 735900 or westenterprise@enterprise-ireland.com



# CHRISTMAS SHOP WINDOW DISPLAY COMPETITION BY LAURA SHEEHAN

For the first year, the Town Team are running a **Christmas Window Display competition throughout** the town with over 40 stores taking part. Some of those involved took part in a workshop recently on window displays.

Voting can be done online at www.ballinasloe.ie up until 6.30pm

Sunday November 27th. The winner will be announced at the Christmas Festival at 7pm that night. There is one vote allowed per valid email address.

















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# **BALLINASLOE - SOME STATISTICS**



Talk of the national recovery is still awaited fully west of the old River Shannon but some of the harsh facts and figures of the recession and recovery are suggesting that we as a community are heading back to full employment.

In 2005 with the National unemployment rate at 5.5% the country was deemed to be in full employment; our rate was 7.5% and in the preceeding 24 months some 850 PPS numbers had been allocated to non nationals for work purposes. So it would appear we have a core long term unemployment cohort even in a boom of some 1400 souls.

Allowing for emigration and immigration figures - the numbers of staff wanted going up on firms windows in the past few months has been anecdotally commented upon.

The CSO tells us that currently our town provides some 11.5% of Galway's County unemployed.

The national unemployment rate at the moment is 7.9% and the unemployment rate in Ballinasloe is 8.7%. So an unemployment blackspot we are NOT.

Unemployment Fell 11% in the last 12 months – Sept to Sept 2016, but most tellingly of all our unemployment rate has decreased by 35% - 927 people since 2010-in six years. Doubtless 920 jobs were not created locally in 6 years but residents are finding work in nearby Athlone, Galway, Tullamore and Mullingar.

So-if any more evidence was needed that we are becoming a commuter town-the CSO unemployment statistics under pin this fact.

#### **SEPTEMBER 2015 COMPARED TO SEPTEMBER 2016**

Period	Male U25	Male O25	Female U25	Female 025	Total
Sep. '15	156	948	117	660	1,881
Sep. '16	138	867	97	576	1,678

brochure available

A decrease of 203 in the number of people unemployed in the area in the last 12 months. Unemployment is higher in males - 1,005 – while it is 673 females who are unemployed.

#### **SEPTEMBER 2016 COMPARED TO SEPTEMBER 2010**

2,605 1,678

October 2016 – Unemployment in Ballinasloe is down to 1,643. a decrease of 165 people since August 2016 which is a decrease of 9 percent.

#### **100 YEARS OF CENSUS POPULATION CHANGES**

In 1911, Ballinasloe was the only town in Galway to show an increase in population from 4,904 to 5,165 on the previous Census.

Out of the 5,165 people listed there were;

- 55 Northern Irish
- 3 American
- 9 Scottish
- 1 French
- 17 English
- 1 Canadian

In effect less than 2% of our local residents were non Irish.

According to the 2011 Census, there was a total of 960 (14.6%) out of 6,659 non-Irish living in Ballinasloe.

- EU 612 (9.3%)
- African 57 (0.9%)
- Asian 70 (1.1%)

Poolboy Industrial Estate, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway

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LIFE every Quarter will try and bring snippets of the evolving community in figures to our readers over the coming year!



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# **FLAMING WICKED CANDLES NEW CRAFT BUSINESS**

**BY LAURA SHEEHAN** 





Flaming Wicked Candles is an exciting new creative enterprise by local artist Una Spain. Established in 2015 there has been a considerable amount of work invested into fine tuning the technical and creative elements so as to get things right from the start.

"Having invested in learning key skills from an internationally recognised candle designer, a solid foundation was established from the outset and since then a lot of work has gone into both identifying and developing the brand values so as to consolidate all the most important elements before bringing Flaming Wicked products to the market" said Úna.

In order to set up the business lots of training days and upskilling were undertaken by Una to get to grips with various topics such as business venture creation, digital media marketing, e-commerce and web design. "It certainly has been a challenging but ultimately rewarding process. The most valuable to date has been product development workshops with renowned craft, fashion and retail expert Mr Eddie Shanahan" she continued.

Quality, innovation and design are the key attributes of Úna's new business. Using only the best quality materials, each product is made by hand in small batches in her studio at Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre. "Making something from scratch is an immensely rewarding process. Melting and moulding, scratching and scoring the wax has endless possibilities, which of course is what appeals to the creative spirit and that which drives this venture",

The range of products currently being brought to the market are inspired by the colours and themes of the local environment, and the designs are contemporary, innovative and eye catching. There is an unscented range based on the colours of Garbally grounds and also the classic white options that are adaptable for any occasion. Scented options are based around seasonal influences and the signature pieces like lanterns, luminaries, bowls and vases are bespoke artisan wax products that are long lasting pieces designed to bring endless hours of enjoyment. They are an ideal gift this Christmas.

Flaming Wicked Candles can be bought in Tosnú Nua Art & Craft Gallery in the town and are currently on show in The Leitrim Design House, Carrickon-Shannon. In the new year a select number of artisan craft galleries will be selected to stock the new range and details of this will be on the Facebook page (Flaming Wicked Candles) and website/blog - www. flamingwickedcandles.com.

Candle making classes will also be run out in Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre for small groups and any enquiries regarding organising classes or making an order directly are most welcome via email or private message on Facebook. If anyone is interested in receiving news/

updates in newsletter form Úna is be happy to oblige.

Úna is a registered member of The Design and Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCoI) and also with the Irish Designers Institute (IDI). For further information, you can contact Una at: info@flamingwickedcandles.com







### **BORD BIA APPROVAL FOR BEECHLAWN** ORGANIC FARM

BY LAURA SHEEHAN

Beechlawn Organic Farm is one of Ireland's leading organic vegetable farms. Located in Poolboy, they produce over 20 different vegetable crops. It is run by local man, Padraig Fahy and his wife, Una Ni Bhroin They met when they were both students at the Agriculture College in Dromcolloher, Co. Limerick and have now been in business for 14 years.

They now have 14 members of staff between those who work full-time and part-time with over half of them being from the local area.

"The top three crops that we grow would be kale, beetroot and leeks. After that then we grow about two acres of broccoli, cauliflower, celery, tomatoes, cucumbers, spinach, chard and Brussels sprouts", said Padraig. In total they grow 26 acres of mixed vegetables and manage 35 acres.

Recently, the Farm got their Bord Bia accreditation. "We're the third organic vegetable grower in the country to have Bord Bia accreditation so that's good and it'll give us the opportunity to start supplying Tesco nationwide as well" he continued.

Beechlawn supply Supervalu's nationwide for their supermarket brand but also produce their own brand through direct relationships with between 30 and 40 stores in Galway, Clare and Dublin.

In the last month, the business has taken a new direction. They have begun exporting kale to Dubai. Mr Fahy stated that there were a lot of hurdles to overcome to get to this stage - health checks, checking the quality of the kale and each week a new exporting license has to be signed off. The kale is



produced locally at the farm and is distributed on behalf of Beechlawn by a distribution company in Dublin.

Organic vegetables are grown without chemicals and fertilisers and other nasty pesticides There are greater levels of vitamins, minerals and nutrient density in Organic vegetables. "A lot of people when they buy from us it is the taste that hits them and they come back for the taste and also the variety of produce that they can get", added Padraig. The organic vegetables soak up all the goodness in the soil, all the nutrients that your body needs. They also grow two unique types of vegetables which are very hard to get in Ireland – Romanesco cauliflower and flower sprouts.

When asked about doing business in Ballinasloe, Padraig believes that it is a great area for it. "It's strategically located. In terms of access in and out, the

road networks are great", he said. With the M6 motorway so close, it makes commuting to and from the town much easier. He stated that in order for others to believe in your business, you first have to believe in your own ability to provide a service or a product to them.

Their website is due to be relaunched in the coming weeks where consumers will be able to find offers in the run up to Christmas.

The plans for the coming year for the farm is to expand the packing house, the polytunnel area and the storage facilities. "We want to be the best known organic farm for vegetables in the next three years. We've a great team of staff who are going to help us get there" Padraig said enthusiastically.

Anyone who orders their Xmas veg order from us will get €5 Off their order. (Minimum order €40) with a copy of Ballinasloe Life Magazine to avail of Offer!!

> For further information, you can contact the farm office on (090) 964 6713 or at www.beechlawnfarm.org.





# UTAH – BRINGING DESIGNER BRANDS FOR LESS TO TOWN CENTRE

**BY LAURA SHEEHAN** 



Utah has been in business on Society Street in the town centre for eight years now offering customers a great selection from clothing to homeware with over 40 years of retail experience between them.

"There is a huge choice, there are 13 departments. We've just opened a new bargain basement", said Val Colleran, the owner of the store.

The bargain basement allows customers to enjoy up to 60 percent off top brand names, such as Regatta, Diesel and Vila. This stock is in season and new. You don't have to pay a small fortune for high quality clothing.

Val stressed the importance of shopping locally this Christmas stating that anything you would be traveling to Athlone or Galway City for you can find here in the town as well without having to spend extra money on your travel expenses.

"They still have all the choice of Athlone so all these independent stores like your Diesel's, your Name It's, your Vila's, your Regatta's, they all have individual stores in Athlone but you can get them all under one roof here at the same, if not, better value", he added.

Whether it's an outfit for your Christmas party, new curtains for your house or a gift for a loved one, Utah has it all in its three storey shop.

For offers and sales, keep an eye on their Facebook page which is updated regularly with the latest offers for the various departments in the store.

Shopping locally increases revenue and keeps employment going in the town. "It's like one big shopping centre Ballinasloe. Choice, value and friendly staff. It is important for people to shop locally", he continued.



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# COMMERCIAL PROPERTY OUTLOOK - PRICES CAN ONLY MOVE NORTH! BY LAURA SHEEHAN

Some 6 significant high street premises have been sold or almost acquired in the past few months with a recent public auction of a Main St. Property causing some to wonder about the fire sale of commercial units in the locale.

Many of the vacated premises on the principle streets have had the FOR SALE signs up for the past 24 months or so . It is a positive trend indicator to see the new investors are arriving to take possession of premises it can only be assumed that they will be fast to the market with refurbishment and new useage plans.

The premises to the left of Murphys Medical Hall (Bould Biddys Bar) has been sold to a Chinese business family with possible use for a restaurant over the street side retail unit. It fetched in the region of €80,000.

Several Units off Dunlo Street-Pauls Bar (Years ago the Dove) and the Jekyll and Hyde Bar and Tommy Kellys Electrcial store have now all been purchased. The average price for the three units was in the region of €95,000.

Society St. too has seen the Michael Mc Cullagh For Sale sign coming down from Rosie Keane's Newsagents which got very close to its reserve

of €110,000 in November with the purchaser looking to renovate for Retail and overhead apartments.

Towards the Fair Green end of the Street, The Hill Family Block incorporating three retail units and overhead accommodation has sale agreed by Rothwell & Staunton and is nearing finality.

Auctioneer Noel Dillon hopes that he will have the last ink dried on the sale of Society Fruit Stores on Society St by the start of the new year, with the buyers seeking to return a convenience store to the location.

The Haydens Hotel Carpark and derelict flats complex on less than an acre has keen interest well above its reserve of €70,000 with local auctioneer John Dolan hoping it will mark the upward swing in prices for the new year.

The sale at public auction of the Stepping Stones outlet (Formerly Paddy Connolly's Butchers) for €75,000 on prime retail location of Main St is the sale that has many scratching their heads.

Contrast that purchase with that of Nellie Jenkins Residence in the Square (Adjoining Cosmos) for some €140,000 less than 28 months ago – shows how much prices have fallen.

Main St Auctioneer Paddy Keane believes it was an outstanding value for money buy by the purchaser "Overall the last quarter has seen much

> more activity at this end of the market but the cash buyer is king and there are no sterling prices available to sellers right now. The focus on street units appears to be less for retail and more for service companies "states Paddy.

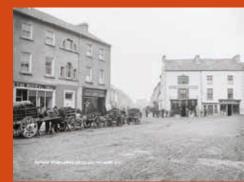
Paddy has seen (like indeed the other seven auctioneers) significant demand for family residences to buy or let and quality residential lettings.

There is some good news on the light warehousing front with the owner of the AT Cross facility indicating that he is seeking planning to develop some additional 2300 square feet of warehousing and light industrial towards the back of the site in the new year.

Good news emerging for the New Year is that after Arthur Guinness & Sons bought out the Brewery off Main St in the 1830s with the arrival of the Canal - the town is to get a micro brewery on the Derrymullen side of town.

The auctioneer who has worked with the investors, over the past few months to get the project across the line, Paddy Keane states "again and again our location, was what was driving the clients to set up here for distribution on a national scale to all the Metropolitan centres, that and our lack of crime were key issues for them".

So as we face into 2017 – it is the light industrial/warehousing of significant size that the market is looking for but we seem not to have enough of.





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# NEITHER A BORROWER OR A LENDER BE? LIAM KELLY LOOKS BACK ON 50 YEARS OF BOTH

**BY COLM CROFFY** 

Hard really to imagine what the Ireland of the mid to late 60's was like in credit terms. The Lemass "rising economic tide lifting all boats" was at work

but for most access to credit was grim.

50 years ago practically anyone that was an employee could only buy goods, - cars, ovens, T.V.s - even Bicycles on the "never, never" hire purchase – where you paid a deposit on the item to the shopkeeper and they paid off the price of the item plus interest at a minimum of 35%.

Money lenders from Athlone and Galway had lucrative trade at often 45% and were clever at offering the principal sum again when the last few pence of the debt was being cleared around Christmas or communion time.

To borrow from a high street bank was a near impossibility for roof repairs, extensions or a couple buying a house or a car. Most of those life indebting moments

were done with family money or by the General Merchant extending long credit terms to the customer but at significant fees.

There was a Society in town during this time called the Patrician Society, that involved fortnightly meetings and speakers. Dermot Connolly gave a presentation on a new movement sweeping the cities to help ordinary families and workers get access to modest credit – "The Credit Union Movement".

According to Liam Kelly, a Church St. native – he "only read about it in the Evening Herald the week before but a group of us, the following week

were out trying to renovate the surrounds of the Creagh Church under Fr. Dunne's supervision when he asked would a Credit Union not be a good idea for the parish?"

Liam has dedicated all of his adult life to the local, National and International Credit Union Movement. He was the founding and Secretary of our local Ballinasloe Credit Union for 27 years and then served as Chairperson for a further 10 years. The retired Psychiatric Nurse has been synonymous with the local Chapter which this years AGM will announce it's Jubillee year of 50 seasons - providing accessible credit to local people from all walks of life.

The sprightly Octogenarian is in fine fettle by his own fireside, recalling with pristine precision, dates, names, meetings, purchases,

log books and meetings while his wife Mary cajoles from her kitchen "sometimes there was more Credit Union meetings in that front room out there – than we had hot dinners in here" – she laughs.

The first Committee meeting to set up the Branch took place in Creagh National School. Liam remembers some of the early pioneers



Founding members at The 21st Anniversary Celebrations. Back: Paddy Colohan, Joe Kelly, Liam Kelly, Jim Reynolds, Michael Mahon, John Desmond. Front: Jack Creaven, Danny Flynn, Tom Costello, Paddy Gavin.



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- many long since gone to their eternal reward - Jim Reynolds, the Agr Officer from Birchgrove; Danny Flynn, an ESB Official; Gus Hynes, a nurse; Paddy Colohan, a carpenter in the Hospital; Pat Boland, a clerical officer with the P&T; to name a few.

"We had to collect 5 shillings each to buy the Book from the foundress of the Movement In Ireland-Norah Heherily-who set up the first banch in Donore in 1955, to buy the founding book and register your interest (cost an old pound) and we damn near struggled to collect it" jokes Liam.

After that they set about establishing the Branch with a public meeting in the Parochial Hall with some 30 persons in attendance.

They gave the project their backing and 3 men from St. Anthony's Credit Union in the Claddagh came to Liam's house one evening to assist with the formal naming and founding of the two hundred and second Credit Union Branch of the League of Irish Credit Unions in 1967.

"We were motivated by the fact that we were all young working men with young families and needs for extensions, cars, renovations and no means of getting reasonable credit. When I started nursing in 1950 there were 870 staff, 17 Doctors, and 2,000 patients in St. Bridgids - 60% might have had a post office account but very few had a bank account and no one had access to credit in the 50s and 60s on reasonable terms", states Liam.

So Liam and his band of merry men (for it was all men in the early days, not like now!) received their common bond - a 15 mile radius of Ballinasloe and the late Jim Reynolds suggested they register the name "Our Lady of Lourdes Creagh, Ballinasloe" - similar to the Claddagh one.

The branch operated originally from the back room of the Town Hall on Sundays noon to 3 pm where members could save. Then they did a deal with the late Mrs Anne Divilly of Dunlo St. who ran the Dom Bosco Boys Club in the Emerald. The Credit Union paid half the rent for the Boys Club and opened the branch on Tuesday nights for the Committee to do the accounts and then on Fridays 7 to 9 pm In the late 60s – Friday evening was pay day and over 80 % of workers were paid cash in envelopes.

Liam remembers the big ledger page and the numbers and members could only borrow a maximum of 4 times what they had saved! The first loan ever given out was for a £30 large

commercial fridge purchase for a new storeowner and by the end of their first 12 months of trading they had achieved a surplus of £5. As part of the strict oversight by the League meant that the books had to be audited and Liam had to drive them to Galway - Merlin Park where a young accountant was recovering with a broken leg - that was Jim Keane and from that day to this; Russell, Brennan, Keane, Auditors oversee the Fiduciary Reporting on the Branch.

Membership has grown steadily from 10,000 in 1970, 12,000 in 1980, 14,000 in 1990, 16,000 in 2000, 18,000 in 2010 to over 20,000 today.

They bought Elders (where Caroline's Hair Salon is now) on Main St. with a loan from the League in 1975 for approx. £1,500 but sold it again when it proved unsuitable. They bought a larger premises - Cartys House on River St. for £4,500 in 1976 with the Forestry Service taking a long lease on the top floor to pay the Mortgage on

the building. Ann Divilly's Boys Club deal in the Emerald of some 10 years previous – proved to be a good template!

The movement of most Credit Unions in the League to high street locations in the 1990s was mirrored here when they bought Jack Crosby's on Main St. for £150,000 in 1994 and after gutting and rebuilding a modern Financial Co-operative premises, opened their doors in 1996.

Maureen Grenham was the first employee in the late 70s as their Clerk/Teller with committee members having to do the counter and book work. Their first Administrator was engaged in 1995 – who left his pensionable position with the P&T to rise to the rank of General

Manager today.

From the £5 first surplus of 1968 the Branch enjoys savings of €80 million plus and has a loan book of over €37 million and a staff of 16. "Mr. Frank Wilwol, the Manager of AT Cross in 1971 proved to be the best recruiting Sergeant we ever had as he agreed that savings deductions could be made from employees pay packets direct-we never looked back after that" remarked Liam.

Liam's work for the movement saw him serve on International Missions, be an advisor to the Minister for Finance, serve on the Irish League and helped form Banagher, Portumna, Mountbellew, Moylough and Ballygar branches. The former Derry SDLP Leader John Hume would be a personal friend.

Looking back he is naturally proud of his own union's growth, development and contribution to the local economy but is particularly proud of his involvement of getting the National Special Savings Protection Scheme Government backed for all members.

"We needed some support from the Central Bank and Government but what they have been doing to us since the crash is nearly killing the movement; we never gave loans to developers-we never supported speculation but we are being punished for those sins" states Liam.

"We were also the second ever, in the country after Tallow to create a Social Economy Fund from the Members dividends; to invest in a variety of Social Enterprise projects. To boost employment we pumped over €150,000 into the St. Enda's Enterprise project and it has sustained some 25 businesses

in our common bond and helped to form the BACD – which has been positive for the town in the recession".

When asked what made us escape the ravages of Credit Union melt down that has affected some?, he grabs both sides of the chair and resolutely declares "the honesty and integrity of our members has kept us out of all that sort of bother, we are a members orientated organisation, our ethos is to help each other, not anything elseour Board and Committee members are not State appointed they are elected by us all to act in our common good. We had over 1000 members in AT Cross and Square D-they all lost their jobs horribly but every cent borrowed was fully paid back!

He and his wife Mary are looking forward to the year of celebrations for the Branch in 2017.



Founder Director - Liam Kelly



Back: Mary Flynn, Michael Mannion, Tracey Downey, Kathleen Burke, Oliver Glennon Middle: Michael Shaughnessy, Jim Kent, Bill Cummins, Marie Finn, James Greene, Bobby Finn Front: Brian Derrane, Liam Kelly, Mary Madden, Maura O'Brien, Marian Brady, Mick Mahon

### **PORTIUNCULA HOSPITAL WINS MEDRAY** AWARD FOR RADIOLOGY DEPT. BY LAURA SHEEHAN



local **Portiuncula** Recently, our Hospital's Radiology Department won the MEDRAY award for the best Radiology Department in the country. This highlights the excellent standards of the hospital as they beat Dublin's Mater Hospital and James Connolly Hospital in Blanchardstown, which are two hospitals much greater in size than Portiuncula.

"They're enormous, you'd fit Portiuncula in their carpark", said Avril Hanly, Senior Radiologist.

They collected the prize at the Irish Institute of Radiography and Radiation Therapy (IIRRT) Annual Conference at the Gibson Hotel in Dublin.

Speaking to Life, Maeve Darcy, Senior Radiologist, said "personally I'm still in shock and this is four weeks later. I can certainly say that the level of pride I feel I don't think I've ever felt it".

The online vote made up 30 percent of the overall mark awarded to the hospital. "That's where I feel all this pride because 30 percent of where we are today came from each individual person and they all own a part of that", she continued. Everyone got involved in the voting from hospital staff themselves to butchers to school teachers unlike their competitors whose main voters were in the medical profession.

The support didn't come only from the people who could vote but the words of those who were unable to. "We got phone calls from some elderly women saying they didn't have computers but wanted to vote for

us asking 'can we write to someone?', in a way it was just the support and the pride and how they wanted to be a part of it that meant so much",

They also received good results from their anonymous visitor who arrived at the hospital without notifying anyone to see the service they offered on a regular basis and praised how easy it was to find the hospital from the motorway with the signage. A professional body from MEDRAY came to interview staff members. "She said that when she went around to other departments she only got to speak to the manager whereas here she met every radiographer bar one", added Avril Hanly.

The high score from the professional visit was much appreciated by the staff because at the end of the day they are professionals so to be recognised for their professional service meant a lot to them.

She also interviewed three patients randomly on the day to see if they were satisfied with their experience of the service and the Department are delighted that they scored highly in that area as it shows the confidence that the members of the local area have in their work.

When asked what they thought put their Department ahead of others, the answer was simple - the staff. "The level of education among the number of staff here punches way above our weight. There isn't anyone here that doesn't have some kind of Postgrad. That's down to management, Margaret insists that we are always going off getting educated", added Maeve.

No member of staff complains when they have to cover for someone who is gone to a course or training because they will get the opportunity as well at another time.



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Avril added, "Just the commitment to education like in a lot of hospitals there would be one person and that one person organises everything and that person sends out all the information whereas here every radiographer is doing their own homework and the different audits. She just felt that everybody was part of the whole thing".

There are 13 members of staff in the Department. That's 13 people to cover 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Margaret Dervan, Manager, commends her team of colleagues saying, "I would've always aspired to have a team as opposed to having individuals and I have that here".

As the majority of the staff from the Radiology Department are from the local area the service is much more personal than what it would be in a bigger hospital. Staff are able to have a chat with patients as they know some of them and it isn't as formal as it would be in one of the hospitals in Dublin.

To further develop the Department, "we want to develop the ultrasound. That's my huge aim. We need another ultrasound machine and more staff to staff it because there's huge demand out there for ultrasound that we can't keep fulfilled", added Margaret, who has worked in the Radiology Department for 30 years and is one of the longest serving staff members. She insists that they are always thinking ahead but finance is a major constraint for hospital departments. Funding has been very limited from the HSE.

"There is so much more we want to do but we don't have the resources to do it. We would absolutely love to be giving more, doing more, just to give back to our patients", continued Maeve.

The staff have been doing the best they can with a limited amount of resources and this can be seen through their MEDRAY win. "I honestly believe that it is the goodwill of the staff working here. They'll always up it a gear when the occasion arises", Margaret added.



Theresa O'Donovan, IIRRT President: Margaret Dervan, RSM Portiuncula Hospital: Maeve Darcy, Senior Radiologist; Avril Hanly, Senior Radiologist; Aidan O'Reilly, Managing Director MEDRAY; at Portiuncula Hospital.



Radiology Department staff at Portiuncula Hospital

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# **HOSPITAL WATCH**

According to ratemyhospital.ie, Portiuncula University Hospital (PUH) remains the same as last month and is ranked at number 30 on the list of both public and private hospitals throughout the country while they are ranked as number 13 in the list of public-only hospitals. The hospital currently has a 73 percent satisfaction rate from patients.

In comparison, University Hospital Galway (UHG) is ranked very poorly at 67th place and with a satisfaction rate of 60 percent. The hospital remains the third worst ranked hospital in the country. In the list of public-only hospitals, UHG is currently ranked in 49th position.

Saolta published their Annual Report 2015 recently which stated that Portiuncula currently has 198 inpatients beds, it remains as a Model 3 hospital - one that admits undifferentiated acute medical patients, has an Acute Medical Assessment Unit and a Category 2 ICU – and its current staffing figure is 671.

According to the report, in the last year PUH has seen a decrease of 5.09 percent in the number of births at the hospital from 1,983 to 1,882 and it also recorded a decrease of 1.41 percent in Emergency Department admissions from 8,432 to 8,313. The number of outpatients to the hospital increased by almost 10 percent from 47,415 to 51,698 patients.

Also, day cases saw a decrease of 6.23 percent as did the Emergency Department admissions which had a decrease of 1.41 percent.

University Hospital Galway currently has 646 inpatient beds and a staffing level of 3,361. The hospital has seen a significant rise of 5.28 percent in the number of outpatients that they care for it increased from 245,134 to 258,082.

For the month of October, the total number of people who spent time on trolleys in Portiuncula Hospital was 121 patients. Unfortunately, that's an increase of 69 percent for the same period of last year which saw 83 people waiting on trolleys at the hospital.

In the University Hospital Galway, there was a total of 524 patients who spent time on a trolley throughout the month of October. Like Portiuncula, this number increased from the same time last year by 70 percent.

The local Dowd family recently held a Golf Classic in the Golf Club in memory of their recent brother, Dan, and the proceeds a total of €1,250 – to the Oncology Unit in Portiuncula.

### **Musicians/Bands Wanted for St Patrick's Day Parade**

The St Patrick's Day Parade Committee are starting their plans for next year's upcoming parade. The parade is due to be held in the town at 2pm on Friday March 17.

The Committee are resuming their meetings in Gullane's Hotel in January and are eager to get musicians and bands involved in the process. They wish to improve the music selection of the parade to provide entertainment for all.

If you are interested in putting yourself or a band forward for the celebrations, or have any other ideas or suggestions for the Parade then do not hesitate to contact Carmel Grealy on (087) 620 7477.

### **BY LAURA SHEEHAN**



Members of the Gala Fashion Show Fundraiser Special, to raise funds for the Friends of Portciuncula Group pictured at the Sherwater Hotel in October last.



Over 15,000 lights will illuminate the village of Aughrim for the festive season where an outdoor crib will be the focal point. It is the second year that the Aughrim **Village Community Group mark** the historic occasion and this year will have twice as many lights spread out throughout the village.

The committee, headed by John Burke, Helen Mannion and Shane Martin will once again erect a huge crib in the village centre which last year attracted hundreds of visitors to see its unique composition. With assistance from Galway Co. Council and local sponsors it is hoped the attractions will be in place for over a month. To help defray some of the expenses a Super Supper Dance will be held in St. Catherine's Hall on Sunday 4th December where international singing star Eleanor Shanley as well as several local artistes will provide the



John Burke and Helen Mannion alongside the open air crib in Aughrim.

entertainment. Local charities will also benefit from the evening's proceeds. As well a handbag, presented by international model Kate Moss, to the Friends of Portiuncula Hospital, will be raffled with the proceeds here going to the Ballinasloe Hospital committee.

The Blessing of the Crib and the switch-on of the 15,000 lights will take place on 8th December at 6 p.m. which will be followed by a session of carol singing by Aughrim schoolchildren. And on New Year's Eve there "will be one hell of a party" (according to John Burke), to herald in the New Year with musical entertainment, carol singing and "plenty of refreshments."

"This is a great opportunity to get the whole community involved in the festive spirit. Last year hundreds came, from near and far, to witness our displays and we are expecting even more this year. It is very much appreciated by all ages and we want to thank the many volunteers and the sponsors who helped to make it possible" said John Burke.

# **CHURCH OF IRELAND COMMUNITY COME TO** THE RESCUE BY KEN KELLY



A magnificent gesture by the Church of Ireland community in Aughrim to help out their Roman Catholic neighbours while their Church was being refurbished has been very much appreciated. For the last few months the Holy **Trinity Church of Ireland** has been the venue for Saturday evening masses while St. Catherine's Roman Catholic Church, built in the 1860's, is undergoing internal renovations.

The hand of friendship was extended by Rector Rev. John Godfrey when he learned of his neighbours' plight and offered his Church for any

Catholic ceremonies for as long as they were needed. At the first evening mass, prior to its commencement, Rev. Godfrey welcomed his fellow brethren to the Church and assured them that the whole Church of Ireland community were delighted to be of assistance and they could avail of their facilities for as long as they wanted.

Most of the work in St. Catherine's is internal including major work on the main altar.

Parish Priest, Fr. Gerry Geraghty said it was a very generous gesture by the Church of Ireland and a great unifying of the whole community. "We have Mass there at 7.30 on Saturday evenings and they have their Service on Sundays. We expect to have the works on our Church completed in the New Year and in the meantime we will avail of the facilities in the Holy Trinity Church. However because of the volume of people attending the Christmas ceremonies we have decided to hold these in the local St. Catherine's Hall.

"We are all very appreciative of Rector Godfrey's gesture and we hope at some stage to reciprocate, if the occasion arises. The ecumenical spirit between both communities has been widely appreciated" added Fr. Geraghty.

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# PASSO A PASSO GRATITUDE TO LOCAL



of the Town Hall Theatre to raise some much needed funds for Passo a Passo - translated as "Step by Step" in Mozambique.

There was almost €3,000 for the school. "That's going to new furniture for our new library and laboratory. We have already put the order in for some tables, chairs and computer desks. It's amazing, we're absolutely thrilled", said Lala Fitzsimons, a native of Castlerea, sister of Muriel Duthie, Cleaghmore.

Passo a Passo was set up by husband and wife, Francis and Lala Fitzsimons 20 years ago in the bush lands of Mozambique. There are now over 200 students and 13 teachers at the school.

Lala praised the support they have received from the town saying, "Ballinasloe have been amazing over the years. They've always supported us. They helped us to get a roof on our classroom and our bore hole to pump water".

The school currently offers Grade eight, nine and 10 which is the equivalent of the Irish Junior Certificate. Now that they are after building a new library and lab, they should be eligible for Grade 11 and 12. "We're just waiting for authorisation from the Government for the final two grades", added Lala. This would allow the students to reach a Leaving Certificate standard of education.

The running of Passo a Passo relies strongly on donations. "It's mostly word of mouth, friends, church, mostly our family and friends. The Government don't sponsor the school at all but they're thrilled that we are here because otherwise these children would not have access to education", continued Lala. The nearest town is 13 kilometre and these families do not have the money to send their children as they would have to pay transport costs and school fees which they cannot afford.

As well as education, Francis and Lala have a palliative care programme where their nurse and her helpers go out into the bush and visit those who are ill and cannot make their way to the hospital. Francis visits the local prison every Saturday where there are at least 100 men in one room to bring them food and give them some encouragement.

Lala wanted to leave one message for the people of this area, "I want to really say thanks to the people of Ballinasloe and Happy Christmas from us all in Passo a Passo, Mozambique. They'll probably never know how many lives they've touched but their money goes a long, long way here and it is so appreciated".









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# A FAMILY'S SHADOW OF THE SOMME BY JOE LYONS





Joe Lyons

The commemorations of the 1916 Risina bring back memories for many people ancestors who were involved in that historic event. For Joe Kellysgrove, Lyons, Clontuskert, memory is that of his father John who fought in the First World War

as a British army officer and was at the Battle of the Somme which started in July 1916.

John Lyons was born in March 1883 into a farm about seven miles north of Kilmallock, Co Limerick. He had an older brother and a younger sister. After receiving his primary education in the local national school in the small village of Athlacca, he went boarded to Blackrock College Dublin, where Eamon de Valera was a classmate for the final two years. On completing his secondary education he sat the British Civil Service exam (like so many others at time ) and on being successful, he joined the Exchequer department in London in 1901.

Like so many Irish men of his generation – he never spoke about his military escapades, much to his family - there is no explanation why he along with the other 200,000 or so Irishmen who took part. We don't know why he felt the need to sign up to a British London Based Regiment.

Capt John Lyons spent most of the Battle of the Somme in the trenches. A few weeks before the end of the battle he became ill but would not leave his comrades, however he fell unconscious and woke up three weeks later in a hospital in Paris. Following a period of medical treatment, he was returned to a hospital in Leeds in the north of England and after further recuperation he was discharged from the army on medical grounds in the Spring of 1917, and he then returned to his position at the Exchequer. During his time in hospital he came to the conclusion that the British military command used soldiers as cannon fodder during the war in general but particularly during the Battle of the Somme where a million soldiers were wounded or killed. He became mildly anti-British and never ever joined the British Legion.

In the Autumn of 1917 he received a telegram from Ireland asking him to come home immediately because his brother died suddenly. He returned home for the funeral with the intention of selling the farm, which he had inherited. However, for reasons never fully explained he decided to stay and take up farming.

His great friend in later years was the local dispensary doctor, Dr O'Connor, who had served as a medical officer in the British army during World War Two, and their friendship initially was due to their shared experience.

He received assurances from the IRA Leader - Michael Collins that he would not be in danger if he remained in



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Ireland and in return he hid arms for the IRA at various locations on the farm using his military expertise. He could not become overtly involved with the IRA because of his previous role in the British army as (like many of the ex servicemen) he would risk being shot for treason.

One winter's night in 1920, the local IRA leader called to his home to tell him that 15 to 20 Black and Tans in two lorries were stopped at the head of the road leading to the house and were overheard by IRA scouts discussing raiding the house and arresting him. The IRA leader asked him to leave and stay in a safe house but he refused, saying that the Tans would burn the place down. He also said he had experienced more dangerous situations in the war and he would brazen it out. The Tans were kept under observation during the night by the IRA with regular reports to John Lyons the house, until they departed the Photo taken in early 1917 after leaving next morning. Apparently, the Tans the British Army due to ill health. discovered that ex-British army veterans who served in the Great War were part of the group, and they could not agree about the raid because if they arrested an ex-British army officer, who had seen service at the Somme, had an exemplary war record and they had nothing definite to charge him with, then there could be serious repercussions for them.

He had very high regard for Eamon de Valera as an academic and for his rugby prowess (he played for Munster) but had a poor opinion of his military and political capabilities. In the 1940's and early 1950's de Valera and his wife would stay for a few days in the Summer on a farm near Bruree where Dev had been brought up by his grandmother and aunt.

> Dr O'Connor, who was active in Fianna Fáil and friendly with de Valera would bring a letter from Dev to John Lyons, inviting him to afternoon tea. John knew what the letter contained because the doctor had told him. The letter was returned unopened with the words "Thank you Mr de Valera for the kind thought but I will not be attending". The doctor would come to bring the invitation every Summer for a few years with the same result and then it stopped comming!

Although the doctor and John differed politically, it did not affect their friendship and the doctor visited him more or less on a monthly basis for the rest of his life for a cup of tea and a chat which did not involve politics. John Lyons died in October 1968, aged 85 years and three weeks later, the British Embassy on learning of his passing, sent a representative to offer condolences to the family.



# TIDY TOWNS AWARDS HILLCREST PARK WINNERS

### **BY LAURA SHEEHAN**

Hillcrest Park has once again received first prize in the Tidy Towns Best Gardens' competition their fifth year in a row. The Residents' Association at Hillcrest is one of the last remaining active residents' associations in the town. It was first founded 35 years ago and was reactivated in 2011.

Speaking to Life, Mary Whelehan, Secretary of the Hillcrest Residents' Association said, "the main purpose of the Residents' Association is to provide a sense of civic pride in our estate, to encourage all the residents to become actively involved by supporting projects undertaken and the general tidying and upkeep of our area". Others members of the Association include; Nora Flaherty who is the Treasurer and Paul Flaherty who is the Chairman.

Projects that have been undertaken in the estate include; cladding of the surrounding wall at the entry to the estate, forming two large circular flower beds, the erection of a stone with Hillcrest engraved on it.

"I have a roster done where residents take it in their turn to mow the large area of green at the entrance and the top of the estate also. I also asked residents this year to place a flower tub outside their houses and this added beautiful colour to our estate", she added.

There is a roster for the women who look after the flower beds, sowing of flowers and shrubs and the children in the estate are encouraged to pick up their litter as they go.

The results are visible and achieved through the team work of the Association. Each year, €50 is collected from each house for the upkeep of the estate. So far they have purchased their own lawnmower and strimmers.

Despite winning the Tidy Towns competition for the last five years, the Association has further plans to ensure the estate keeps its great condition. "Our plans for the coming year are to place two benches in the green area at the top of Hillcrest and place extra tubs of flowers in our green area", continued Mary.

She would encourage others to get involved in the Tidy Towns competition and be proud of where they live as it gives you a great sense of well-being and satisfaction.

"We have great fun and you get to know people and form friendships", she added.

The town itself increased by 6 marks this year receiving 296 marks. Skerries, Co Dublin won the Tidiest Town with 327 marks. This highlights how good the town's result was as Ballinasloe had a maximum of 10 volunteers while Skerries had over 300.

"New volunteers can contact me on (087) 997 0110. We would love new members to help us", added William Duthie, Chairman of the Ballinasloe Tidy Towns Committee.



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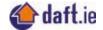
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# BECOME A BALLINASLOE BUTTERFLY...! BY MAURE

BY MAUREEN CAHALAN

Can you or have you ever imagined yourself becoming totally free? When I was younger I often dreamt of becoming a butterfly for a day, gracefully taking flight, at my leisure. Last summer I became that butterfly in my home town.

I found all of our local shops full of exciting products with lovely staff and owners taking pride in their work. The town was literally jumping with joy too as our community prepared for the "Fit Towns" project and then we were awarded 1st place in the country, what a remarkable achievement! There was something for everybody.

Our community spirit showed how much we love and appreciate our town. Business owners, restaurants and manufacturers in Ballinasloe support local events, where possible. There are facilities for everybody including our beautiful new Library which was once the Mercy Convent, is worth visiting as the architecture alone is a real treat; not to forget all the books.

A new company came into the Industrial Park in Creagh with promises of 100 new jobs so we can see that Ballinasloe is on the rise with new horizons in sight. There are many local businesses offering a great selection of choices to suit every taste and pocket. Take flight, walk the town and parks and find your mojo by becoming that butterfly. Remember the crafters, writers, artists, fitters and bakers who love the sight and beauty of butterflies who care to softly land, on their doorstep. So, become a Ballinasloe Butterfly... Enjoy your day..! Advt.





### PÓL Ó CONGHAILE SCOOPS TOP INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISM AWARD

Local man Pól Ó Conghaile recently won the Travel Writer of the Year Award at the British Guild of Travel Writers 2016 Award in London. Kilgarve reared Pól is the eldest son of Dr. Colm and Claire Connolly.

Pól is currently the Travel Editor for Independent.ie and the Irish Independent. He regularly contributes to National Geographic Traveller, Newstalk FM and CARA Magazine. He also worked with the Irish Examiner from 2010 to 2014. He has over 15 years of traveling behind him which has led him to be one of the most trusted Travel Journalists in Europe. He studied in Trinity College Dublin from 1992 to 1996, after receiving his secondary education in St. Joesphs College Garbally. Pól also has much experience as an author with his name to titles such as 'Secret Dublin: An Unusual Guide, 'Explore Ireland's Islands' and 'That's My Baby'.



### Michael McCullagh

**AUCTIONEER & ESTATE AGENT** 

( RICS

sioner for Oaths Dip. Soc. Act. Licence No. 000001 30 Society Street, Ballinaston, Co. Galway, Republic of Ireland.





### CHALKFACE CHRONICLES UPDATES FROM OUR SCHOOLGOERS



### **GARBALLY BEST LEAVING CERTS AWARDS**



The picture shows from Left to Right, Mr. Michael Tully (Year Head), Alan Barrett (recipient of the Best Leaving Cert 2016 award), Mr. Stephen Reilly (Principal Garbally College), Mr. Willie Staunton (Staunton Accountant's Athlone and sponsor of the Best Leaving Cert Award), David Mannion (joint recipient of the Best Leaving Cert 2016), Ms. Jacinta Deady-Henry (Deputy Principal), Mr. Paul Walsh (Programme Co-ordinator). The boys received a trophy each and a very generous financial gift and they also share the perpetual cup for the year.



6th-Leah Campbell, Amy Rocke, 5th -Rebecca Hynes 4th-Sophie Flynn, Caoimhe Kilkenny, Thie Jones and Amanda Brien

### INTO CUMANN NA MBUNSCOIL CAMOGIE MINI-7'S By 4th & 6th Class Kiltormer

We had our mini 7's blitz here in Kiltormer. We didn't have to travel very far! Our team was 6th-Leah Campbell, Amy Rocke, 5th-Rebecca Hynes 4th-Sophie Flynn, Caoimhe Kilkenny, Thie Jones and Amanda Brien.

teams in our group that we played were G.S. Uí Cheithearnaigh and G.S. Baile Locha Riach. We beat these 2

teams so we had to play Creagh N.S. as they won out of the other group. It was a tight game but we beat them. Our teacher Mr Sean Tuohy organised it all for us on the 10th of October.

This meant that Kiltormer N.S. made it through to the County Finals. On Fri 14th October we went off to Loughgeorge, Claregalway. We had a small team so we only needed four cars. Mike Flynn's, John Rocke's and our teachers', Mr Tuohy and Mrs McDonnell.

In Loughgeorge we Duniry, Clonfert and New Inn. Duniry and Clonfert beat us and we beat New Inn. We had some great supporters- Mags Kilkenny, Bernie Campbell, Mike Flynn, John Rocke, Adam Rocke and our two teachers-Mr Tuohy and Mrs McDonnell. After that our teacher bought us ice-cream in the Galway Plaza. It was a great day and we all played our best.

# **HUTCHINSON DAVIDSON & SON** Solicitors

Principal: David C. Colbert, B.A. L.L.B

Orla M. Barry, B.C.L.

Elaine Bannerton, B.A. LLB.

Bridge Street, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, Ireland.

**Tel.:** + 353 (0) 90 96 42143 **Fax:** + 353 (0) 90 96 44077

**Email:** info@hutchinsondavidson.ie





www.hutchinsondavidson.ie

### A TRIP TO FEEVAGH WOODS By Eoin Grehan, Taughmaconnell N.S.





On a sunny but cold Monday morning, in the middle of October, 5th and 6th class of St. Ronan's leaped onto our bus and set off towards Feevagh Woods. We twisted and turned down rough, narrow roads, until we came to an old rusty gate at the entrance of Feevagh Woods.

We were greeted by a friendly, kind and energetic man, whose name was Paddy Daly, with his cute dog Rosie at his feet. Rosie was a joyful, friendly dog and we followed Paddy up a wide lane towards his cabin.

We arrived at a large wooden cabin at an opening in the woods. We left our luggage on a long yellow bench and joined Paddy inside the cabin. Inside the cabin there was a warm roaring fire in a huge kitchen. There was an arch leading to a cosy living room. We were introduced and played some fun games to get to know each other.

grounds. The woods covered 12 acres and there was a wonderful variety of species of trees and plants. We found out there was lots of limestone in the area that affected what grew locally. Then we collected long, narrow sticks to use on our scavenger hunt.

We were put into small groups and had 45 minutes to find some interesting leaves, berries and insects in the woods. Paddy showed us how there's a whole ecosystem in the space of a single hula-hoop. After 45 minutes, we arrived back and Paddy taught us about everything that we collected. We tasted some bitter sloe berries and stayed away from other poisonous berries.

Afterwards, we used drama to demonstrate how pollination works. The day was nearing an end and we were preparing to play a big game of hide and seek. Paddy hid inside the woods as we counted. Everyone was feeling tense as we searched for him behind every tree. It took ages to find him but after a while 2 groups eventually caught him camouflaged behind some ivy.

We said a huge 'Thank You' as we boarded the bus and everyone was tired but extremely happy. It was a super day.



Ardscoil Mhuire Student Council 2016/17

Orla Madden, Clodagh Powell, Abbie

Cunningham and Aoife Jordan taking part in the



Ardscoil Mhuire Student Council Presidents, Kellie McGuire and Sarah Fletcher.





# **Ballinasloe Credit Union**









### **Borrowing From BCU** Benefits Include:

- No Fees No Gimmicks No Hidden Charges
  - Pay Less Interest with each repayment
    - Life Savings & Loan Protection insurance provided at No Extra Cost

#### **SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE:**

A recent leaflet circulated to households offered a loan of €500 to be repaid over 26 weeks @ €25 per week. So you would repay €650 for €500 borrowed. The interest rate is stated to be 60% p.a. fixed. Representative 187.2% APR. A credit union Loan of €500 repaid @ €25 per week would be repaid in 21 weeks and it would cost €508.91. The interest rate would be 9.04%APR.

Main Street, Ballinasloe. Tel: 090 9643 179 Fax: 090 9643 511 Email: info@ballinasloecreditunion.ie Web: www.ballinasloecreditunion.ie

**OPENING HOURS**: Monday - Friday: 9.30am - 5.30pm, Saturday: 9.30am - 4.30pm

**LOCAL • LOYAL • LENDING** 

### **OUT AND ABOUT IN BALLINASLOE**



Four Generations get together to celebrate the 60th Wedding Anniversary of Noel and Tess Geraghty, Cleaghmore, Ballinasloe in Gullane's Hotel.



Blanaid Fenton from Damsha an Sean Nós, Béal Átha na Slua, dancing at the Tribute Night for Mike McKeigue



At the Ballinasloe Bowls Club Presentation Night in Gullanes Hotel the Singles Competition Winners were presented with their prizes by Fr. John Garvey. Front row I-r Fr. John Garvey, Michael Kelly (winner), Frank Dolan (runner up) of the "A" Competition. Back: William Duthie (runner up), Nancy Kelly (winner) of the "C" competition, Margaret Moran (runner up) and Ita Rigney (winner) of the "C" competition.



At the Ballinasloe Bowls Club Presentation Night in Gullanes Hotel the Doubles Competition Winners were presented with their prizes by Fr. John Garvey to Frank Dolan & Nancy Kelly and the runners up were Ita Rigney & Liam Keoghan.

The Bowls Club now play in the Emerald Ballroom on Mondays at 7.30pm & Thursdays at 10.30am and new members are welcome.



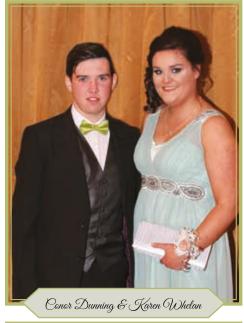
Another successful year for everyone in Scoil an Chroí Naofa Once again there are over 100 shoe boxes full of little surprises, collected for the 2016 CHRISTMAS SHOE BOX APPEAL



Teresa Coughlin, Ballinasloe Social Services, and **Deborah Brady, Viewpoint Centre** 

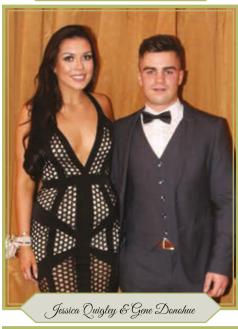
# **OUT AND ABOUT IN BALLINASLOE**

### **Garbally College - Graduation in Gullanes Hotel Ballinasloe**







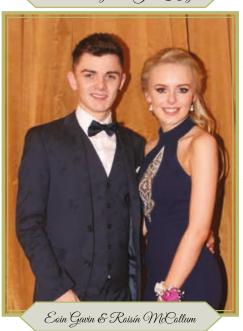












Photos: J & S Photos, 10 Society Street, Ballinasloe, Co Galway

# **December EVENTS GUIDE**

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Liam's Country Road 10pm The Aul Sod Bar Hickory Wind 9pm The Pillar House John Finnerty 10pm Joe's Bar		Topin					LIVE MUSIC WHO NEW ICOIS COICH.	2.20hiii	Gullanc 3 Dal
Etain's Country Nodu Topin The Adi Sou Dai Thickery Willia 5pin The Filial House	December 11th Sunday				9.30pm	Joe's Bar	Paul Rurns	10 30nm	The Dunlo Tayorn
	December 11th Sunday Pillar House Charity Trad Session	6pm	The Pillar House	December 23rd Friday				-	The Dunlo Tavern
Live Music 7pm An Tain Tradstone 10pm The Aul Sod Bar Music in Lounge by Shane Moore 10pm Valeries, Aughri	December 11th Sunday Pillar House Charity Trad Session Liam's Country Road	6pm 10pm	The Pillar House The Aul Sod Bar	December 23rd Friday Hickory Wind	9pm	The Pillar House	John Finnerty	10pm	Joe's Bar

# **January EVENTS GUIDE**

January 1st Sunday			January 11th Wednesday			Live Music	10pm	An Tain
Pillar House Trad Session 6pm	m	The Pillar House	B. Kilkenny ,F. Hession and Friends	10pm	An Tain	Amy Brennan	9.30pm	Shearwater Hotel
King's of Connaucht 10p		The Aul Sod bar		6.30pm	Gullane's Bar	DJ	9pm	Downey's Bar
Live Music 7pm		An Tain			Men's Shed	Live Music	10.30pm	The Dunio Tavern
The NOSHOWband 8pm		Maud Mi <b>ll</b> ars	January 12th Thursday			Damien Gormley	10pm	Joe's Bar
Shane Moore 9pn		Downey's Bar		8.30pm	An Tain	Cappy Hospice Auction, Dj P.Hardiman		Valeries, Aughrim
Buzz the Agent 10p		The Dunlo Tavern			The Dunlo Tavern	January 22nd Sunday	тории	valenes, Auginini
Slider 10p		Joe's Bar	January 13th Friday			<del></del>	6pm	Ther Pillar House
Session in the Front Bar 10p		Valeries, Aughrim	Evan Blake	10pm	The Aul Sod Bar	Pacifica	10pm	The Aul Sod Bar
January 2nd Monday		,	Reel Deal	10pm	An Tain		7pm	An Tain
	30pm	Gullane's Bar		9.30pm	Shearwater Hotel		9pm	Downey's Bar
		Gullane's Bar			The Dunlo Tavern	Session in the Front Bar	10pm	Valeries, Aughrim
January 3rd Tuesday			January 14th Saturday			January 23rd Monday	тории	vaieries, Auginini
	30pm	Gullane's Bar	Chrish Nash	10pm	The Pillar House		6.30pm	Gullane's Bar
GAA Bingo 8pm	-		No Bodder	10pm	The Aul Sod Bar		8.30pm	Gullane's Bar
		Gullane's Bar	Live Music	10pm	An Tain	January 24th Tuesday	0.50piii	dullanes bai
January 4th Wednesday				9.30pm	Shearwater Hotel		5 20nm	Gullane's Bar
B. Kilkenny ,F. Hession & Friends 10p	pm	An Tain		9pm	Downey's Bar		5.30pm	dullalles par
		Gullane's Bar	Take 2	10pm	The Dunlo Tavern		8pm	Cullen de Den
Art Classes 7pm		Men's Shed		10pm	Joe's Bar		8.30pm	Gullane's Bar
January 5th Thursday				10pm	Valeries, Aughrim	January 25th Wednesday	-10	
	30pm .	An Tain	January 15th Sunday		, ,		10pm	An Tain
January 6th Friday				6pm	The Pillar House		6.30pm	Gullane's Bar
Johnny F 10p	pm	The Aul Sod Bar	Live Music	10pm	The Aul Sod Bar		7pm	Men's Shed
Reel Deal 10p		An Tain		7pm	An Tain	January 26th Thursday		
		Shearwater Hotel	Live Music with Lal Lee	9pm	Downey's Bar		8.30pm	An Tain
		Gullane's Bar	Shane Moore	10pm	Joe's Bar	January 27th Friday		
Trad Session 10p	pm	The Dunlo Tavern	Session in Front Bar	10pm	Valeries, Aughrim	Johnny F	10pm	The Aul Sod Bar
January 7th Saturday			January 16th Monday			Reel Deal	10pm	An Tain
Ultan Conlon 10p	pm	The Pillar House	Yoga	6.30pm	Gullane's Bar		9.30pm	Shearwater Hotel
The Crime 10p	pm	The Aul Sod Bar	Line Dancing	8.30pm	Gullane's Bar	January 28th Saturday		
Live Music 10p	pm .	An Tain	January 17th Tuesday				10pm	The Pillar House
John Molloy 9.30	30pm	Shearwater Hotel	Unislim	5.30pm	Gullane's bar	Legacy	10pm	The Aul Sod Bar
DJ 9pn	m	Downey's Bar	GAA Bingo	8pm		Live Music	10pm	An Tain
The Livewires 10.3	.30pm	The Dunlo Tavern	Tea Dance	8.30pm	Gullane's bar	DJ	9pm	Downey's Bar
Joby 30th All Welcome 10p	pm .	Joe's Bar	January 18th Wednesday			Split	10pm	The Dunlo Tavern
Music and Dancing in the Lounge 10p	pm	Valeries, Aughrim	B. Kilkenny ,F. Hession & Friends	10pm	An Tain	Shadow Count	10pm	Joe's Bar
January 8th Sunday			Yoga	6.30pm	Gullane's Bar	Music and Dancing, Shane Moore	10pm	Valeries, Aughrim
Pillar House Trad Session 6pm	m	The Pillar House	Art Classes	7pm	Men's Shed	January 29th Sunday		
Live Music 10p	pm	The Aul Sod Bar	January 19th Thursday			Pillar House Trad Session	6pm	The Pillar House
Live Music 7pm	m .	An Tain	Walsing and Jiving Classes	8.30pm	An Tain	Live Music	10pm	The Aul Sod Bar
Night Owls 9pn	m	Downey's Bar	Ard Scoil Mhuire Fundraiser Prog. 25		Gullane's Bar	Live Music	7pm	An Tain
Small Deal 10p	pm .	Joe's Bar	January 20th Friday			Live Music with TBC	9pm	Downey's Bar
Session in the Front Bar 10p	pm	Valeries, Aughrim	Don Stiffe (20€)	9pm	The Pillar House	Session in the Front Bar	10pm	Valeries, Aughrim
January 9th Monday				10pm	The Aul Sod Bar	January 30th Monday		
		Gullane's Bar	Reel Deal	10pm	An Tain		6.30pm	Gullane's Bar
Line Dancing 8.30	30pm	Gullane's Bar	Happy Bar Stars	9.30pm	Shearwater Hotel		8.30pm	Gullane's Bar
January 10th Tuesday			Trad Session	10pm	The Dunlo Tavern	January 31st Tuesday		
	30pm	Gullane's Bar	January 21st Saturday			Unislim	5.30pm	Gullane's Bar
GAA Bingo 8pm	m		G2 Finnegan's Fury	10pm	The Pillar House	Tea Dance GAA Bingo	8.30pm	Gullane's Bar

### Sun 27th Our Annual Festive Gathering - St. Michael's Square

The Lighting up of the Taller Central European Tree with Santa Clause due to arrive @ 5.45pm on Sunday 27th Nov. Festival/Music starts at 5pm with 4 local schools, Newtown National School, Scoil Uí Cheithearnaigh, Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal (Creagh), Scoil an Chroí Naofa.

The Panto dance troop & the town band providing entertainment from the Gig Rig.

MC is Farmer Hood from "Little Red Riding Hood" who will be joined by the cast and crew from this years panto.

Mulled Wine will be served from the Christmas tree and Santa Claus will be arriving with the aid of the local Fire Brigade.

Face painting and balloons will be available.

Just before we all go home the winner of the Best Window Competiion (get your votes in) will be announced!

— A Fun evening for all the Family!!

Nollaig faoi shéan agus faoi shona daoibh

"Go mbeire muid beo ar an am seo arís."

A Very Happy Christmas to all our Readers, and a Peaceful and Prosperous New Year

### **CELEBRATIONS AND EVENTS**



Launch of the Book called "The Man Who Stopped The Train". Pictured above Author Michael John Kilgannon's Wife Maureen and his Son Padraig at Gullanes Hotel, Ballinasloe



**Phil and Harriet Bruce** with Senator Maura Hopkins outside Dáil **Eireann** 



Fiona Carey, Renate Kohlmann and Evelyn Donnellan took part in the fun run/walk in aid of East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support Centre



**Ballinasloe Snooker Committee 2016/17** 

Picture: From (L to R): Adam O'Connor, Barry O'Connor (Chairman), Joey Walsh (Treasurer), Paul Keighery, Gary Ward, Joby Kelly (Secretary).

Missing: Colm Keighery, Rob Malynn & Dara Jordan.



The Sheridan Family celebrate Aiden's achievements.



Murphy's Totalhealth Medical Hall win Pharmacy of the Year 2016 Award for Customer Service. Pictured are: Daithi O'Shea, Representative of Actavis Medical (who sponsored the award); Avril Noone, Niamh Murphy, Raphaelle O'Neill, Andrew Hyde and Oliver McGuinness.



Aiden and Jennifer Sheriden at the After Party of 52 Marathons in 52 Weeks.

# **GIVING LOCALLY AT CHRISTMAS**

### **BY LAURA SHEEHAN**



**Ballinasloe Social Services Christmas Donation** 

Christmas has long been known as the 'Season' of Giving' and there are plenty of services and charities that you can donate to in the town over the Christmas build up period.

**BALLINASLOE SOCIAL SERVICES** are due to hold their Annual Christmas Fayre and Cake Sale on Thursday, December 1 at their Day Centre in Brackernagh. There will be a selection of crafts and homemade treats for you to enjoy. The Social Services are also holding a Progressive 25 Card Game in the Golf Club on Thursday, December 29 at 9pm as a fundraiser event.

THE LIONS CLUB will once again be doing their church gate collection which will take place the weekend before Christmas - Saturday and Sunday, December 17 and 18. The Club are due to distribute food parcels to families in need also. To help out contact President Liam Howley 087 3818777.

THE BROTHERS OF CHARITY RAINBOW SERVICES Deerpark will hold their Annual Sale of Work on Friday, December 16 between 10am and 1pm at their Centre. There will be Christmas cakes, homemade cards and trinkets and much more for sale on the day.



Scoil an Chroí Naofa students Carol Singing for SVP

THE COUNTRY MARKET will be open every Friday in December before Christmas up to and including the 23 for all your festive treats. As always they will be located in the foyer of the Town Hall Theatre from 9am until 1.30pm. "We hope to see everyone during the festive month and would like to thank our many customers for another successful year", said Lorrain Devlin, Treasurer of the Country Market.

ST MICHAEL'S FOLK CHOIR will be bringing some festive cheer to the town on Christmas Eve when they'll be singing Christmas Carols outside Gullane's Hotel on Main Street from 1pm until 4pm in aid of local charities with collection points throughout the town.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL (SVP) are doing their Annual Food Appeal - asking members of the public to donate non-perishable festive food items. A shopping list can be found on their website – www.svp.ie. You can drop off your collection at their Oznam House Store on Jubilee St. and the food hampers will be distributed to the families that need it most in the community.

BALLINASLOE LIFE in an effort to reach out the Community Diaspora are also printing and selling some choice Ltd edition Robbie Riddell designed Christmas Cards which are available now from LIFE stockists, KPW and the Town Hall Theatre.

### NOLLAIG NA MBAN TO WRAP UP CHRISTMAS SEASON

Nollaig na mBan has become one of the most popular events on the Christmas calendar nationwide and especially so here locally. The twelfth day of Christmas is traditionally the day that women take the day off to celebrate with each other.

This year the festivities take place in Gullanes Hotel on January 8 from 3pm to 6pm. This is the fifth Nollaig na mBan event since it was revived, thanks to the wonderful hospitality of Thomas and Caroline Gullane and the support of Anne Conlan at Crumbs and Cream.

Last year some four generations of ladies were present and it's hoped they will come again this year to continue this lovely tradition. There will be tea and treats, the menfolk have generously organised raffle

prizes, music and song and the tickets are still only €5! All monies collected go directly to Sr. Annette Farrell's educational work with girls in Tanzania.



packing if ordered by telephone from KPW Print) they are available now in the LIFE Magazine outlets.

Salmons, Dolans, Town Hall Theatre, Corrib Oil and Edel at KPW Print 090 9642297.

Please support if you can

### FAIR AND FESTIVAL WEEK SUCCESS





Pat McDonagh of Supermacs at the official opening 2016



Black Bull Knights from Roscrea. Adrian Ahern, Shauna Finnerty, Ambrose and Mary Cuddy & Family with winning team members Stephen O'Toole, Adam Scully & Eanna Murphy



Shauna Finnerty with Amy Clarke, Kealan Clarke and Misty



**Bread Basket Dog Show** 



Horse of The Fair. Adrian Ahern, Shauna Finnerty, Eric Egan, Michael Egan, Danielle Cusack, Noel Madden Manager BCU



Killeens - Local Business winners for Gullanes Hotel Tug of War 2016



CIIr Michael Finnerty, Insp. Conor Madden, Eimer Dolan GCC, Bishop John Kirby, Noel Madden, Credit Union; Pat McDonagh, Supermacs; Cllr Aidan Donohue and Brendan Kelly KPW Print.

Ciara Croffey F&F, Cllr Donal Burke, Shauna Finnerty Queen F&F, Cllr Michael Connolly, Mary Phelan F&F, Adrian Ahern F&F.



Society St., Ballinasloe.

Join us for our annual customer day on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December

Discounts on all christmas stock, fragrances, jewellery, gifts and skincare Declare skincare consultant instore (Phone 090 9642252 for appointment)

> Mince pies and sweet treats to enjoy. Customer draw for a range of prizes.

(No discount on goods already on special offer). Open 9.15Am to 6pm through lunchtime. Tel/fax 090 9642252



# **TRYING TO GET HER HUSBAND HOME FOR CHRISTMAS**



Local woman Harriet Bruce (daughter of Phil and the late William Bruce of Garbally Drive, Ballinasloe) has had to spend much of the first year of her married life separated from her husband, Kleber Silva Medeiros, who was deported back to

Brazil on July 13 this year.

"It's my Constitutional right to marry a non EU national if I want. We need to highlight the fact that my right is being denied" states Harriet. She is now stepping up her campaign to have then reunited in Ballinasloe for Christmas.

Harriet and Kleber met in Ballinasloe while he worked with Liffey Meats in Taughmaconnell. They were together for three years before getting engaged on August 16, 2015. During these three years, the couple shared a mortgage together.

Two days following their engagement an objection was made to the HSE that Harriet and Kleber's upcoming marriage was a 'marriage of convenience'. It was only once all of their wedding arrangements - dresses bought, hotel booked - had been made that the HSE informed them of this objection saying that their marriage licence would not be released in time for their December 10 wedding. They told them that the religious ceremony could go ahead and that the register could be signed later.

Kleber had to appear in court a number of times where the presiding Judge Browne "complimented him on his work ethic and

made an example of him in court as a hard worker, a tax payer who wasn't a burden on the State and adjourned his case", added Harriet. The I.N.I.S. (The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service) were not notified of any court appearances and didn't know that the case had been struck out.

> "On June 30 a letter was issued by the I.N.I.S. to say that he had to present himself regarding his removal from the State. That was a registered post that was sitting on their desk and we didn't receive it until July 11. On July 12 he had to present himself and he was deported the morning of the 13", she continued.

> Nine days after his deportation, on July 22, a letter from the HSE arrived at their home confirming that they believed that their marriage was genuine and they could continue to process their marriage but it was too late.

> Harriet has spent the last two and a half months in Brazil but returned home to try and get the deportation order revoked so that her husband can join her at home for Christmas. The case has been under discussion in the Dáil after Eugene Murphy TD raised it and is under consideration but it is not known when a final decision on whether Kleber can return home to Ireland or not will be made.

> If you would like to show your support to the couple, you can check out their Facebook page 'Bring Kleber Home', where you will find a link to a petition that you can sign.



Harriet and Kleber on their wedding day.

# **DON'T BE LEFT OUT IN THE COLD!**



CRAB CLAWS - SMOKED SALMON - SHRIMP **ALL YOU NEED THIS CHRISTMAS** 

LAST CHRISTMAS MARKET **DECEMBER 23RD** 

**GANNET FISH STALL CROFFY'S YARD BALLINASLOE** 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM





### SIVEEN KELLY – WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



A native of Ballygortagh, Creagh, Siveen Kelly-Gay is the second youngest of a family of six. Both her parents, Brian and Kathleen Kelly, were nurses at St Brigid's Hospital in Ballinasloe. She fondly remembers her childhood growing up in the town.

"My father built the house we grew up in. It was a happy home with three sons and three daughters. It was always noisy and full of activity. I was a member of the Choral Society. There was so much to keep us busy in those years in Ballinasloe" said Siveen.

She attended Newtown National School and the Convent and knew from a young age that she wanted to follow in her parents footsteps and train as a nurse.

"I left Ballinasloe in the early 60's to start my nursing career in Croydon in Surrey at Mayday Hospital", she continued.

Siveen met her husband, Bert Gay, in Surrey and they went on to have two children together, Geraldine and Donald. In 1968, the family immigrated



to Massachusetts, America. There, she became involved in the local community, firstly by joining the Parent Teacher Association at her children's school in the City of Somerville, just outside Boston. "It was my first taste of politics", described Siveen of her time as a member of the Association.

At this time, she was also a member of the Massachusetts Nurses' Union – as were her father and brother, Brian, in the Irish Unions before her - where she felt she had a voice as a nurse. "I was an advocate for my patients so there was no great leap when I entered politics" Siveen added.

Her career in politics officially began when she was appointed to the Somerville School Committee in 1987 to fill a term of a former member. Her political career flourished from there. "I ran for election and won and was elected three more times" she continued. She was the

first immigrant and nurse to be ever elected in Somerville.

Success continued for Siveen as in 1992 she was elected to the Governors' Council representing the 26 cities and towns in Massachusetts.

Then, in 1999, she became the first female Mayor of the City of Somerville. "I was the only woman with four male challengers. My gender was a major factor but with the help of so many motivated voters I was sworn in as the first female Mayor of the City that opened its arms and heart to me and my family 31 years before" continued Siveen.

During her time as Mayor, Siveen left her mark on the city through many successes including; the building of two Elementary Schools, an Early Childhood Centre and a Medical Clinic on to the High School. She also officially opened the Ballinasloe Fair in an official capacity.

Reflecting back on the Ballinasloe she left in the 60s, she recalled it as a great place. "Before I left Ballinasloe it was a thriving town in my memory I remember it as this great place where everyone knew everyone, a happy place", she said. Siveen hopes that the town will return to this state once again in the near future and be a great place for investment.

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# AN APPRECIATION-JOE MURRAY

BY KEN KELLY



The passing of one of Ballinasloe's best-known traders, Joe Murray of River St., marked the death of a highly popular businessman, sportsman and politician, as well as a passionate townsman.

Ever since he ventured into the family's agricultural merchants' business at the age of 16, Joe endeared himself to all he met, town and country folk alike, with his sharp wit, generosity and kindness.

Born in 1944 to Joe Murray and Frances (of the Delaney family from Dunshaughlin), Joe studied as a boarder to Newbridge College, in Co. Kildare following his primary education. He returned at 16 years of age to work in the family business in River St., which was founded by his late grandfather in 1884. There he spent over fifty years, during which

time he modernised and expanded the business and was always willing to lead the way by helping farmers embrace new practices and technologies. He also perfected many of the arts of being an agricultural merchant. He was a master wool grader and had an excellent knowledge of and passion for trucking. He drove the lorry every day, right up to the time he took ill, enjoying delivering and meeting the people on his rounds. Now the business is carried in by his son Kevin-the fourth generation of the family in charge of the renowned River St. outlet.

Joe was passionate about Ballinasloe-he lived and breathed the town, getting involved in many organisations and clubs, particularly the Fair and Festival. In 1994 he was elected to the local Urban District Council, on a Non-party ticket, and held the balance of power during his reign.

A proud Galway sportsman, Joe attended an astonishing 105 All-Ireland finals from 1960 until his final football decider in 2014. He



funded and built the first ever boxing ring for the local Boxing Club and having played rugby at school went on to be captain of the Ballinasloe senior rugby team.

In his business he launched many great careers out of his shop/yard in River St., always willing to give people "a break." Earning your stripes with Joe Murray came to be known as a badge of honour. He believed in the power of work and formed strong links with St. Brigid's Psychiatric Hospital, helping to provide many patients with the dignity and respect of a job. He was a strong believer in the therapeutic nature of a day's work.

With his business slogan "Deal with Joethe man you know" he got to know so many people over half a century, making connections with a smile, a chat or a yarn. Joe had a sharp intellect, quick turn of phrase and a unique way of telling a story. He was

renowned for his one-liners such as "If work was in the bed that lad would sleep on the floor" or "If you can't do someone any gooddon't do them any harm." He had a very generous nature and was never happier than when he was doing "a turn" for someone. Work and people were his twin passions and he lived his life with simple values and believed in the power of honest endeavour and strong friendships.

Joe Murray's warm smile, kindness and sense of fun will be sadly missed and for the crowds of mourners that turned up to pay their respects there was an exchange of stories, yarns or deeds that were a testament to the memory of a man that had enriched the lives of so many over seventy odd years. He is survived by his wife Noreen (who he married in 1970), daughter Geraldine, sons Jack and Kevin, as well as grandchildren Sarah, Joe, Matilda and Gwendolin as well many other relatives and friends.



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Speaking to Ballinasloe life, Credit Union Manager Noel Madden acknowledged that at the Credit Union "we understand the positive effect a personal loan can have on your life, giving you the chance to get things when you need them, so we always look at your whole story. We only propose personal loans with realistic terms, which you can pay back

in a way that works best for you".

Before taking out a loan of any kind, it's worth taking the time to understand how lending works. That way you can compare the benefits and be aware of the risks.

The great thing about a personal loan at your Credit Union is that there are no hidden fees or transaction charges. The credit union interest rate is fair and reasonable and is capped by law @ 1% per month i.e. 12.68% p.a. Repayments are calculated on your reducing balance, so you pay less interest with each repayment. You can pay off your loan early, make additional lump sum repayments or increase your regular repayments all without a penalty.

A loan from the Credit Union is a much better and more sensible option than borrowing from high interest rate moneylenders and we would urge you to come and talk to us first before you approach any one of these companies. The ethos of the credit union is simple – we are here to offer friendly, accessible financial services in the local community through savings and loan services. We would urge anyone who is planning to borrow to call in and speak to us. Your credit union loan is also insured in the event of your death – subject to terms and conditions - at no direct cost to you. Savings in the credit union are safe and secure and are guaranteed by the Governments Depositor Guarantee Scheme.

#### **CINEMA HIRE**

For those groups in the neighbourhood looking to organise Christmas Parties or indeed New Year Events for underage teams, schools or youth groups, the Town Hall Cinema option makes a pleasant and economical local choice.

The venue and cinema with a movie of choice and a time of choice (but not to interfere with the rehearsals or live performances) can be booked for depending on length of movie, numbers and

time of day/evening.

It could be ideal for showing some footage of the clubs winning matches or highlights of the school year or the Clubs Final footage on the big screen in advance of a festive movie.

Throw in a few sweets before a visit to a local restaurant or order food in to the Foyer?

Feel free to contact the Town Hall Secretary, Mary at 090 9643779 to discuss your requirements.







# JOHN FEELEY OUR OWN CLASSICAL GUITARIST RYLAURA SHEEHAN

**BY LAURA SHEEHAN** 

Classical guitarist John Feeley grew up in Birchgrove and attended school in Creagh. "At the time there were a lot of woods and fields and all that so we had a good childhood playing around", said John.

He began studying Engineering in Dublin before changing courses to Music. Following some time in Dublin, Feeley emigrated to New York where he worked and studied music for a number of years.

"I made a living in New York when I was a student there playing the accordion. I never practiced the accordion but I made a living playing it. I also played the clarinet in a Brass and Reed Band in New York for a year", he said.



John is now a highly respected classical guitarist but his musical talents didn't begin with classical music. He thought himself how to play when he was 13. "I started

playing electric guitar initially so I played every kind of music - rock, country, bit of jazz, folk, everything really", he continued. When he was 19 he saw John Williams - one of the greatest classical guitarist the world has seen in concert and then he decided to teach himself how to play classical. He describes his style as a difficult one to explain as it is quite varied.

John Feeley

When asked about where his interest in music came from, John said, "I think it was from a previous life. I always had a love of music, even as a child. I remember my eldest sister coming home and she used to sing Do-Re-Mi so subconsciously I picked that up".

There have been many highlights of his career. When he was a student in the States, he played Carnegie Hall in New York which was a "big thing at the time". Bringing out new albums is always a highlight for him as they give a sense of pride and accomplishment. "When you do something like a CD you've created something that reflects your understanding of the music and your interpretation of it so I think some of the CDs I have done would at least represent to me highlights maybe to nobody else but certainly to me", he continued.

John's main plans for the coming years are to edit a number of albums that he has recorded and publish some of his music. "I have such a huge amount of stuff, literally thousands of pages so a few publishers have been on to me and it looks like a lot of those are going to get published now", he added.

John's next local concert is scheduled for Thursday, February 2 at 8pm in Gullane's Hotel. Tickets can be purchased from Gullane's Hotel in the coming weeks.

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# MOLL FOR BALLINASLOE BY LAURA SHEEHAN

John B Keane's play "Moll" has over the years enjoyed many successful outings on both the amateur and the professional stage. The most recent professional production was at the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin in 2015. Both critics and audience alike gave it much praise. Comments such as "great night out" "hilarious", are typical of the audience response while the Sunday Times critic wrote "long before Craggy Island's Fr. Ted, Dougal and Mrs Doyle, made their appearance, Keane penned a sitcom that equally stands the test of time".

Moll is not just a mere priest's housekeeper. Her political incorrectness leaves Trump playing catch up. She is the scourge of young curates while parish priests and canons are, pardon the pun, just more cannon fodder for this scheming, devious and manipulative diva. Everything from mass cards to bingo, from matters matrimonial to pensions, principally the latter, are part of her vast portfolio.

Acorn Theatre Company, in association with the Friends of Portiuncula Group will present this crowd pleaser in Ballinasloe Town Hall Theatre on February 16, 17 and 18 in the New Year. With a cast



Aisling Sheehy and Declan Kelly in rehearsal for Acorn Theatre Company's production of Moll

Aisling Sheehy, Declan Kelly and Director, Eamonn O Donoghue

of well known local and accomplished performers, director Eamonn O'Donoghue is confident that the production will be one which will entertain and delight audiences with much hilarity and fun.

Acorn are delighted to support the local hospital support group. The profits of this production will go towards providing this hard working group with additional funds.

# **MEMOIRS OF A BALLINASLOE - BORN DOCTOR**

Ballinasloe-born Declan Burke who emigrated to the USA over fifty years ago and later became a Obstetrician/Gynaecologist there, has written his memoirs. Entitled "As I Roamed Out" the book covers Declan's schooldays in Ballinasloe, his upbringing in Dunlo Hill and the changes he has seen on his return visit.

Back in Ballinasloe for a Garbally College re-union, Declan told Ken Kelly about the book.

"Many years ago, when my mother wanted to display a certain cynicism about some story, she said 'that is all as "I roamed out". So here is a tale of how I, her son, "roamed out". I was born in 1938 right in the middle of Ballinasloe. From running around barefoot, (summers were definitely warmer then) with my urchin friends, to Senior staff in a large hospital in Virginia, at the end of an interesting career. This career went from teen-aged slanesman cutting turf for my father in Pollboy bog, to consultant Obstetrician – Gynaecologist in a moderate size

city in the U.S. Garbally followed, then University in Galway, trying to hang on, but what with making 14 Pounds a week and having three small children, and it all cost 20 pounds a week, that made emigration unavoidable. The life of an emigrant in the U.S. is described, one who came equipped with an Irish medical degree, and an Irish attitude.

Will I ever return? It depends. Many of my old acquaintances are gone.

When I walk down the street in Ballinasloe I fail to recognise anyone, except for a very few. I have ten grandchildren in the U.S.



This book, "As I Roamed out" is a short description of that life, where I have tried to cover as many aspects of that life that might interest "the folk".

Copies of the book can be ordered at KPW Poolboy Industrial Estate, Ballinasloe.



# **TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS RETURNS TO TOWN HALL THEATRE**

"Twas the Night Before Christmas" will return to the Town Hall Theatre on Wednesday, December 21 make sure to include it in your Christmas calendar!

It promises to be a very entertaining night. Once again the redoubtable Marie Power is Producer and Musical Director for the large ensemble. A number of local acts have offered to perform on the night for the annual Town Hall Fundraiser, which as well as the Tinsel will include the traditional mulled wine for the early birds.

This year will see the Midlands Classical Tenors who include Seamus Ferrick and Johnny Farrell. The amazing Rachel Goode, Soprano singer, is home for Christmas and will leave the audience spellbound as usual. They will be joined on the night by the Sarah Corcoran Choir, storytelling, swing dancers and other local surprises.

The Town Band will be on hand to entertain the audience with a medley of Yuletide tunes.







Rachel Goode

Tickets cost €15 and €12 at concession for OAPs and students. They will be available online at www.ballinasloetownhall.com (booking fee applies) or on the door on the night. Curtain at 8.00 pm sharp.

## **MUMMERS FESTIVAL 2017**

The Annual Mummers Festival in New Inn will be staged in the Leisure Centre on Saturday night January 7 and Sunday afternoon January 8 2017.

This will be the 39th hosting of the Festival, which continues to attract lovers of traditional music and entertainment, due to the quality of the performers who take to the stage at New Inn. Over the years, talent first spotted at the Mummers Festival, has gone on to perform on the National and International stage.

The Senior section of the Festival will be staged on Saturday night, commencing at 8 pm, and participating groups will perform for 30 minutes, with a variety of music, song, dance and storytelling, and the winning group will be presented with the Peter Donohue Perpetual Trophy.

On Sunday afternoon, from 2.30 pm, the Junior/ Juvenile competitors will have the opportunity to display their talents. Their show will run for 20 minutes, and the Festival organisers are keen to promote this event, and encourage young talent throughout the region to get involved.

"Thanks to the generosity of Festival Sponsors, there are cash prizes for Group winners in all categories, and individual awards for the best musicians, singers, dancers, storytellers and most outstanding entertainer", said Michael Mullins, Chairman of the Festival Committee. Entries for



Juniors/Juveniles at Mummers Fest

Festival 2017, should be confirmed as soon as possible to Festival Secretary – Michael Finnerty who can be contacted on (087) 3828281.



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## **ZOMBIE WALK SUCCESS!**

The Halloween Zombie Walk at Garbally Woods attracted 2,100 attendees. The event was organised by the Town Team part of the Ballinasloe Area Community Development Company (BACD) over the Halloween Bank Holiday weekend.

Once their cars were parked in Ardscoil Mhuire, groups made their way to begin their trail. Each group spent about 20 minutes walking through the woods that was full of zombies and witches before reaching the finish line.

Members of the Musical Society, Panto and the Town Hall Theatre made every effort on the two nights ensuring their make-up, costumes and props were ready to go. Between Cast and Crew, Strewards and production crew there were over 135 volunteering each night.

There was a surplus of €2,566 for upcoming Town Team projects. Local Sports Clubs and Organisations who provided stewarding on the night are due to receive a token of thanks from the Town Team.

Chair of the project Seamus Duffy thanked all the parents and patrons of the night, as well as the Boards of Guardians of Garbally and Scoil Mhuire "We are very fortunate that the School authorities continue to support this local effort and we are very much indebt to all the people who give up huge amount of time to produce and star in the event - the monies raised go to support development of our performance arts and the continuation of the many Town Action team projects like the Xmas Lights, the Benchmarking, The Retail Development, The Marketing, LIFE Magazine, Sports Hub to name but a few ".

Sales	€10,500
Expenditure	
Marketing/Signage/Flyers Crew/Cast/Volunteers Subsistence Snacks/Water/Food Event insurance and indemnities Production, Props, Lanterns, Make up etc Generators/Fuel/Electrics/Bulbs Barriers/Staging Equipment/Hi Vis Vests Civil Defence First Aid Cover Garbally/Ardscoil Mhuire	€290 €1,291 €550 €1,983 €415 €805 €300 €500
Bursaries	
Ballinasloe Musical Society Local Clubs/Organisations Providing Stewards/ Crew	€1,200 €600
Total Costs	€7,934
Surplus for Town Team Projects	€2,566



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### **PANTO PREVIEW**

#### **BY LAURA SHEEHAN**





B'sloe Panto's production of "Little Red Riding Hood" is set to run from December 12 to 18 in the **Town Hall Theatre.** 

This will be the Panto's eighth consecutive production and for many the Panto is becoming part of a new Christmas tradition, whether that be taking part or as a member of the audience. There are costumes to source, sets to design and build, special effects to be brought in from London, routines to be choreographed, posters to be printed, tickets to sell, the list goes on and on, and

that's all on top of countless rehearsals!

"It can be hard work at times but it's always worth it. We're always aiming for a bigger and better show than the one that came before. We strive to bring a thoroughly entertaining show to the stage, from the music to the special effects, we really want it to be a show that has something for everyone; kids and parents alike!" states Director Eoin Croffy.

This year's cast sees the return of a few familiar faces but also the addition of some new talent. Rachel Walker, former Queen of the Fair, is returning to the Panto stage for the first time as Little Red Riding Hood since taking part in their very first production "Aladdin".

Her father Farmer Hood and his farm hand Walter are being played by Pat Vaughan and Eoin Quinn. The hugely talented Louise McEvoy returns this time taking on the role of Granny Hood. Mike O'Reilly will be playing her short sighted and bumbling love interest, Doctor Darling. Offaly native Paula Kearney is making her Town Hall Theatre debut this year to play the role of Mother Hen, matriarch of the farmyard.

No stranger to the stage but another Panto first timer Seamus Ferrick will be taking on the role the infamous Mr. Wolf. His fiercely loyal side kick "Lurch" is being brought to life by Panto Regular Dave Hardiman. Of course it just wouldn't be a Panto without a hero to come to the rescue when things go wrong, and they will go wrong! Enda McGrath plays the part of champion "Tom the Woodsman".

New to the production team line-up this year is the very talented Ria Purcell who is taking on the role of choreographer for the Blue group. She is joined by Aoife O'Grady who will be choreographing the rest of the cast. Musical direction is provided by the redoubtable John Roe.

The show begins nightly at 7.30pm with two fancy dress matinees on Saturday and Sunday December 17th and 18th at 2.30pm, where both

> children and adults alike are invited to come in outfits fit for the Panto stage with prizes for the best dressed!

> > Tickets are available online (www.ballinasloepanto. com) and from the booking office at J&S Photos on Society Street, drop in or call (09096) 31566 to get yours! They will also be available on the door; however, pre-booking is advised.

Back row L-R: Pat Vaughn, Dave Hardiman, Seamus Ferrick and Eoin Quinn. Front row L-R: Paula Kearns, Rachel Walker, Louise McEvoy, Enda McGrath and Mike O'Reilly



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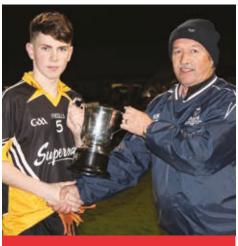
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## GAA





Cian Reynolds Captain receiving the cup from Peter Bane Chairman Coiste Peil na nÓg



Pat Potter, John Mitchell, Seamus Duffy (Chairman Ballinasloe GAA), Cian Reynolds (Captain U15 Team), John Coughlan (Captain U16 Team), Aidan Dooley (Manager), Des Jennings, Cathal Coleman

Ballinasloe GAA held a function in the Shearwater Hotel recently, to honour their underage football teams who have been successful this season.

Aidan Dooley (Manager) thanked the boys for their commitment and effort this year and also thanked the parents for their support throughout. Mr. Seamus Duffy (Chairman Ballinasloe GAA) endorsed the managers words and he too thanked the boys, the parents and the managers and selectors for the great work done.

The Under 15 Boys' Team beat Dunmore recently in the Division 2A League Final with the final score at 3-6 to 1-5. Team Captain Cian Renoylds received the Cup from Peter Bane, Chairman of Coiste Peil na nóg.



Ballinasloe Team Back: Tom Fitzpatrick, Adam O'Connor, Oisín Duffy, Odhrán Dooley, Oisín McCormack, Stuart Madden, Conor Coleman, Fintan Donnellan, Mark Poland, Phelim O'Reilly, Shane Jennings. Front: Andy Naessans, Craig Potter, Niall Kelly, Cian Poland, Matthew Devine, Jack Mitchell, Shane Carrig, Josh Hanney, Naoise Murphy, Cian Reynolds (Capt)

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# SUCCESS ON THE DOUBLE FOR BALLINASLOE

**UNDER 12 GIRLS** 

BY STEPHEN KERF



2016 was a hugely successful year for Ballinasloe Under 12 girls Gaelic Football team. Under the management of John Mitchell and Stephen Kerr, the panel came together in early February ahead of the League which began in April and which they won defeating Loughrea in the final with an excellent performance.

excellent performance.

Back Row (L-R): Lauren Ruane, Eabha McCann, Katie Lyons, Lorna Kennedy, Shauna Mitchell, Katie Galvin, Ruth Manning, Emma Keane, Zoe
Tumelty, Tieyane James, Maeve Reynolds, Amy Egan. Front Row: Roisin Coleman, Emily Gillespie, Eilish Kerr, Emily Riddell, Ava Kilduff, Nicole
Ward, Emma Mitchell, Caoimhe Kennedy, Caoimhe Waters, Sarah Russell, Amy Leonard, Ciara Daly.

commenced in September. Having won their League, they competed in a higher division in the championship and were again successful defeating Moycullen in the County Final in what was their best performance of the year.

In addition to weekly training sessions the panel of 24 girls played over 20 games between competitive and challenge matches. A feature of the panel was that a number of the girls had never previously played football and the progress and development of all involved was a fitting reward for their hard work and effort throughout the year.









# **LLOYD KELLY OUR MAN- FOR THE MASTERS**

Ireland Masters Rules won two tests against Australia featuring Club Stalwart–Lloyd Kelly. First game was played in Clonbern, second game was played in Ballymote. Lloyd played in Goal

Lloyd also plays for the Galway Masters who reached the All-Ireland Semi-final and were beaten by Cavan.



# 3 DECADES OF MEMORIES - THE LAST VICTORIOUS SENIOR COUNTY FOOTBALL SIDE

**BY LAURA SHEEHAN** 

In 1985 for the first time in its proud history St Grellan's GAA Football Club were not playing senior football, a shock to the system for a club that was undefeated in the Galway Senior Football Championship from 1913 to 1930 hence the moniker "Ballinasloe the home of football" that even contested an All-Ireland Senior

Championship final in 1980.

At the start of the year of 1986 players and management were determined to achieve Senior status for the following year, the squad had a good blend of youth and experience. In February a trip to Maynooth was arranged by Manager Pat Vaughan. All the squad bonded well together and this proved to be successful start to the senior championship. The team were undefeated all year culminating in becoming County Champions and League winners.

St Grellan's were once again back where they belonged, playing Senior, pride was restored in Ballinasloe Football, they achieved their goal and did so with fine performances throughout the season by all the squad.

Vincent Jennings in goal, gave nothing away; with a great defence in DerTierney, Joe Kelly, John Gillespie, James Manton, Con Moynihan, Sean Riddell. At midfield were Gerry Dolan and Michael Brennan, and later Pat Cunningham was moved to midfield.

There was a blend of youth and experience in the forwards, with the sextet of Michael Cunningham, Godfrey Gibbons, Michael Gavin, Kieren Barrett, Ciaran Ganly (son of Mattie) and Brendan Dolan taking their scores when the opportunity arose. Ciaran Ganly in his first year on the panel can look back on many a good performance especially the one against Headford.



### CO. INTERMEDIATE FOOTBALL CHAMPIONS 1986.

BACK ROW (I. to r.): Brendan Dolan, Michael Gavin, Mike Cunningham, Dermot Tierney, Vincent Jennings, Michael Brennan, Joe Kelly, John Gillespie. FRONT ROW (I. to r.): Con Moynihan, Pat Cunningham, James Manton, Sean Riddle (Capt.), Kieran Barrett, Ciarán Ganly, Godfrey Gibbons.



# AHASCRAGH-FOHENAGH ARE CONNACHT INTERMEDIATE HURLING VICTORS

**BY LAURA SHEEHAN** 

Ahascragh-Fohenagh GAA Club was born with the amalgamation of the neighbouring junior clubs of Ahascragh & Fohenagh. Due to the drop in player numbers in the nineties, officers from both clubs started talks on amalgamating at Juvenile level in 1999.

There has been continued success on the playing fields with the club winning U10, U12, U14 & U16 titles over the years. The success of the Juvenile Club brought about the natural progression of amalgamation up to adult level. In 2002 the Ahascragh-Fohenagh Club became fully amalgamated.

The club fields teams from U8 to U21, Intermediate, Junior B and Junior C. The amalgamated club claimed its first adult title since 1999 winning the Junior C Co. Championship in 2009-10; winning U21C title in 2011 & in U21B in 2012. In 2012, the Intermediate team was defeated by Killimordaly in the County Final.

In 2013, they won the St. Judes All Ireland Hurling Sevens tournament final. In 2014, Ahascragh-Fohenagh also contested the Intermediate County Final losing out to Cappataggle after a replay. Eoghain Delaney and Mark Kelly were part of the Galway All-Ireland minor hurling winning panel in 2015.

Cathal and Padraic Mannion are well established players on the Galway Senior hurling team in recent years. Cathal Mannion secured the club's first All Star Award in 2015 and was nominated again this year!

Ahascragh Fohenagh secured their first Galway Intermediate Hurling title defeating Ballindereen in the Final and have earned promotion to Galway senior club hurling ranks for 2017.

Just recently they also won the Connacht Intermediate Hurling final for the first time ever defeating Ballyhaunis Co Mayo after a replay.

In January 2017 we will compete in the All-Ireland Intermediate semifinal v the Munster Club champions.

Club Officers Chairperson: John Egan, Secretary: Michelle Healy, Treasurer: Sean Keane

### **Ahascragh-Fohenagh Team Management**



**Left to Right:** Aidan Dolan, Vincent Glynn, Jonathan Leonard, William Dilleen, Anthony Kelly, Seamus Moclair.

#### Ahascragh-Fohenagh GAA Club Roll of Honour

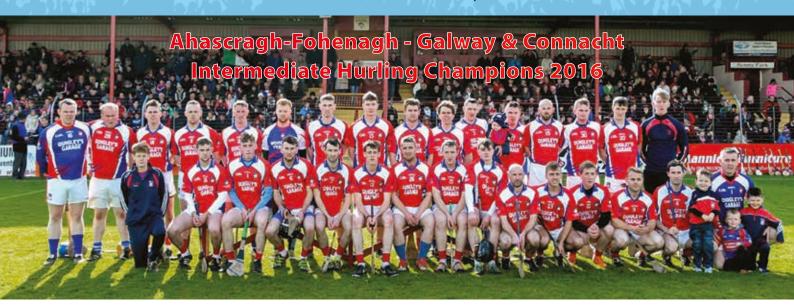
- U12 (4 titles)
- U14 Winners B1 2015, 1999
- U16 Winners B1 Shield 2015, B Cup 2015
- Minor B Winners, 1999 and 2011
- U21 C Winners 2011, U21 B Winners 2012
- Junior C Winners 2009
- Galway Intermediate County Winners 2016
- Connacht Intermediate Winners 2016

"We greatly appreciate the wonderful support we got



Captain Padraic Mannion receiving the Mick Sylver Cup from Galway Hurling Committee Chairman Michael Larkin

in each and every townland in the Ahascragh, Fohenagh, Caltra and Castleblakeney parishes. Everywhere we travelled were we met with crowds of people waving flags, bonfires blazing, fireworks displays, music & champagne (in some cases!). We know many of you waited patiently for hours to see us. We are truly indebted to all of you and delighted that we got the opportunity to bring back County & Connacht Cups and celebrate with our families, friends, neighbours and communities. Looking forward now to the next step of the journey!" stated Eileen Healy Club Secretary.



**Back Row: Left to Right:** Francis Mitchell, Alan Harney, Darren Smyth, Ronan Kelly, Niall Burke, Luke Cosgrove, John Finnerty, Cathal Mannion, JP Egan, Shane Connelly, John Kelly (& his son Nathan), Simon Doyle, Finbarr Donnellan, Fergal Mulryan, Cathal Delaney, Sean Bleahene.

Front Row: Left to Right: Oisín Delaney, Cathal Cosgrove, Stephen Kelly, Padraic Mannion (Capt.), Stephen Smyth, Eoghain Delaney, David Harney, Peter Birch, Eoin O Ceallaigh, Brian Kilroy, Trevor Barrett, Kevin Harney, Laurence Tully, Paul Gavin, Donal Kelly.

Mascots Left to Right: Mark Dolan, Harry Kelly, Ryan Kelly.

# UNDER 11 CROSS COUNTRY CONNACHT CHAMPION

BY LAURA SHEEHAN



Aoibheann Fitzpatrick ran a brilliant 1500m race in Westport House to become the U11 Connacht Cross Country Champion. The U11 Girls Team of Aoibheann Fitzpatrick, Caoimhe Kilkenny, Ruth Kilkenny and Clodagh Killeen won Connacht Silver medals and now go forward to the All-Ireland Cross

Country Finals in Dundalk IT on the December 11. The girls did the Club proud and ran a very tough competitive race.

Stellar performances were also put in by the U13 Boys Team who ran a 2500m race. The boys were also up against some very stiff competition but held strong to claim the Club team silver qualifying for the All Ireland's also.

The Under 13 athletes who ran for the Club were Shane Fitzpatrick, Conor Harley, Adam Mc Greal and Mark Kilkenny. The Under 11 boys Jamie Coyne and Niall Jennings and Rowan Harley who competed in the U17's all put in big performances in their age groups.

### MASSIVE USED HOUSEHOLD GOODS SALE FOR TENNIS CLUB

Ballinasloe and District Tennis Club are holding a Massive Used Household Goods Sale on Saturday November 26 in the Emerald Ballroom. This is a fundraising event to help build new tennis courts and a multi-purpose indoor sports facility for the benefit of all.

This is a great opportunity to make some cash for Christmas by selling unwanted goods, or to grab some Christmas bargains. Sellers can take a stall and sell their own goods, or the club will sell them on behalf of sellers for a commission. Donations of saleable goods are also most welcome, and many local businesses are kindly supporting the event in this way by contributing goods or vouchers.

There has been great interest in the sale so far from sellers and the club is expecting a large turnout of bargain hunter from the town and surrounding

areas on the day. For children, Santa will also be making a special appearance in the afternoon and refreshments will be available throughout the day. Doors will be open from 11am to 6pm. Stall space is limited and needs to be booked in advance, as do goods to be



Winner of recent Ballinasloe Tennis Club Fundraising Prize Draw of a Robotic Lawnmower from Hylands Husqvarna Centre was Oisin Brennan, whose mother Linda Harding is pictured being presented with the prize by Tennis Club Chairman Joe Staunton.

sold by the club. You can contact the club at Tel: 087 667 9141 or email: householdsale16@ qmail.com.

The Winter League is due to begin shortly. Keep an eye on their Facebook page – Ballinasloe & District Tennis Club.



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## **CONNACHT SHORT COURSE SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Congratulation to Ruth Dolan who performed exceptionally well at the recent Connacht Short Course Championships in Leisureland. Ruth who is 12 was competing Under 14 and won silver in the 50m Breaststroke & Bronze in the 100m I.M. (all four strokes).

Anyone interested in joining Ballinasloe Swimming Club can call Monica McKeon, the Secretary, at 0877432787 or look up their website at www.ballinasloeswimmingclub.com.

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# **SHANE O'GRADY ON TOP OF THE WORLD**

BY KEN KELLY

Ballinasloe-born Shane O'Grady, a golfing professional at the Black Bush Golf Club in Co. Meath, is on top of the world after one of his students is now ranked the top amateur lady golfer in the world. 21-year-old Leona Maguire from Co. Cavan, who Shane has been coaching for over ten years, now hopes to break into the professional ranks which will put her on the international stage just like Rory McIlroy and Padraig Harrington.

46-year-old Shane O'Grady is son of Willie and the late Vera O'Grady from Creagh in Ballinasloe, all of whom have been members of the Ballinasloe Golf Club. Following a very impressive career as a golfer, Shane decided to become a golf coach and twenty years ago he became the professional at the Black Bush Golf Club in Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath. He had previously worked at Dun Laoghaire and Royal Dublin Golf Clubs as well as being the Leinster coach for a number of years.

His early pupils included Ken Kearney and Niall Goulding but when the Cavan twins, Leona and Lisa Maguire, came along he could see their hunger for success. "I could see their potential from day one. They had a different focus and a different want-a want to succeed. I could see they had a work ethic and I am big into that. I always worked very hard in anything I did and I would expect that of anybody I work with. After the first lesson, I realised they had that. Anything I asked them to do, they did it. That's rare" said Shane who accompanied Leona and her father Declan recently to Florida where she teed up for the second stage of the LPGA Qualifying Tournament.



He rates Padraig Harrington as "the best I've ever seen" and his advice to youngsters keen to make it in the game is "Structure and application. You have to have structure and a plan. It's like life or business. You can't expect it to happen by chance. You have to have a goal-a short term goal and a long term one" explained Shane.

Two other Ballinasloe golfers are now among the top professional coaches in Leinster, Mark Staunton works at the Delgany Club in Wicklow while Nigel Howley is attached to the Balbriggan Club in north Co. Dublin. When any of the three return to their Ballinasloe Club they are only too willing to pass on their coaching skills to eager golfers.



### CYCLING YEAR IN REVIEW

It has been a year of enjoyment, achievement and success for the Cycling Club who are coming to the end of their second year running.

Their second Tour d'Shams Cycle took place on a sunny day which led to over 130 people turning out to support their chosen cause – St Teresa's Special School. This event managed to raise €3,300 for the school.

During the May Bank Holiday Weekend, hundreds of cyclists that took part in the Cycle Against Suicide had a stopover in the town. It was a huge success and culminated in a family fun event organised by the Club.

Five members of the Club – Aidan Dolan, Cormac Killeen, Kieran Kilmartin, Padraig Curran and Noel Slevin – undertook the challenge of cycling close to 600 kilometres in two days travelling from Mizen Head to Malin Head.

As the winter progresses, the Club still have the Sunday morning cycle at 8am and 10am along with the 6.30pm cycle on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Keep an eye on their Facebook page – Ballinasloe Cycling Club – for updates on their exciting plans for 2017.

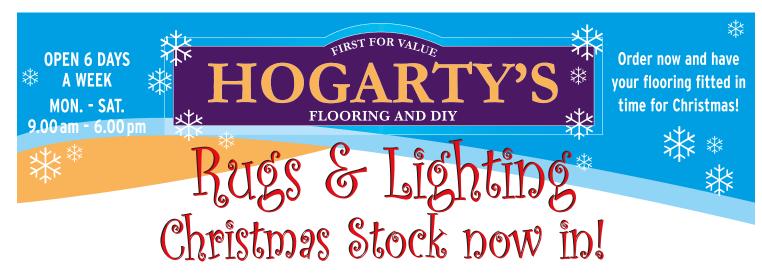


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# BIRCHGROVE CONNECTION CAMILLA MAKES US OLYMPIC TEAM | BY LAURA SHEEH

16 year-old Camilla Feeley - daughter of Brendon Feeley and Dr. Pamela Feeley - was selected to be a member of the USA Olympic Rhythmic Gymnastics Team as a result of her performance at the 2016 USA Gymnastics Championship, held in Providence, Rhode Island in early June this year.

Her dad Brendon grew up in Birchgrove, Ballinasloe and after studying engineering in Dublin, immigrated to the USA in 1977. Camilla is a valued member of the 2016 USA Rhythmic Gymnastics Team and has preformed internationally for the past four years. She debuted in the junior international scene in the 2013 season competing at the Junior World Cup and other international tournaments.



She represented the U.S.A in the Corbeil Essonnes International Tournament in France and in July 2016 at the Baku World Cup in Azerbaijan. She currently lives in Chicago and follows a rigorous programme at the gym on a daily basis with her trainer.



Club Captain, Tom Horkan and Mattie Curley

Ballinasloe Golf Club's Jack O'Sullivan team were victorious over Co. Sligo Rosses Point in the Connacht Final recently.

They were declared Jack O'Sullivan Champions 2016 following an aggregate 7.5/2.5 win over the two Legs.

"We would also like to thank all our supporters who came out in big numbers to help bring this title home", said Mark Connelly, PRO.

This is Ballinasloe's first men's title in ten years. They won their last men's Connaught title in 2006 on the same day ten years previous to this win.



Back Row (L to R): Alan Hough, Jack Coughlin, Stephen Ruane, Declan Flannery, Michael Ward, Michael Glynn, Padraig Ryan Jnr, Liam Coughlin and Darren Egan. Front Row (L to R): Sean Kenny, Mike Barrett (Team assistant manager and specialist links player), Kevin Cunniffe, Niall MacSweeney (Convenor of Venues & Fixtures), Tom Horkan (Ballinasloe Club Captain), Mattie Curley (Now legendary Ballinasloe Jack OSullivan Manager), Joe Molloy (Ballinasloe Club President), Ciaran "Bing" Smyth, Mark Conneely.

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### **VINTAGE CLUB – 12 MONTHS ON THE ROAD!!**



Ballinasloe Vintage Club Members 2016.

It's been a busy year for the members of Ballinasloe and District Vintage Club travelling as far as the National Ploughing Championships in Tullamore. There was much talk about the stand which Club members had brought to the Ploughing in Co Laois for the past two years which had been placed in the specially dedicated vintage area.

The Club members involved did not disappoint as once again the hard work and effort put in was warmly received by the many onlookers who visited the stand during the three-day event.



Kevin Cunniffe in action.

Their usual display was on show on the last Sunday of the October Fair. "Being the 70th anniversary of the Ferguson System, a concerted effort was made to attract as many variants of this famous make of tractor to our event. There was also a threshing display, a static display of stationery engines, live traditional music and dance and a fine display of vintage cars, tractors and motorbikes assembled in the centre of the town", stated Shane Burns of the Vintage Club.

Beetle during the October Fair

Other recent trips that the Club undertook include; one to Johnstown Castle and a trip to Pallas Karting in Tynagh.

The last outing of the year for the Vintage Club will be their Christmas Social on Saturday, December 3.

"The Active Club who would love to welcome new members at any stage during the vintage year. We hold regular meetings in Gullane's Hotel to discuss & plan upcoming events. You can also keep an eye on their Facebook page for further updates. We wish to take this opportunity to wish all our members and friends a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year!", added Shane.

### **RUGBY ROUND UP**

### **BY LAURA SHEEHAN**



**Division 1A Team** 

Recently, the Division 1A Team won against the Galwegians in an easy defeat of 33-0 at Graigueawoneen. The Rugby Club's Under 13's continued the winning streak for the club with a

# win over Westport 31-10 as did the Under 14's who defeated in the Galwegians as well in a 77-5 defeat.

The Ladies Under 18 Team have also enjoyed success lately following their win over Buccaneers.

The Bronco's Mini Rugby training continues on Saturday mornings at 10.30am. Registration can be done at the Clubhouse as all children must be registered members to play.

The Rugby Club's Annual St Stephen's Day fixture will go ahead this year once again. Two teams—the Locals versus the Visiting Exiles will go head to head for the Seán O' Flynn Cup at the Rugby Grounds. As many of you already know, this match will see members of the senior team take on former members who are home for the Christmas holidays.

Last year saw the Exiles defeat the Locals – who will be this year's winner?

Kick off will be around 2pm. The Cup will be presented to the winning captain following the game in the Clubhouse. It's sure to be a great day out for all the family and one not to be missed!

Keep an eye on their Facebook for updates closer to the event.



**Ladies Under 18 Team** 



Bronco's Mini Rugby

# **SENIORS PROGRESS IN FAI JUNIOR CUP**



Ballinasloe Town's Patric Evason takes a throw

A rain soaked Curragh grounds saw Henry Loughnane's Ballinasloe Town move into the 5th **Round National Draw** of the FAI Junior Cup with a tight 1-0 win that saw an accomplished Castlerea Celtic team bring the game to the Town in the first half. With **Ballinasloe's** defence getting a reputation for

not giving too many goals away once again. This was a win in a tough game in bad conditions which could have gone either way, but its Ballinasloe Town who showed resilience and their strength in depth from the bench to march on into the national draw.

Wayne Coynes Senior 'B"s played against Rahara Rovers at the Curragh Grounds in a Division One RDFL fixture. The game ended 1-1 with a Mike Lynch header putting the home side ahead and Rahara replying with a penalty.

The Under 10's South match against Temple Villa ended 10-9. A free scoring Shay Kelly was on hand to keep the game alive.

The Under 14 Team travelled to St Peters of Athlone to record an excellent 6-2 win on the astro turf at McCarthy Park. The scorers were: x2 Michael O'Grady, Fionn Kelly, Aaron Cunningham, Shahed Patwary, Cameron O'Leary.

The Under 12's got an excellent 2-2 draw versus high flying AC Celtic with Keelan Cawley & Cameron Keighrey grabbing the goals, Under 11's North drew away 2-2 in Mount Temple versus Temple Villa with Liam Martin and Killeen Blackweir scoring and a very high scoring game as the Under 10's game finished South Ballinasloe Town AFC 6 St Francis 6!



Under 11's Kyron Blair sets up another attack in the 1-0 win over UCL Harps of Longford in the Under 12 Connacht Shield Round 1



Ballinasloe Town's Des Hope, Cormac Clogher, Mark Duffy, David Cullen, **Shane Duffy in defence** 

### UNDERAGE ROUND UP

Under 9's enjoyed a fun morning of football in Kiltormer, where they played against East Galway Utd and Under 10's North Squad won 7-2 in their match.

U11's North Squad played in the U12 Connacht Shield Round 1 versus UCL Harps (Longford) and won 1-0 with Killeen Blackweir getting the goal from distance.

U11's South played Temple Villa and were beaten 8-3 but had two very well taken goals by Ronan O'Grady and Hugh Curley added the 3rd for the Town.

U12's also played in the Connacht Shield (Round 3) versus CP Ajax and ran out 3-0 winners with goals by Josh McCarthy, Darragh Blake and Cameron Keighery completing the score.

Unfortunately, the Under 14's were beaten 5-1 by Galway Hibs in the Connacht Cup 3rd Round.

Friday Underage Ballinasloe Town soccer will continue to carry on every Friday with brand new times for different age groups: 5.30pm to 6.30pm Under 6's, Under 7's, Under 8's then 6.00pm to 7.00pm Under 9's.

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### FIT TOWN PROPOSAL – BIG PLANS AHEAD

BY LAURA SHEEHAN

The Fit Town Team are partnering with Ballinasloe's Engineering Team, Galway Sports Partnership, Galway County Council and Cllr Donal Burke, Cathaoirleach of the Municipal District Council to progress their initiative to develop and promote the town's natural environment.

As a result of feedback from engagements with local clubs and organisations, the Team

has developed a proposal which sets out the notion of harnessing the potential of Ballinasloe's rich natural landscape, biodiversity, heritage, strategic location and infrastructure and exploring how we can best utilise it to benefit the local community and visitors, in line with the aims and objectives and set out in Galway County and Local Development Plans 2015 – 2021.

In particular, the Project will look to promote and develop walking/cycling trails and loops in line with national guidelines and standards.

In addition, they plan to develop Ballinasloe as an 'Active Town' to promote a more cycle-friendly and walking/running-friendly culture within the town as outlined in Governments 'Active Town' Programme. The focus will be in providing interlinks between residential areas, workplaces and schools and public transport.

An inaugural meeting was held between all parties last month to review the proposal and get plans in motion. It was agreed that as a starting point the group would engage the services of the Irish Trails Office to carry out an audit on existing trails and walkways within the town and hinterland. The audit



would map out trails in the area and make recommendations around bringing them to a suitable standard in line with national guidelines.

The Team see this as a great opportunity for the town and may have far reaching benefits in terms of developing the untapped tourism potential of the town. Ballinasloe has a rich heritage and natural environment which includes the River Suck and its tributaries, the old Grand Canal line, the Hymany Way walking trail and indeed

Garbally College Demesne. There are a number of recreational trails within and outside the town of which there is currently very little awareness among the community.

The next stage of the project will be to develop an Action Plan around the individual elements of the proposal. Together with the €5,000 prize money from last year's Fit Town competition, the group will also be actively seeking funding under various government initiatives in order to progress each key action.

The Team hope to have project details and updates available on the official Ballinasloe website www.ballinasloe.ie over the coming weeks. If you have any ideas that you feel should be considered as part of the overall proposal the Team would welcome your contribution at this

early stage – you can contact them at fitballinasloe@gmail.com.

Finally, following last year's very successful Fit Town Project the team are strongly considering running in the 2017 Fit Town competition. The 6 week programme will commence on 1st March - if your club, organisation, school or business would like to participate please email the Team directly with details of your event before January 1, 2017.





# **ACCESSIBILITY BALLINASLOE - A BUSY INAUGURAL YEAR!**

**BY LAURA SHEEHAN** 



Accessibility **Ballinasloe** established earlier this year with a key focus on working towards developing the town and hinterland as an accessible and inclusive community. The overall approach covers all life stages from parents with young children to older adults and persons with disabilities. Accessibility are also focusing on the social challenges that are often overlooked.

The group is made up of four volunteers and one representative from Galway Rural Development. Teresa Coughlan (Social Services Manager), Marion Ruane (Fit Town Lead), Ken Campbell (Miles for Emma, Equality for children with special needs), Patricia Kelly (Galway Rural Development) and Deborah Brady (Galway Brothers of Charity).

The emphasis to date has been about building relationships both within the community and wider region and creating awareness around the theme of accessibility and inclusion.

The Team held an information evening in May this year where all members of the public were invited to attend and participate. This provided them with an opportunity to meet the Team members and to understand the purpose of the project. Ideas and suggestions captured on the evening has fed into the Accessibility Ballinasloe Action Plan.

Accessibility Ballinasloe together with Galway County Council, Age Friendly Ireland and community groups conducted a Walkability Audit of the town. The audit, including findings and recommendations has been presented to the Town Engineering Team for consideration as part of the upcoming Town Enhancement Plan.

Accessibility Ballinasloe co-hosted the launch of Social Inclusion Week in which took place on







October 17 in the Church Gallery. The evening was presided over by Cllr Michael Connolly, Cathaoirleach and included a spectacular lineup of entertainment from a number of local talented musicians, dancers and singers. The exhibition showcased the excellent work that is taking place within the community in supporting each other to live full and happy lives. It also provided the opportunity to reflect on the challenges faced by others and how, by working together the lives of individuals and their families can be improved and the community can grow stronger.

As part of Social Inclusion Week the group facilitated two training sessions targeted at the catering and hospitality industry and sporting community. The Communication & Awareness Programme was offered to all hospitality businesses in the town and a number of businesses are now trained to support people with communication difficulties. Accessibility Ballinasloe together with Galway Sports Partnership delivered the 'Disability Awareness in Sport' programme to 18 coaches from various clubs throughout the district.

Accessibility Ballinasloe coordinated the pilot of the first Buddy Bench (a positive mental health programme) in Galway, in Scoil an Chroi Naofa. The bench is used as a visual tool for those who may need to talk or have someone to play with. They sit on the bench and fellow students invite them to play or listen to them. This project involved Ballinasloe Mens Shed who made the bench, Viewpoint, Brothers of Charity who painted and decorated the bench. Galway Rural Development sponsored the programme.

If you would like to contact the group directly simply email accessibilitybsloe@gmail.com or follow them on facebook @Accessibility Ballinasloe.



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# **BISHOP JOHN DIGNAN**

#### BY BARRY LARRY

"After that I am finished consecrating bishops," remarked Archbishop Gilmartin on the occasion of the installation of John Dignan as Bishop of Clonfert at Loughrea Cathedral in 1924. His comment was prompted by Dignan's forthright expression of political views in his inaugural homily.

Born in Ballygar on 13th June 1880, Dignan's father Thomas was a "gentleman farmer" and Justice of the Peace. Young Dignan attended the Diocesan Seminary at Esker where he became the protégé of Bishop John Healy, a family friend, who later took the unusual step of having Dignan conferred with an Honorary Doctorate in Divinity in 1905 two years after his ordination

in Maynooth.

From 1904 to 1908 Dignan was president of St. Joseph's College at The Pines in Creagh. While there he came under the influence of Fr. Patrick Connolly, a teacher colleague, and Dr. Ada English, a psychiatrist in the nearby Mental Hospital. Their advanced nationalist views were to have a profound effect on his political outlook. It was said that he travelled to Dublin after the 1916 Rising in an attempt to secure the release from custody of a nephew of Dr. English who had been involved in the rebellion.

Following his term as college president, Dignan served as curate in a number of parishes, including Ballinasloe from 1916 to 1918. During the War of Independence he was active in Sinn Féin, presiding as a judge in the Dáil Courts that had been set up to replace the British judicial system. He was parish priest of Abbey when on St. Patrick's Day 1921 he preached a sermon strongly flavoured with Republican sentiments. Its contents were disclosed to the Black and Tans, who apparently planned to assassinate him because of his outspokenness. However, following a tip-off from a friendly policeman, he managed to slip

away in disguise to the safety of a neighbouring parish. On finding him absent from home, the would-be killers vented their frustration by looting his house and exploding a hand grenade in the living room.

A supporter of the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War, it is a matter of speculation as to why the Free State Government seemingly raised no objections to Dignan's appointment to the See of Clonfert. Perhaps they were relieved to learn that Fr. Tom Fahy, an even more extreme Republican, would not be the recipient of the episcopal crozier. In any event, Dignan had two powerful advocates, who were of his own political persuasion, in the persons of Bishop Thomas O'Doherty of Galway and Monsignor John Hagan, Rector of the Irish College in Rome. As well, his Doctorate in Divinity can have done his cause no harm.

Amongst Dignan's abiding preoccupations during his episcopacy were the upgrading of primary school facilities and the proper maintenance of cemeteries. In the course of his 29 years as bishop of the diocese many existing schools were renovated and some were rebuilt at a different location, notably St. Grellan's Boys' N.S., Ballinasloe, in 1937, and Creagh N.S. in 1939.



His concern for public welfare found practical expression in 1936 when the Fianna Fáil Government appointed him Chairman of the Committee of Management of the National Health Insurance Society. In 1944, without consulting the Government, he published a pamphlet entitled "Social Security: outline of a scheme of national health insurance." The plan was rejected as impractical by the relevant minister, Séan McEntee, who punished Dignan for his temerity by declining to re-appoint him to the Committee.

Ballinasloe had been without a local hospital since the closure of the Workhouse Infirmary in 1922, a medical facility whose absence continued to be keenly felt in the town and its hinterland. Dignan decided to address the problem by inviting an order of nuns, the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood, to set up what

> became known as Portiuncula Hospital, which opened its doors in Brackernagh in 1945. Relations between himself and Mother Margaret Keenan, the Superioress, were at first cordial but were later reported to have turned sour.

> Dignan was never a man to stand aloof from matters of contention. For instance, in December 1947 a divorcée who had re-married, Mrs. Hanbury of Craughwell, was selected as Master of the Galway Blazers Hunt. At a time when Irish society was less tolerant than it would be today of lifestyles that deviated from the norm, her appointment aroused widespread indignation in the Blazers' rural heartland. Dignan reacted by declaring his lands out of bounds to the Hunt and by releasing a joint statement with Archbishop Walshe of Tuam and Bishop Browne of Galway criticising the Hunt Committee for "displaying contempt for the religious convictions and feelings of a Catholic people." Mrs. Hanbury's resignation the following an end.

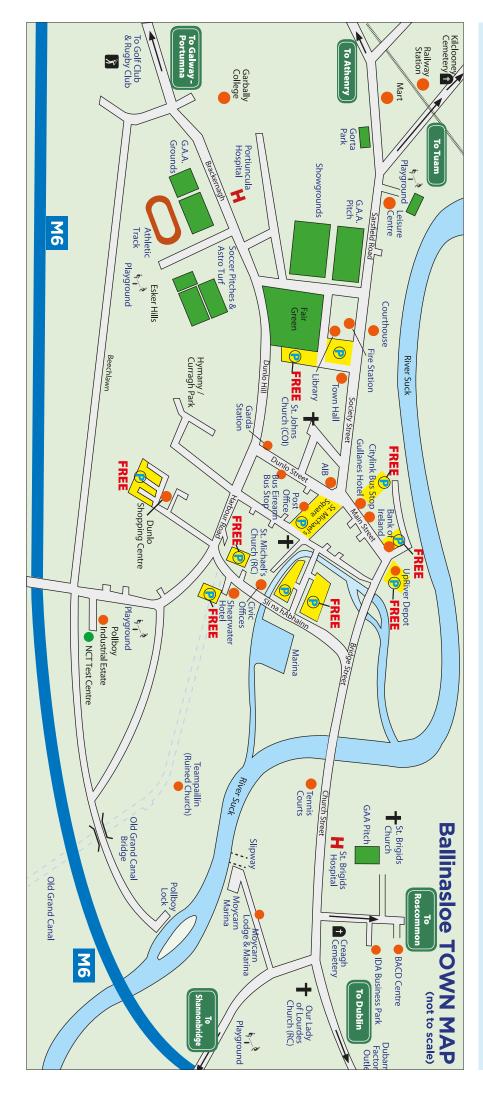
> month brought the controversy to an end.
>
> When the Minister for Health, Dr. Noel Browne, introduced his Mother and Child Bill in 1951 it met with strong opposition from the Catholic Hierarchy

and the Irish Medical Association. Dignan deliberately absented himself from a meeting of the bishops that condemned the measure, a stance on his part which earned him the Minister's warm appreciation as recorded many years later in Browne's memoirs.

A man of reserved disposition, Dignan had few close friends. His manner has been described as "testy", and his temper could on occasion be unpredictable. He sometimes behaved as a martinet in his dealings with the young priests of the diocese, while treating with great indulgence the shortcomings of senior members of the clergy. Perhaps surprisingly for such an ardent nationalist with his educational interests, he never learned Irish (or to drive a car). For recreation he golfed and fished with rod and line.

An inveterate heavy smoker, Bishop Dignan developed cardiac disease and emphysema, dying at his residence in Coorheen near Loughrea on 12th April 1953. He was succeeded by 46-year-old Dr. William Philbin, a Kiltimagh native and Professor of DogmaticTheology in Maynooth.





### **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 Jayout, 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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