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BALLINASLOE LIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 8 Issue 6: Feb' 19 - March' 19

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Our planners have accepted that cities are the drivers of economic growth for the 21st century. Like it or not; longterm this state or the one in the North - cannot afford to deliver citizen-based services to a rural or sparse population.

Retail reports for Christmas suggest that we shopped more online than in our shopping centres or high streets. When was the last time you saw a local club or team sponsored by Amazon or Google?

The notion of Local Authorities being continually funded by business rates from tills and car parking is quaint as very shortly all our parking will be free and we will be shopping like the French and Californians at big out of town malls. With classic doughnut town centres - hollowed out with just jackdaws and geriatrics to keep the homeless company! The residential property tax will eventually shoulder the fiscal gap as will more of us citizens pay more for the privatised services.

But as you can read elsewhere, upcoming local elections in May will be historic as it will be last time we elect County Councillors who will oversee a Municipal District Area, because in five years' time the merger back to the 1985 status quo will be rammed through and the unfettered growth of a supersized Galway city that will consume Barna, Oranmore, Moycullen, Athenry, Clarinbridge like a melting ice cream cone - in a way that Chapelizod, Santry, Rathmines and Clontarf development will look glacial.

So jobs, investment, and infrastructure will flow to the epicenter of an already clogged Eyre Square. If we were Dutch of course we would be developing simultaneously with the growth of Galway as Europe's first Green Fully Carbon Neutral City - 9 satellite towns connected by fast bus corridors or light rail that would each have a niche, an employment sector and a focus that could sustain their commerce, health, hinterland, heritage and facilities.

As the Tribes of Galway attempt again to consolidate their grip fully on the levers of commerce and investment, maybe it is time for the Ferocious Flahertys not to besiege the walls but rethink with the shifting plates how, in the words of the first Dáil, "We ourselves" can create a community that can meet these challenges innovatively. That wearily, is the task of us all!

Le Gach De Ghui, **COLM CROFFY**, Editor.



Articles and Photos Welcome

NEXT ISSUE

Deadline 13th March

For submission of articles, please email:
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It is reporting season for the IDA & Enterprise Ireland and both are very upbeat about job creation over the past 12 months and for the year ahead but our question is "Is Ballinasloe going to reap rewards in 2019?"

A new survey has confirmed that the cost of buying or renting in Dublin is the biggest concern for both Employers and Employees and is now the main reason for loss of staff and hindering the ability to recruit.

44.5% of respondents in the survey said they would take a pay cut of 10% to get out of the Capital! Work life balance is now becoming a priority ahead of salary differential. In recent years we have seen a rise in remote working and digital nomads which is now the new workforce beyond the traditional hubs. Our ever improving technology means rural communities will become even more popular in years to come.

BACD's recent initiative to form the "Pulse club" has shown the number of start-up business in existence locally and the demand for a structure locally to support them in their endeavours. We have a full report in Ballinasloe LIFE this month.

The new message out there is "Think Global, Live Local".

The Government's new Future Jobs Plan is being launched next month which aims to rejuvenate Ireland's Towns and Villages and we need to see inward investment for Ballinasloe and its hinterland if they are serious in their efforts.

SEAMUS DUFFY,

Chairman Ballinasloe Area Community Development Limited.



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WHAT'S INSIDE

Local News

- 4 Local Issues Raised
- 5 Investment Focus on Co Towns
- 6 200 Seek New Positions

Business

- 7 Society Travel Celebrates 20th
- 8 Pulse Club Launched
- 10 Garbally Oil - 25 Years On
- 11 9th Volume of LIFE
- 12 Festive Gathering Trading
- 14 Industrial Investment Outlook
- 15 Tiny Tots Celebrate 20th
- 16 Matt Carthy in Brussels

Community

- 18 Photographer's Benefit Concert
- 19 €54,000 for Community Projects
- 20 Michael Hyland
- 22 Parish Pastoral Council
- 23 Remembering Paddy Connor
- 24 Noel Casey Retires
- 25 Aghrim's Unique Christmas Tree
- 26 New Walkway and Cycleway
- 30 Out and about
- 32 Events Guide
- 35 Credit Union Launches Loan
- 36 'Whose Shoes' Maternity

- 37 Tom Purcell Remembers
- 39 Fit Towns Rewarded
- 40 Passing of Martin Grenham
- 41 A Girl's Best Friend

Schools Rules

- 27 Ardscoil Mhuire Spikeball
- 28 Chalkface Chronicles

Culture

- 42 Town Band's New Home
- 44 Lee Lynch Remembered
- 45 Sister Act Serenading
- 46 Four Seasons Exhibition
- 47 Town Hall Theatre

Sport

- 48 Clare FM Head of Sport
- 50 OsKaRs Night
- 52 Town AFC Prepare
- 53 Women's Rugby
- 54 150 Road Runners
- 55 Cycling Club Couch
- 56 Athletes Perform Well

Tourism And Heritage

- 57 Royal Kate Chooses Dubarry
- 58 This, That and the Other
- 59 Aghrim Battle Centre
- 60 Tenant Defence Association
- 62 Times Gone By



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COUNCILLORS RAISE LOCAL ISSUES

BY DONOGH MOORE

In the recent monthly meetings of the Municipal District of Ballinasloe, local councillors raised many issues that were concerning both to them, as well as to the people they represent.

Councillor Michael Connolly brought forward the proposition of building a new footpath for Harris Road, right on the edge of the fair green. This proposed build would separate the horses from the people attending, during the annual October Fair held in the town. The Fair seems to grow every year, and so adequate safety measures must be put in place to ensure everyone can enjoy the occasion. This particular motion was raised by Councillor Connolly at the behest of the Fair and Festival Committee, of which he is a member.

He also raised the issues of some dangerous portions of road that need attending to around the local area. These 'black spots' can be found on the Mountbellew to Ballyforan road, as well as the road from Killure to Ballinasloe. It is believed that these roads may require emergency funding, with the section on the Killure road, before the bridge, on the approach to the town being in acute disrepair.

Councillor Michael Finnerty brought attention to the issue of the large number of applicants who wish to be housed in the new development in Garbally Drive. This housing scheme features 10 newly constructed houses, and the issue at hand is that there is obviously a significant and growing need for social housing in the local area. There are no plans for new builds this year.

Lastly, the issue of St Brigid's Old Hospital buildings came to the fore. The building was first established as the Connacht District Lunatic Asylum when it opened in 1883. The institution was permanently closed in 2013, and the building itself has been left to rot and decay ever since. In June last year the then Minister for Communications Denis

Naughten commissioned a community backed report on the future of the campus which the owners the HSE seemed to be in broad agreement with. Nothing has happened to either the main buildings or the worsening Nurses' Home which nearly has no window left intact. The motion was brought forward that Galway County Council should pursue a dereliction notice for the old hospital. This would pave the way for something to be done with the land, be it another municipally owned facility or offices, or even selling the land off to private vendors.

The Councillors argued that if the campus was in private hands the State would be pursuing through the courts; the misuse of listed buildings. The officials are to report back on this avenue of approach as the council has the state power to enforce any building owner to knock it if it is an eyesore.

LITTER OF TOWN CENTRE GETTING WORSE

The IBAL/An Taisce Annual Survey of Irish Towns saw very mixed results for the Town.

The town now lies as the 23rd most littered out of 40 of similar size.

They were impressed overall with outer connect roads, most estates but when it came to the centre the judges were quite stark in their analysis.

The Famine Memorial Park and Kilgarave Estate were singled out for praise in the available online report but the town has lost its clean status to one of moderately littered.

It found the Harbour littered, the Costcutter carpark seriously littered and noted that Main St was "untidy and poorly maintained environment with heavy accumulations of litter".

The judges visited the town in Quarter one 2018 and mid summer – before any of the issues of the big dig could creep into the presentation of the town.

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NEW WESTERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY PLAN TO INCLUDE INVESTMENT FOCUS ON COUNTY TOWNS

Under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 a number of changes were made to the regional structures in Ireland. The eight regional authorities were dissolved in June 2014 and their functions and staff were transferred to the Regional Assemblies.

Subsequently three Regional Assemblies were established in January 2015 – the NWRA, the Eastern & Midlands Regional Assembly and the Southern Regional Assembly. Together the Regional Assemblies form a regional structure that strengthens the development of Ireland's regions in a co-ordinated, strategic manner.

Three Galway representatives were nominated to this assembly in 2014: Councillor Jimmy McClearn, Councillor Dermot Connolly, and Councillor Mary Hoade.

Through the adoption of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES), the government has asked the Regions to define and shape development and infrastructure investment at a regional through to local level for the next 10 years and to fit into the Government Ireland 2040 objectives. Priority was to be given to Galway City, Sligo and Letterkenny.

The three Galway Representatives led by Cllr. Dermot Connolly have consistently sought a role and a focus for significant county towns and provincial centres

of population outside of Metropolitan designates in the new plan which is finalizing its drafting stage.

The Draft Report available on line at www.nwra.ie will not (as a result of the three councillors) campaign see the three largest economic conurbations enjoy the total focus of the ESF, The state agencies like IDA and EI with inward investment and Government strategies.

Instead owing to the population displacement pattern of the West – a more nuanced approach will be taken in carving up resource and investment priorities in Education, Healthcare, Transportation, Tourism investment and housing.

It means locally that towns such as Ballinasloe will have a bespoke role in delivering on the objectives for all the stakeholders in delivering a more sustainable West over the period 2022 – 2032 replacing the Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022.

BY DONOGH MOORE

LESS INVESTMENT IN MUNICIPAL LOCAL NEEDS

With The Municipal District area meeting taken place in late November (which only passes an estimate but is subject to ratification by the main County Council) and the main council estimate passed in Dec with €4 million being majiced from a Dept to cover the costs of merger that no politician wants it is still unclear what will be spent at all in the coming 12 months.

What is abundantly clear in the last five years of the County being the budget master for the locality (as opposed to the old Ballinasloe Town Council scrapped in 2014) that the ability of the town to invest and prioritise its own needs has been hugely hampered.

Leaving aside the diminution of the Civic Offices being a one stop shop for all your engagement with the County – people five years on, are finding themselves having to visit the city for pre planning meetings, for housing issues, to inspect documents etc. etc.

In 2013, the last year the Urban sat, the allocation for the Xmas lighting fund was in the order of €10,000; this year it was €3,500 - a decrease of 65%. The rates of the businesses are moving to parity with the county level – should be there within another four years but what is the town getting back in return? Two area councillors – Broderick and Dermot Connolly opposed the adoption of the local estimate as there were no figures provide for income !

In 2014 the Open spaces, Parks and Recreation Cost Centre was in the region of €350,000; we had a town gardener an active Tidy Towns Committee scored reasonably well in the Competitions but in four short years – the post of town gardener is gone, estate maintenance has to be paid from notice of motion monies, the amount for all the pitches, parks, residential estates and commonage – estimated at 40 acres has €96,000 of an allocation for 2019 ??? Almost a 70% reduction.

Any wonder we are 23rd of 40 of the most littered town in the country. Whether we have an independent restored Town Council as advocated by former Town Mayor Johnny Walsh and others – the starving of funds, resources, staff, facilities and interest in the town since 2014 has been acute.

New Council elections are being held in May of this year to the County – whoever is running would need to be forearmed with the facts.



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OVER 200 SEEK NEW POSITIONS WITH SURMODICS

US science and medical technology company, Surmodics, held an open careers fair in the town recently in the run up to the Christmas holidays. The fair, which saw over three hundred prospective employees walk up, of which 220 of them actually conducted a mini-interview with staff present.



L to R: Johnathan Canavan, Ann Hynes, Tom Kelly, Teresa Murray, Teresa O'Grady, Brendan Geraghty, Fiona Kelly, Joe Kilbride.

The careers that were on offer were Production Operators (day and night shifts), Manufacturing Line Lead, Laboratory Technician, Quality Engineer, Quality Technician, Manufacturing Engineer, R&D Engineer, R&D Technician, IS Programme/Analyst, and Planning Specialist.

Surmodics came to Ballinasloe back in 2015 when they overtook the premises at Creagh Medical, out on the Creagh Road in the IDA Business Park. After investing significant capital into the facility, they made good on their promise to create over 100 jobs, taking the local medical devices manufacturer from over thirty jobs, to just over 130 currently. Now, they intend to make good on more promises by expanding the business, and

so the careers fair day held in the Shearwater recently was the first step to realising these undertakings.

For more information on any careers with Surmodics, please email a cover letter and CV to careers@surmodics.com, or contact them via telephone at (090) 964 6300.

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SOCIETY TRAVEL CELEBRATES 2 SUCCESSFUL DECADES

BY DONOGH MOORE

Society Travel recently hit a notable milestone, when they celebrated twenty years in business. The local agency was founded by Geraldine Dolan, daughter of Brian and Freda Dolan (née Headd) of Carrowreagh, Taughmaconnell.



Mr Glenn Burke, Ms Geraldine Dolan, Ms Yvonne Garvey, Mrs Anna Guider.

First opening its doors to the public in December 1998, they specialise in a wide range of trips; from camping packages to a variety of continental destinations, to the more intimate honeymoons. They also organise the annual Clonfert Diocesan Pilgrimage, which sees a mixture of invalids, elderly pilgrims and volunteers depart for Lourdes for a week. This year's pilgrimage takes place from the 15 – 20 August.

After many years working in the travel trade and much encouragement from friends, family and most importantly her two brothers, Gerry and Pat, she set out on her own.

"I decided I wanted to build something from scratch. I have enjoyed every moment of it, the sense of accomplishment I cannot describe. It's the best thing I have done and it would not have been possible without the support of our customers who are with us since we first opened our door on that crisp December morning with my great friend Patricia Hynes (née Dervin) with me that morning" recalls Geraldine.

Society Travel deals with specialist groups for all destinations, and for larger, more comprehensive trips, these companies will arrange everything from accommodation to visas.

While the general consensus is that booking holidays online is always a better option, there is a difference between both methods. Travel agents operate with bonded companies, who offer security both locally and abroad, should something beyond your control

go awry. They also need to remain up to date with the constantly changing laws and regulations regarding travel and insurance, so they can offer advice and guidance to prospective customers with any query they may have. While booking a holiday online is fine for a quick and direct trip, when it comes to more than one flight, holiday-goers often turn to travel agents due to many issues arising, such as varying passport validity issues, visa restrictions and minimum connection layovers at foreign airports.

Whilst they have had staff come and go over the years all in all with a very low attrition rate. Glenn Burke, who is highly respected and sought-after by all their customers, due to his level of knowledge ranging from cruises to ski trips. Bridie Dolan works in the accounts section of the business, after working in an accountant's office for many years. Yvonne Garvey and Anna Guider cover sales and admin respectively, as well as dealing with potential visa issues, after having worked in local outlets for many years before joining.

Her memories of the opening days of the firm are tinged with sadness as her founding employee Patricia, who was such a fun loving person to work with, passed away tragically in an accident in Nov. 2004

When they opened in 1998, they got many cards and good luck wishes, but one that stands out most in Geraldine's head to this day was a note written on a slip of paper, (as he had no money to buy the card) was from her 8-year-old son Brian:

"Best of Luck Mam, Hope it works out, Probably the best Travel Agent in the World"

"We would just like to extend, from the bottom of our hearts, a massive Thank You to everyone we have done business with over the years, especially our loyal customers for your continuous support. Without you, all this would not be possible. Here's to another twenty of getting you going places!" exclaims Geraldine.

For more information and regular updates from Society Travel, you can visit their Facebook Page www.facebook.com/societytv1 or pop into the shop.

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PULSE CLUB LAUNCHED FOR LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS

Ballinasloe recently saw the launch of an initiative which aims to provide a support network for young businesses and entrepreneurs in the town and hinterland.

'The Pulse Club', an initiative by the Ballinasloe Area Community Development, aims to provide a networking platform for fledgling entrepreneurs, as well as established businesses. They also aim to provide members with a mentoring service, through regular presentations delivered by seasoned entrepreneurs, as well as in-depth courses on various key topics, which will be subsidised by the club.

The Pulse Club came together through the efforts of a number of local entrepreneurs and businesspeople. Brian King, who is a board member of the Ballinasloe Area Community Development CLG, rallied a group of people together regularly and began chairing these meetings. Through various brainstorming sessions, the group decided to set up The Pulse Club, which would offer budding businesses in the locality a network of contacts who can offer support and advice.

The founding members of the Pulse Club were all locals, or have ties to the area: Brian King (Ballinasloe Area Community Development), Kevin Broderick (BACD), Lyn Donnelly (BACD), Joe Glennon (Shuul Colours), Renate Kohlmann (Grow Remote), James Coyle (Coyle & Co. Accountants), Mike O'Brien (Brewery Lane), Sinead Collieran (ALDI Community Games), Andrea Duffy (The Front Room), Lorcan Mitchell (Mitchell Drum), and Eoghan Kenny (The Compliance Team).

The official launch of The Pulse Club was held in the new innovation business suites - upstairs in the new Ballinasloe Library, with a small light bites reception, followed by a series of very informative talks and presentations by various guest speakers. These speakers included the likes of Gerry Kilcommins, Vice President of Worldwide Vascular Operations for Medtronic, and Michael Burke, CEO of the Chanelle Group. Both of these men gave incredibly in-depth and engaging talks to some of the budding entrepreneurs, ranging from discussing their own beginnings in business, raising finance and how to successfully manage a growing workforce.

Present on the night were senior officials from the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Western Development Commission as well as the CEO's of both County Councils Enterprise Offices in Roscommon and Galway, Louise Ward and Brenda Fox; Alan Farrell, Acting Director of Services Galway

County Council and Eugene Cummins CEO of Roscommon County Council. Oireachtas members Deputies Denis Naughton, Eugene Murphy and Senator Maura Hopkins all attended the evening's programme.

The event drew a large crowd from the area, and attendees were not only treated to some insightful presentations by the guest speakers, but also got the opportunity to see for themselves the kind of spaces that were available in the upstairs of Ballinasloe Library. The building was redeveloped recently, and now boasts over 4,000 square feet of office space, spanning two floors. These new facilities come complete with new carpet, sound proofing and office furniture.

Eoghan Kenny, a founding member of the Pulse Club, is highly enthusiastic about the location and facilities. "The office space both here [above the library] and in the Enterprise Centre, and all the other supports around the town can do nothing only help the



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Brian King (BACD), Alan Farrell
(Director of Economic Enterprise, Galway CoCo)
Michael Burke (CEO, Chanelle Group)
Gerry Kilcommins
(VP of Worldwide Vascular operations, Medtronic)



thriving local business community" stated Eoghan. He reminisced on how business and commerce thrived before the turn of the century, citing "a couple of big factories closing" as well as the economic crash of the mid 2000s as the primary reason why this wealth of businesses in the town waned. However, he's confident that Ballinasloe will become a prosperous economic and entrepreneurial community once again, although perhaps in a newer micro enterprise form.

Renate Kohlmann, another founding member, said she was incredibly keen to grow enterprise in Ballinasloe. "Business begets business. Learning from other people throughout Ballinasloe and Galway is really, really important. I've been really fortunate to see

first-hand how that's worked in global companies, and I'm excited to be able to a part of this, and to try and bring a little bit of that here as well, locally" she added.

Many of the attendees present were former alumni of Scoil Mhuire and Garbally who have returned to the district with contracts, clients and overseas customers or aspects of service operations that can be

managed from outside of the daily grind in and out of our clogged metropolitan cities.

Deputy Denis Naughton reminded the attendance that increasingly people were looking for lifestyle balance with recreational and leisure amenities coming as high as preference as salary expectations. "Make no doubt about it but the Hidden Heartlands Tourism drive and opening up of new cycle ways and walkways with this town at the centre – will provide as much as an attraction as the closeness to either Dublin or Shannon airports", stated the Deputy.

Another initiative being run by The Pulse Club is the 'First Tuesday Club'. The club will get together on the first Tuesday of every month to network with aspiring and existing entrepreneurs, and to learn and discuss topics and areas of interest that will support the growth and development of a business. Not only that, but it offers members a group of peers with whom they can discuss any problems that might arise in the day-to-day running of a business. The Pulse Club seeks to serve and support a diverse range of business types and models, including agricultural, horticultural, service providers, retailers, e-commerce and more, as driven by needs of its Members.

Chairman of the BACD, Seamus Duffy, welcomed the support of the agencies that matter in partnering again the actions of the Community Development Company and stated that while Galway City may have its Portershed and Skibbereen its Ludgate Hub to incubate the next generation of micro businesses – Ballinasloe now has its own Pulse Club and new Innovation space. "We are fortunate that Galway County Council have agreed to contract BACD to market and support this space in conjunction with our 27,000 square foot Enterprise Centre in Creagh – which has supported through the assistance of our partners some 50 start-up business and over 600 jobs in 20 years" stated Seamus.

The Pulse Club will hold their inaugural meeting on the first Tuesday in February. People can register their interest online at www.thepulseclub.com/sign.up.html, and keep up to date on all the news and information surrounding the Pulse Club, from workshop topics to key dates in the club's calendar. For more information, contact Lyn in Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre on (090) 964 6516 or info@ballinasloeenterprise.ie, or check out The Pulse Club on Facebook.

BALLINASLOE

TOGETHER WE'RE BETTER

We are always looking for volunteers or people with ideas. If you're interested in getting involved contact us at Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre

BACD Ltd and the Ballinasloe Town Team would like to express a huge thank you to all the Ballinasloe groups, societies and community members for your help and support with our recent projects. Looking forward to working with you all again with our new ventures.

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GARBALLY OIL – 25 YEARS SERVING LOCAL FUEL CUSTOMERS

BY DONOGH MOORE

Garbally Oil are celebrating 25 years in business in Ballinasloe this spring. An independent, family owned company who originally hail from Ferbane, in Co. Offaly and in January 1993, they opened their gates for the first time in Poolboy Industrial Estate, with a total staff number of four.

The business grew quickly as they supplied heating oil, diesels and petrol to the houses, businesses, churches and factories in the east Galway region. In 1998, the business purchased a second plot adjacent to their site and doubled the size of their depot, where they installed retail pumps and opened their forecourt to the public.

The family-run business has been voted through various surveys as having the most competitive prices for fuel in the area. In 2010 they opened Claddagh Oil, where they began to expand their range, and supply oil to the likes of Galway city and beyond.

Garbally Oil now employs 11 people, which is a far cry from the mere four staff they had when they first opened all those years ago. Not only that, but the business also has further plans for expansion in the near future. They also operate from two other oil and fuel depots in the midlands area-Flaherty Fuels in Ferbane, Co. Offaly, and Birr Oil in Woodlands, Birr. Taking these other two depots into account, the tally comes up to twenty three total employees.



Brendan Flaherty



Conor Flaherty



David Flaherty

The three directors, Brendan Flaherty and his two sons, David and Conor, are incredibly proud of not only the business they've created, but the legacy that has come with it too. Garbally Oil has become a staple in town of Ballinasloe. "Genuinely we are so thankful for everyone being so welcoming, and accepting us with open arms as one of your own here in town" states Director Conor.

They are incredibly happy to have been able to keep running a successful business for so long, and they hope to be able to continue this success for another twenty five years. If nothing else, their story proves that the locality is a good setting for commerce, and businesses have ample opportunity to grow and expand, given the town's prime location.

Garbally Oil deliver 6 days per week, and their pumps are open 7 days a week. They can be contacted via telephone on (090) 964 4147, or email at: SALES@GARBALLYOIL.COM, or find them on Facebook: @Garbally.Oil.



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SENATOR

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📍 @hopkins_maura

FINE GAEL 

9th VOLUME OF LIFE GEARS UP

BY COLM CROFFY

For the project team of four who started this community publication in February 2012 – there is still some sense of shock as we launch the ninth volume of 6 editions commencing next April.

The Magazine with its initial 35 Advertising subscribers (Businesses in the locality, in the grip of a severe down turn) published some 3,500 copies of 32 colour pages in its infancy has now grown thanks to almost 80 regular advertising subscribers, to 64 colour pages and a print run of 6,500 copies – 6 times a year.

The Magazine is produced, designed and printed professionally by local leading printers KPW Print Management and the Reporting across the Magazine, the Website, and Social media is undertaken by third level Trainees on very modest expenses stipends, as part of their internship.

None of the photographers, contributors, editing or project co-ordination is subject to a payment. Neither are core team of volunteer drivers and the TY students of Garbally or sports club members in the summer months who hand deliver 3,000 copies to every apartment, business and home in the old Urban District Council area.

This whole project and publication has been a huge collective voluntary effort.

How many know that all the following Villages and National Schools within them are supplied with copies 6 times a year – Ahascragh, Attyrory, Aughrim, Ballyfa, Caltra, Cappataggle, Castlesampson, Clonmacnoise, Clontuskert, Eyrecourt, Fohenagh, Kilconnell, Killimor, Kiltormer, Laurecetown, New Inn, Newtown, Shannonbridge, Taughmaconnell. As well outlets in Galway City, Gort and Athenry are supplied and also some in Dublin and Kildare.

All the Hotels in town receive multiple copies for their guests in bedrooms as well as the Hospital, the Railway Station and indeed all the State Agencies, Public Representatives to spread the positive news of our growing and developing community.

Life now has 30,000 online readers and our Fbook page has an

An initiative of Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd.
www.ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie

To get in touch with Ballinasloe Life online, visit us here:
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BALLINASLOELIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Vol. 8 Issue 6: Feb' 19 - March' 19

FREE

annual reach of 185,000 while the website Ballinasloe.ie has seen an increase of 15% on last year visitors and our multimedia crew last season produced over 60 videos which had a combined viewership of over 85,000. A Good 35% of these trackable figures are from overseas!

The Advertising Rate Card has not changed since 2014 – that's 6 year with no increase to business supported whilst cost have climbed with the Magazine costing just under €60,000 to produce annually – each magazine costing just under €1.50 for a free magazine to the reader.

It has become one of the landmark Marketing avenues for the town, its businesses, our sporting, community, voluntary, faith and charitable organisations and societies.

The Project team of Lyn Donnelly (Advertising and Circulation Manager), Seamus Duffy Chair of the Board: Brendan Kelly (KPW) and Colm Croffy, Editor need to secure some more subscribers to underpin the viability of volume 9 – sadly there are some firms in the locality who in 8 years have never taken a support ad. It is hoped that they may review that decision for the coming year; any advertising subscription above €300 entitles the firm to a membership of the Charitable Development Company B.A.C.D. CLG

The group would also welcome the offer of new volunteer drivers who could give up a few Friday mornings of the year to spin around the locale with a couple of boxes of magazines.

Submissions and new suggestions on format and content always welcome to ballinasloelife@hotmail.com

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FESTIVE GATHERING HERALDED GOOD TRADING BY C. CROFFY

CHRISTMAS SEASON

Though Christmas has come and gone, it's timely to look back at the Festive Gathering held in St. Michael's Square, with the Big Dig suspended for most of December – most of all the streets got a dusting of festive lighting despite the inconvenience.

The petitioning of Galway County Council by Cllr. Dermot Connolly, seconded by Cllr. Donal Burke at the last normal meeting in early December saw free parking on all the streets and car parks of the town from December 5th to the early part of January which made a huge difference to trading.

The absence of rainfall and unusual mildness of the eve helped raise the Christmas spirit, as a fantastic crowd of some 1500 gathered around the unique Ballinasloe Renewable Timber Christmas tree. The Fair & Festival sponsored sound stage played host to the evening's musical entertainment.

The Christmas festival & turning on of the lights began with choral singing and music from the local National Schools, (Newtown

National School, Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal (Creagh), Scoil an Chroí Naofa and Scoil Uí Cheithearnaigh).

MC for the evening was "Wishee Washee" from Aladdin (Pat Vaughan in his Bottler Night time attire) who was joined by the cast and crew from the annual Panto. Mulled Wine along with Hot Chocolate for the kids was served from the Christmas tree by Ballinasloe Musical Society members. Prior to the North Pole visitor's arrival – members of the Dance Troupe from the Panto gave a display of what would be available in the Town Hall later in the month.

The Ballinasloe & District Vintage Club tractors provided an amazing illuminated procession on the streets again with their festive tractors before the main man, Santa Claus, was escorted into the town by the local Fire Brigade to turn the lights in the town and to light up our European Christmas Tree.

Santa finally arrived in the Square at 6:30pm, where he was greeted with rapturous applause. After a countdown from 10 to 1, Santa pushed the button to bring the Christmas lights to Ballinasloe for the festive period.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Allied Irish Bank	Darren Goode RGR Partners Accountants	Healys Pharmacy	McGuckian Dental Surgery	Talking Heads Hair & Beauty
An Táin Bar	Delaneys Carpet & Furniture	High Society Hair Salon	Michael McCullagh Auctioneer & Valuer	The Bread Basket
Ballinasloe Credit Union	Downeys Bar & Restaurant	Hutchinson Davidson & Son Solicitors	Michael Ward Menswear	The Ecig Store
Ballinasloe Opticians	Duanes Healthwise Pharmacy	J&S Photos	Mightybite Taxis and Bus Hire	The Hair Gallery
Bank of Ireland	Eimear Loughnane & Co. Solicitors	Joe Kellys Bar	Murphys Medical Hall	Tiny Tots Preschool & Creche
Bar One Bookmaker	First Stop Barbers	Jorena Health & Gift Shop	Murrays of River Street	Tomas Barbers
Barretts - Heiton Buckley	Fletchers Expert Electrical	Joseph M Jordan Solicitor	Niall Hogan Menswear	Topman Barbers
Billy King Pharmacy	Florys Hair Salon	Karibas Restaurant & Coffee House	Noonan & Cuddy Solicitors	Tranquility Beauty Clinic
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The Town Band, growing in numbers, under the direction of conductor Noel Madden played a wonderful medley of Carols and Festive tunes as the well behaved crowd queued for some 40 minutes to meet the red man himself, get the selfie taken with the folks and lift a parcel.

Jacinta Divilly, Town Team Facilitator, commented at the end of the evening "It is important to remember that Christmas Illumination project is always a community-driven one and would be impossible without the contributions from many local businesses. Their subscriptions and support, along with the fundraising- finances the project and helps bring the spirit of Christmas to town".

The Total project came to just under €24,000 of costs with practically the same being raised from local business – 45%, Local Authority 15% and Community/ Town Team Events Fundraising

Income	2018	2017
Total Business Contributions To Date	10670	11,905
Galway County Council Community Support Scheme	3,500	3,500
Subsidary Income From Town Team Events	9,548	8,153
Totals	23,718	23,558
Expenditure		
Purchase of New Lights / Replacement Bulbs Repairs	6,097	5,561
Installation, Equipment Hire and Maintenance of Street Lights	7,219	7,428
Insurance & Admin / Regulatory / Signage Costs	1,400	1,800
ESB Costs	2,053	2,128
Contstruction Erection, Disassembly and Storage of Xmas Tree	4,784	4,544
Christmas Festival / Switching on Ceremony	2,165	2,097
Totals	23,718	23,558

40%.

She thanked Manager Lyn Donnelly for her co-ordination of the project, James Burke for collecting the business subscriptions, Liam Loughrey and Woodwork crew for the tree and Liam Kenny for the electrical works.

The proceedings were broadcast on Fbook live through the Ballinasloe Life Channel and over 6,000 people viewed the footage and Xmas Greetings videos. Though Christmas has come and gone, you can revisit the Festive Gathering evening on our Youtube channel, Ballinasloe Life.

5 Tips to reduce our reliance on single-use plastics



Most Europeans back measures to cut plastic waste. With 87% of Europeans worried about the environmental impact of plastic, and 74% worried about impact on their health, people have the drive to tackle the plastic challenge. Here are some tips to help reduce our reliance on *#singleuseplastics*.

- Carry a reusable water bottle and coffee cup
- Say no to plastic straws and disposable cutlery
- Buy local and seasonal fruit and veg
- Avoid excessive food packaging
- Carry a reusable shopping bag

Europe Direct Information Centre, Ballinasloe Library



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INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT OUTLOOK FOR YEAR AHEAD

While both IDA and Enterprise Ireland reported more balanced year end results for the regions in the early new year, the Town Team Project Group, attempting to secure new investment and medium scale employment to the area, see significant statistics as a barometer to better success on the horizon.

The Western Development Commission (WDC) is a state agency responsible for promoting the economic and social development of the Western Region recently carried out a survey on the importance of the Health Care sector in 40 towns in the West.

Of the 40, Ballinasloe at 18.9% has the second highest % of workforce in the Health care sector (up 13.2% in 5 years) and as a town is the centre of employment in this sector for many workers in neighbouring towns. So the town is firmly on the radar of significant health care and medical employment and perhaps can capitalise on these attributes as a centre of growth and excellence.

A recent pilot survey on the economy of County Mayo analysing where it is positioned to capitalise on the Governments Project Ireland 2040 was carried out. The project group are adamant that some of Mayo's apparent weakness in securing projects from 2040 are coincidentally strengths for what Ballinasloe has to offer to potential new industry. Three key industrial advantages to the locality now are:

1) **Density of population.** Estimates show that over 500k of the Republic's workforce of 2.2m are within an hour's commute of Ballinasloe. 2) **Infrastructure/ Access.** – Again the Town is on the M6 motorway with direct links to Dublin & Shannon Airports and on the main Rail line linking Dublin and Galway. 3) **Third level Education.** In close proximity lies the campuses of NUIG, GMIT, AIT, LIT & Maynooth University.

Enterprise Ireland supports 8,000 jobs across Galway which is an increase of 4% over the past 12 months. Barry Egan, Regional Director West for Enterprise Ireland, stated the top 5 priorities for 2019 are supporting clients prepare for a hard Brexit, regional jobs development and driving innovation, competitiveness and diversification among Irish exporters.

Cathriona Blewitt, West Regional Manager for IDA Ireland, has confirmed there were a total of 42 IDA sponsored site visits to County Galway up to the end of September 2018 with only Dublin and Cork exceeding this number. She pointed out that their client base outside the City has performed well in terms of their operational sustainability and job retention. Aptar & Surmodics are two IDA based companies in the Creagh Business Park. A recent recruitment campaign by Surmodics brought a huge response which proves again the workforce is available locally.

Employment levels in IDA backed companies have surpassed their pre-crash peak for the first time last year.

The belief of the Board of BACD and the Town Team is that if the facilities are available a new company will set up here and there is recent proof of this in the fact the IDA built a unit in Castlebar and they are now finalising a new tenant for the Building. BACD secured planning for a 15,000 sq ft building on the IDA site and are pursuing every avenue to get same built.

If we continue to be left out in the cold and fail to get support from the many Government Initiatives out there at the moment, (which would be very disappointing), we will have to look at private investment options.

BY SEAMUS DUFFY

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TINY TOTS CELEBRATE TWO DECADES OF CARING FOR OUR PRE SCHOOLERS

BY DONOGH MOORE

Tiny Tots Crèche came from humble beginnings, starting out in a converted house in Woodlands, Creagh, in January 1999, some 20 years ago. From there, the owner and business woman Jennifer Sheridan, daughter of former President of the Chamber of Commerce Tommy Sheridan, renovated and officially opened Tiny Tots Educational Preschool and Crèche in the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre on the Roscommon Road, in August 2003.

The Crèche moved into a section of the old hospital building that originally was the kitchen and dining room for the facility. It was hoped that it would add to the attractiveness of the Enterprise Centre and adjacent IDA Business park for the anticipated workforce.

Jennifer said she couldn't have succeeded without the help and constant support of her parents, Tommy and Eilish. "Dad, who is a self made entrepreneur, encouraged me to start out on my own and gave me great support and advice along each step of the way," states Jennifer. "An opportunity arose for me to renovate part of the Enterprise Centre which had been set up to provide an affordable and high-quality enterprise space for businesses wishing to set up in town" she added.

Jennifer began her enterprise by minding four small children on her own. Twenty years on and her first clients still keep in contact - Katie Conlon is in her final year of psychiatric nursing in NUI Galway, Daniel Dent now works and lives in Galway City, Nathan Waring went on to play Rugby with the Leeds Rhinos and now works in the family flooring business in Leeds, and Rafeek Khan went onto Maynooth College to study law where he played Rugby and Wrestling, before his untimely death.



Tiny Tots Staff

Back Row; Olivia Sweeney, Ciara Watson, Hailey Sweeney, Elaine Kenny, Erol Moody
Front Row; Ashling Fahy, Patrice Fallon, Jennifer Sheridan, Caoimhe Byrnes, Nicola Sweeney.

From those modest beginnings, Tiny Tots went from strength to strength and now caters for 50 children on a daily basis. The Crèche has 5 groups: babies, toddlers, junior and senior preschool and afterschool, as well as offering a pickup service from Creagh National School.

As well as the free preschool scheme, Tiny Tots also offers government schemes for parents on low incomes, and with this Jennifer welcomes the introduction of the Affordable Childcare Scheme this year, which brings with it a historic new era for childcare funding in Ireland.

Jennifer also works alongside her husband Erol, who is originally from Tullamore. He came to Ballinasloe to work as the Meat Manager in the local Tesco and is now the Crèche Chef, as food and nutrition is a vital part of the service.

The School now has a team of 8 qualified childcare staff.

The crèche would not be as successful as it is without the dedicated team. "I am fortunate as a proprietor and the parents are really fortunate that we have the staff we have; they go above and beyond every single day to make Tiny Tots the place it is. And also a special mention for Erol's parents, Roy and Doris, who offer Erol and I help and support whenever needed", states Jennifer.

Jennifer standing beside her father, Tommy Sheridan, who was the President of the Chamber of Commerce at the official opening of Tiny Tots Crèche in August 2003.

1999 – Daniel Dent, Jennifer holding Nathan Waring, Katie Conlon standing, Rafeek Khan (RIP).



Playground

Finally as one of the longest clients of the Enterprise Centre who has seen some five managers come and go over the years she singles out Lyn Donnelly for being such an excellent resource and supporter for all the businesses in the centre. "Everyone in the building loves coming in here to work – she has really got a wonderful vibe going and we are lucky to have her in a key management role".

For further information contact Jennifer at 090 964 4480 or visit their website – www.tinytotscreche.com

BRINGING BALLINASLOE TO BRUSSELS BY MATT CARTHY MEP

When I was seeking election to the European Parliament in 2014 I made a commitment that I would be Ireland's representative in Europe rather than the EU's rep in Ireland as I felt many MEPs have traditionally considered their role. In the period since I have kept to that mantra in all of my dealings. My responsibility is to them, not to the institutions I sit in.

If the work I do doesn't impact on people in the communities around Ballinasloe then it's not worth doing. In an EU constituency that comprises of 15 counties it is not always easy for MEPs to convey the value of our work to, or remain in contact with, all of the communities we represent. That is where I, as a Sinn Féin MEP, have an advantage over others. When people vote for a Sinn Féin representative they are voting for a team. Our councillors, TDs and MEPs all work together on the issues that impact those we represent.

Over the past five years I regularly discussed with Ballinasloe Councillor, Dermot Connolly, all of the issues I am working on while receiving his reports on the feedback and impact of EU policy in his area. I have visited Ballinasloe regularly to meet individuals and groups and have organised public meetings in the region to keep people apprised of the work I have been doing on their behalf. I believe I have remained in tune with the communities of East Galway in as comprehensive a manner as possible. In a nutshell I have used my role, thanks to the help of Dermot Connolly, to bring Ballinasloe to Brussels.

In the European Parliament I am a member of the Agriculture & Rural Development Committee, the Economic & Monetary Policy committee, the Transport & Tourism committee and two special committees established to tackle corporate tax avoidance and evasion.

I have defended rural Ireland and argued that the concerns of people in towns like Ballinasloe and the rural communities that surround it have been inserted into every debate in which I've participated. I have argued for investment in infrastructure to

help secure sustainable jobs in our areas. I, alongside my Sinn Féin colleagues, have been to the forefront in demanding EU funding for initiatives such as broadband connection. Clearly we still have a lot of work to do.

Only last month, the European Parliament voted in favour of my amendment which will prioritise the Western Arc in the EU's transport strategy. That means now that if the Irish government finally commits to the Western Rail corridor then it will be in a position to secure EU funding which it couldn't if my amendment wasn't included.

I have used my role on the Agriculture committee to advocate on behalf of our family farm network and the local economies that depend on them. I continue to seek a redistribution of CAP payments so that farmers in Co. Galway and Roscommon, who currently receive lower than average farm supports, can see their payments increase so that their holdings will become more sustainable. I have challenged the dominance of the major retailers and processors who strip the majority of profits from the farmers who do all the work in producing food. I will continue in this vein to protect the CAP budget, challenge the inequalities in the market and demand that our family farms are protected in the challenging times ahead.

One of the first events that I organised after the EU elections in 2014 was a packed public meeting in Ballinasloe for beef farmers who are on the front-line of these injustices.

An issue that I have been in constant touch with Dermot and others on has been the concerns of flooding and I was pleased to meet and work on behalf of, communities that have suffered from flooding in recent years in Ballinasloe. Again, much work remains to be done but I am satisfied that by raising this matter at an EU level we have embarrassed the government to take the limited remedial steps we have seen.

On Economic issues it is clear that areas such as Ballinasloe have yet to receive the full benefits of the purported recovery consequently, at EU level, I argue in favour of measures that will ensure greater

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regional investment.

I have prided myself on being a voice against the failed housing policies of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael that have created the situation whereby most young people can never expect to own their own home as long as those two parties are in power. I have recently initiated an EU-wide campaign against the actions of Banks and Vulture Funds and in opposition to a European

Commission proposal to introduce a directive that encourages banks to off-load loans to the vultures.

MEPs also have a responsibility to use our position to help local causes. That is why I have championed our local services, such as our post offices and libraries, and those who work in them.

I was pleased to work with Dermot Connolly and our party's health spokesperson, Louise O'Reilly, in visiting Portiuncula Hospital and meeting with staff and patients. We will continue, together, to pursue the retention and development of all services at this campus.

Having met with childcare providers, local businesses, active age

groups and farming representatives in Ballinasloe I can assure each of them that the Sinn Féin team in the European Parliament recognise their contributions to our communities and will continue to press on their behalf.

I would encourage anyone who wants to raise an issue with me to get in touch via 042-9674001 or matt.carthy@sinnfein.ie and to stay apprised of our efforts on your behalf by signing up to my regular eNewsletter at www.mattcarthy.ie

Sinn Féin have been the voice of the Irish people on Brexit in Europe. Our efforts helped ensure that Irish concerns became central to the EU position in negotiations with the British government. Our work has brought the issue of Irish Unity to the centre of European discourse. All the while we have maintained our critical approach to the EU's attempts to move towards a militarised, centralised and less-democratic body.

Our vision is if the EU is to thrive it must be a people-led, democratic EU that respects the rights of national parliaments and ensures that decisions affecting local communities are made as close to those communities as possible.

I am Ireland's representative in Europe, I am Ballinasloe's representative in Europe. I look forward to continuing to bring Ballinasloe to Brussels.

TYRES & ROAD SAFETY ADVICE BY THOM FOX, BALLINASLOE TYRES



Car manufacturers spend millions on car design and always pick the most suitable tyre for that new car they make. So when it comes to the next set of tyres that you choose to fit, it's very important you get the right advice - this is where a trained tyre professional's advice is key.

They should discuss with you how your current set of tyres performed in a number of key areas, like longevity and grip. Armed with this information, suggestions can then be made as to the next set of tyres you choose, whether it's to be premium, midrange or budget.

Price also plays a big part and shopping around is always a good idea. When doing so always insist on new valves and balancing being incorporated into the price. 3D alignment is always an extra, but is well worth it when it comes to the longevity of your tyres. Possibly some see merits in part worn tyres from Germany; but be warned of these tyres' roadworthiness and question why they have been removed in other countries and now end up here.

Check the year of manufacture of the tyre as the NCT now advise motorists of the age of their tyres. Would you fit part-worn brake pads to your car? Always check with your insurance company for independent advice before fitting these tyres to your vehicle.

KEY POINTS FOR TYRE CARE AND ROAD SAFETY

1. Visually check tyre condition on a regular basis.
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4. Consider Alignment to ensure tyre wear evenly.
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WONDERFUL TURNOUT FOR ESTEEMED PHOTOGRAPHER'S BENEFIT CONCERT

BY DONOGH MOORE

People from the town and the surrounding areas gathered in Gullane's Hotel, Main Street recently, for a huge fundraiser concert for local photographer Jackie Dolan.

Jackie has been taking photos in the town for the last eighteen years, and since 2010 launched and ran her own photography studios and store in Society Street's J&S Photos, capturing most of the notable events over the years.

However, in May 2018, Jackie suffered a minimal brain bleed and as a result lost her balance and fell down the stairs. She was immediately transported by ambulance to Galway University Hospital, where the doctors worked frantically to access her injuries, and from there began the lengthy process to repair her broken body. She damaged her spine in the fall and is now currently confined to a wheelchair.

Not only did people come from the local area to show their support on the night, but the event also drew supporters from abroad, including Jackie's own sister, Angie, who flew in from the United States where she resides but was instrumental in putting the road to recovery fundraising campaign in place.

At the start of the Dublin City Ramblers concert, Angie made a brief address of welcome and gratitude – singling out especially Jackie's son Paul and his wife Fiona, Jackie's daughter Michelle Doyle, (Angie's) uncle Austin, uncle Matty and aunt Kathleen, neighbour Seán Fletcher, Tomás Gullane and family for the use of their premises and in particular to Sean Ward and the Ward Family.

All the proceeds from the night went towards Jackie's 'Road to Recovery', which included sales on the

door, as well as several raffles that took place. People in attendance were treated to a night of music and culture, with the added benefit of donating to a good cause.

Four young dancers from the World Championship Irish Dancers group in Clare gave a lively display of Irish set dancing, which marked the beginning of the evening's affairs.

Jackie herself made a short appearance via a pre-recorded video, as sadly she couldn't be there on the night. Jackie in a deeply moving clip, thanked everyone in attendance, and gave special thanks to her family & friends for organising it. Speaking about what happened to her, she didn't dwell too long on the details of her accident and recovery, but rather focused on an uplifting and powerful message. She told her friends and wellwishers "I want to walk again."

The Dublin based folk and traditional band, The Dublin City Ramblers, entertained the large audience with their upbeat and lively renditions of many famous songs, as well as taking a few requests from the crowd too. Not only that, but local man Johnny Johnston, accompanied by other local musicians, troubadours and entertainers hosted a trad session out in the front bar into the wee hours.

The total raised on the night was in the order of f €21,000 and coupled with the online fundit campaign of some €10,000 means the team behind Jackie's road to recovery is 60% towards its funding target. If you would like to find out more or make a donation to the crowdfunding campaign set up for Jackie's 'Road to Recovery', the details can be found on GoFundMe, at: Jackie Dolan's Journey – Road to Recovery.





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OVER €54,000 FOR COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

BY DONOGH MOORE



Senator Maura Hopkins with Teresa Coughlan and Pádraig Ó Ceithearnaigh at opening of the new dining room at Ballinasloe Social Services recently.

Members and Supporters of both Coral Leisure Centre and Ballinasloe Cancer Support at the recent presentation of a cheque from Coral's members fundraising efforts.

€54,087 is set to be provided to five projects locally under the Community Enhancement Programme. Minister for Rural and Community Development,

Michael Ring T.D. announced recently that a number of projects around the country are set to receive grant aid, with five community projects in the locality set to benefit from this.

Ballinasloe Rugby Club received €10,675 for a new 3G AstroTurf training facility and pitch.

Ballinasloe Town Hall Theatre, on Society Street, received €12,810 for building maintenance. The maintenance required for the theatre entail repairs to the ceiling of the front offices. Due to a water leak, the ceiling was damaged and is currently still leaking. A portion will also be spent on refurbishing the bathroom facilities backstage.

Ballinasloe Social Services, located in Brackernagh, received €14,602 for the development of their community services centre. This money is set to go towards the establishment of a new dining room in the centre, as well as refurbishing bathrooms off that. The idea originally came from staff, as they were having to use the facility's day room as a makeshift dining room, but now they can finally separate the two.

Ballinasloe Tidy Towns received €1,000 for photography equipment, which is set to help their online and social media campaigns. Chairperson Tom Madden indicated that the new equipment will aid their biodiversity project, which first started in 2017. Not only that, but through their work with youth groups, it gives the volunteers a chance to get involved with hobbies such as bird watching, and the camera will prove useful in logging these sightings.

Ballinasloe Cancer Support, found on Main Street, received €15,000 in order to refurbish the ground floor of the building, as well as to make the building wheelchair accessible. The centre, which was founded in 2010, aims to provide support to people and families dealing with cancer. Director of Services, Maura Fahy, said that she was "delighted to hear" about the influx of grant aid. The money is set to go towards general refurbishment of the building, which includes the building of wheelchair accessible services, as well as the construction of an extension to the back of the building. "After previous fund-raising efforts, in which Coral Leisure Centre helped us greatly, we amassed nearly €6,000 in the space of a month." It was the support centre's first time since establishment nearly 10 years ago, that they've applied for government relief. Maura said: "Receiving this money was great, but hopefully we can reapply again in the future, and the next application will be met with the same empathy as the first."

Fine Gael Senator Maura Hopkins welcomed the allocations: "Support for these projects will provide a great boost for the locally. It is so important that we continue to support the work of volunteers who are so giving of their time in order to further develop our community."

All of the groups still have to fundraise a considerable amount of match funding to draw down their grant aid as typically under the terms of the letter of offer – promoters own matching finances can range from 45% to 65%.

For more information regarding the Community Enhancement Programme and how to apply, see the Department of Community and Rural Development's official website at: drcd.gov.ie

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MICHAEL HYLAND – MAN AND MACHINES

BY COLM CROFFY

Hard to imagine that the kindly Mayo native curled into his armchair – walking baton at ready for an educational parry, was a debonair prince of track and speed as well of dance hall in his prime.

His knowledge of mechanical engines, speed, track, and vehicular conformity is vastly superior to that of this chosen professional subject – Agricultural Science and for many readers it is for roll calls, and farmyard practical demonstrations he will be most fondly remembered.

Strangely though to his grandchildren's generation and some he never graced a class lab with – it's his love for motoring and in latter years as the speed wore off – more matters of vintage - that they associate Michael Hyland – former Principal of St. Joesph's College Garbally with.

In the post war summers back on the small mixed family holding he commandeered a shed where his Agricultural Contracting Uncle had a lot of his machines and quickly moved from hot wiring and fixing transistors to save for a mechanised bike to get himself to secondary school. His love of gadgetry and engines in particular saw him taking things apart but critically repairing and rebuilding cars, bikes and tractors with gusto. A knack that was to prove very handy when ice roads and other pre breathalyzer hazards lurked the bye roads late at night.

He recalls how he loved the vibe of Galway but hated Dublin and took a long stretch at home during the potato harvest before his parents and the tubers returned his mojo to complete his degree in science. Later summers and holidays were spent importing car parts and self assembling motor cars from instructions – no google or you tube assistance!

The Partry native snuck a ride off Conor Morris (teacher in the Tech. who subsequently became CEO of the Galway V.E.C.) a student friend from University College Galway and then Dublin in the mid Fifties- for an interview for a new teaching post in Garbally in the Autumn of 1957.

Reverend Louis Page was the man pouring the tea in the Throne Room. Michael remembers the scene as if it were only yesterday "After the usual preliminaries of education, qualifications he pounced with who are you related to? I had my homework done and proffered a mutual friend of his, who was a distant cousin on the Nigerian missions, a Fr. Harrington".

That sealed it – he was offered a full years teaching contract in science starting on Oct 20th 1957 on a salary of €400. He of course then had to get his teaching diploma. More importantly though he had to get a car – digs were sorted with Maigs Keane alongside the same Morris and Peadar Weafer the Art teacher in the Tech.

'Louis was a lovely, decent, fair minded and reasonable man who understood human nature so well and was a deeply knowledgeable botanist and horticulturalist – so we got a long fine" stated Michael.

In the late 50s before Donagh O'Malley's free secondary school education the enrollment was typically 180 boarders and some 30 day pupils. 18 staff – 17 Diocesan clerics and one layman – Michael!

When he retired as Principal for a decade (becomming the first lay principal of a Catholic Diocese school in Ireland) in 1998; there were some 500 day pupils and some 120 boarders and a lay staff of over 45.

Whilst as a young undergraduate – with ancestral teaching a vocation on his mother's line – he had a fond aunt who used to lend him her Morris Minor for excursions. Which assisted him and his erstwhile colleagues traversing every carnival dance and gilded ballroom for formal dances which were all a rage in the 50s.

"So there I was job in hand in Garbally, and no permanent wheels



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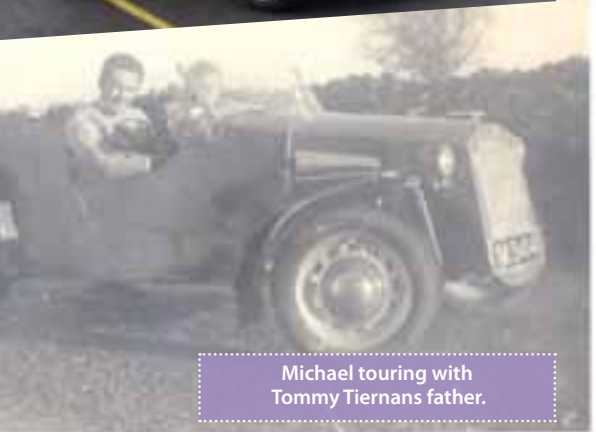
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Michael with his beloved Minis at the Palace Carting Track.



Michael touring with Tommy Tiernans father.



Michael in the mid-50s with a car completely made by himself.

but as luck would have it the dear spinster Aunt was selling the Morris and buying something

else and offered it to me on a lend lease type arrangement."

After his first few years of teaching and buying the first ever telescope from Masons of Dublin for the teaching of science in the college – he was determined to cut an even better dash. He needed wheels that spoke as well as moved, and in the late loved Fr. Cassidy (subsequently to become Bishop of Clonfert and Archbishop of Tuam) he found a willing and eager buyer for the stately Morris which gave him the cash

wiggle room to upgrade to a sports mini cooper!

"Aah it was a dash – racing green with a white roof" recalls Michael fondly and he quickly set about hitching his wagon to the emerging Galway Rallying scene of the swinging sixties.

He found another car mad enthusiast who was an Agricultural Officer in Athlone and they remodeled trucks, flat beds, tractors anything with an axle and torque and subsequently rallied and raced about the circuit. That man happened as luck would have it; was the famous comedian Tommy Tiernan's Dad!"

He became Driver of the year in 1963 but his dinner dancing days caught up with him when married the love of his life – a Lahinch girl; theatre nursing in Portiuncula Ann Skerrit in 1964. Two children subsequently arrived Brian in 1965 and Fiona in 1970.

Domestic life of the 70s yielded eventually to less hectic racing but more importing and remodeling of racing vehicles for the racing scene from the UK and elsewhere and there was always a project or two in the works at the back of the house in Mackney. He got involved in the admin side of the sport officiating at race tracks and

was a regular motor cross participant – eventually taking to Touring Car racing.

As a member of staff in Garbally during these hectic petrol soaked years his presence in the classroom or Vice Principal's office or Lab was always heralded by the parking of a different set of jazzy wheels that any young fella could only aspire to gaze at never mind drive.

His son Brian got involved in Motorbike racing in the mid 80s and Michael continued his youthful energy for upgrading and fixing racing motors of any class or genre. In Garbally he spearheaded the expanding of the curriculum to include Mechanics, Engine Repair for Transition and eventually found a number of ingenious ways to divest the Madden Trust for some resources to fund Building Technology, Woodworking and Engineering teaching Workshops for the next generation.

With retirement and the passing of his wife Ann he found himself with more time on his hands; he reignited his passion for the mini with his purchase of a shook vintage one in Roscommon some 18 years ago and has been buying, renovating and moving on a vehicle that forever reminds him of more zippier years.

Some past students approached him to help out with a fledgling Ballinasloe and District Vintage Club some years ago and he found it ticked a number of boxes "I was mixing and messing with a load of old machines that I had either driven, built or maybe even crashed in my heyday and still transferring skills and knowledge to guys younger than me about engineering of yesteryear" enthuses Michael.

A brain child of Michael's which grew legs after he suggested they organise an event for members of the club who wanted to "explore the full potential of their vintage machines in a controlled environment". That was some 16 Octobers ago at the Pallas Karting Track. He still talks animatedly about his next project which is to restore a 1920 Agricultural Mower to working greatness.

Club Chairman Shane Burns commented "he is held in high regard by all who meet him, Mike has that endearing quality which allows him to communicate his ideas and aspirations to all members of our club with ease. He doesn't suffer fools gladly, however his huge energy and intellect have earned him respect amongst his many friends and we wish him all the very best now and well into the future".

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PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL GEAR UP FOR NEW YEAR

The Council is currently in the process of surveying the people of the locality and beyond regarding their views on how the parish can move forward in a positive way. They are grateful to everyone who have contributed to this by filling out the survey sheets, which are still available in both St Michael's and Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Creagh.

Over the coming months the Council will compile all the information and suggestions submitted and put together a plan going forward. The Council realises change can sometimes be difficult, but they



ensure that they will take into account the views of the people. The results of this survey will be summarised and made available to the entire parish through the newsletter in the coming months.

"On behalf of Ballinasloe Parish Pastoral Council, I would like to wish everyone a prosperous and peaceful new year and to remind

people that as the months of various pastoral events draw near, such as First Communion and Confirmations, a big commitment and effort is required from all parishioners to help with the running and maintenance of such events" stated Chairperson Seamus McGuinness.

SCOIL MUIRE CLASS OF 82 REUNION

BY EDEL MADDEN

A very enjoyable evening was held recently in Gullane's Hotel and Conference Centre, when a very apprehensive group of past pupils from Scoil Mhuire's class of 1982 in Ballinasloe came together.

The majority of the pupils had not met in over 36 years. Unfortunately, three students from this particular year have passed away. The group remembered Carol Dolan, Bonnie Jones and Brenda McCormick (RIP). Thoughts were also for Carmel Harney (RIP) who was in that same year in the Vocational School, while Kay Purcell and Rita Larkin were also fondly remembered.



BR: Teresa Ryan, Edel Madden, Kay Naughton, Caroline O'Rourke, Maura Connolly, Claire Costello, Geraldine Butler, Pauline Burke
MR: Caroline Burke, Valerie Cahill, Mary Walsh, Claire Dillon, Mary Downey, Mary Lawless, Geraldine Flanagan, Anne Barrett, Catherine Bleahen, Eileen O'Donoghue, Ann Finnerty, Carmel Dooley, Sinead Smyth, Susan Geraghty
FR: Kevina Lyons, Eithne Hannon, Deirdre O'Flynn, Phil Lally(T), Mary Molloy(T), Emer Nolan (T), Avril Bannerton, Marguerite Cummins, Carmel Connaire.

Chat was focused on memories of school trips, cold prefabs, bus break-downs, school closing due to heavy snow of 1982 and of course the No Name Club and our beloved Palm Club which was owned by the Swarbrigg brothers, where one attended as much for the curry as the music! While this group is growing fast, we still have to locate others that we have failed to find so far. We'd be delighted if they contacted Edel Madden on (086) 370 2501 or Caroline Burke on (086) 068 3460.

Picture includes class of 1982 with Principal Mary Molloy, teachers Phil Lally and Emer Nolan.



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REMEMBERING TALENTED FIDDLER PADDY CONNOR, EARLSPARK

BY MOIRA DUFFY



Many elders among us may remember Paddy Connor as a skilled gentleman. He was a talented musician playing the fiddle, a gifted carpenter who carved lovely items from a piece of wood, and a great horologist, who was able to fix any time piece. Above all, he was a friendly man who had all the time in the world to visit his neighbours and entertain anyone who rambled to his home.

Paddy was born to Joseph Connor and Anne Tierney, Kylemore in Laurencetown in 1887. He was the second youngest of ten children. In the 1901 Irish Census, Paddy was living with his parents and six of his siblings in Kylemore. Paddy's father died in Rathpeak in December 1906, having moved to this area after 1901. He married the widowed Ann Cannon (nee Egan) from Clonfanlough, Clonmacnois. They had no family and after some time, separated, with Paddy returning to Rathpeak.

Paddy died suddenly at his residence and was found by his neighbour, James Kelly, on the 10th March 1969. He was laid to rest in Creagh alongside his brothers Hugh (1943) and Joseph (1968). Sometime later, Bobby Kilkenny and Jim Hession erected a beautiful headstone to perpetuate his memory. Both of these men played the fiddle, and often played music with Paddy and Jim Lenihan, who owned Maggie Mays pub in St. Michael's Square, where Eurospar is today.

A most enjoyable tribute night honouring Paddy was held recently in Padraig Pearse's Clubhouse. It was organised by James Costello, Ardarn who was MC. The large crowd in attendance all had one thing

in common: they all wanted to pay their respects to this talented man. The night began with a slideshow and presentation on the genealogy of the Connor family, researched and presented by Bridie Kenny, Moira and Maureen Duffy, who were neighbours of Paddy. She and her friends were frequent visitors to his home after school. They loved hearing his music in his kitchen regularly. Anywhere there was a session, Paddy was there to entertain into the early hours of the morning.

His good friend Philip Greene, Clonoulty, got the night off to a great start reminiscing on his memories of this man, and shared the items Paddy made from wood that he still treasures in his home today. He also sang some of Paddy's favourite songs.

James Costello introduced Paddy's grandniece Eileen Whelan, Athlone (granddaughter of his brother Peter Connor) and her family who were invited guests for the tribute. His great-great-grandniece Laura Wall, who is an All-Ireland fiddle player, played solo on her fiddle and also joined with Bobby Kilkenny and his group.

James, on behalf of the organisers, thanked all who contributed on the night. "We wish to acknowledge all those who helped with the evening and to Padraig Pearse's for the refreshments and lovely finger food served. Our community can be happy that we commemorated a special local on the 50th Anniversary of his death. A Versatile Musician, a Fine Craftsman, a Gentle Soul, May He Rest in Peace" stated James.



Three generations of family Mary Wall with her mother Eileen (O'Connor) Whelan & granddaughter Laura Wall.

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NOEL CASEY RETIRES AS COUNCIL SUPERVISOR BY KEN KELLY

Having worked for more than 37 years on the outdoor staff of Ballinasloe Urban Council and Galway Co. Council, Noel Casey of Perssepark, Ballinasloe has retired as General Services Supervisor. His area covered Ballinasloe town as well as Banagher, Eyrecourt, Lawrencetown, Kiltormer and Aughrim where, as Road Overseer, he was in charge of fourteen operatives.

After leaving school, Noel served his apprenticeship in August 1971, as a trainee carpenter in Collieran Bros. in Main St. He then moved on to work for Michael Kenny, Building Contractor, before joining the maintenance team of Hayden's Hotel in 1978.

Noel moved to Ballinasloe Urban Council in 1981 as part of the Housing maintenance staff, where he worked for sixteen years. He was appointed General Services Supervisor with Galway Co. Council in 1997-a post he retained right up to his retirement. He is now succeeded by Paul Leonard from Fohenagh.

At a farewell party in Valerie's of Aughrim, organised by both the outdoor and indoor Council staffs, Noel Casey was praised for his commitment and dedication to his job, in all kinds of weather, as well as being a helpful and obliging overseer. "I'm a bit sad to be retiring



Noel Casey, in centre, pictured at his Retirement Party with family, from left: Conor Casey, Mercy Casey, Ailish Coughlan and Cathal Casey.

but I have worked with great Council officials and a staff that had to deal with flooding, frost and storms in recent years. I want to thank them all for their assistance over the years" said Noel.

CITY AND COUNCIL ON COURSE FOR DEPT OF ENVIRONMENT STEALTH MERGER BY COLM CROFFY

In June 2015 Minister for Environment and Local Govt. Alan Kelly appointed a statutory Expert Advisory Group, led by Professor Eoin O Sullivan of Trinity, to ascertain the practicalities of merging Galway City and County Councils in one Greater Authority.

This would remove the county as being the only one with two councils since the mergers of Waterford and Limerick in a unitary authority. The new super authority would govern and provide services for a population of over 275,000 anchored around Galway City, placing it third behind Dublin and Cork and becoming as the spatial planners require a counterbalance to Dublin's juggernaut continued growth on the Eastern seaboard.

The Cabinet approved a memo brought by Minister of State John Paul Phelan on the 5th of June this year to accept the Advisory Group Report and draft legislation for Oireachtas approval merging the two.

For the elected councillors this would no longer mean 18 for the City Hall and 39 for the County Hall but approximately 40, elected on a population ratio which would mean more for the 90,000 in the nucleus of the city and according to some TDs: 2 for Connemara, 2 for South Galway and 2 for Ballinasloe etc. Almost 90% of Councillors and Oireachtas members are not supportive of such a measure, but it was the same in Limerick and Waterford, the Government got its way.

The Government on the 17th of Nov. moved the second stage of a Bill ostensibly to allow for the acquisition of Cork City of some parts of the County under a land and population for rates swap but with a section ordering for the appointment of CEO of the new super authority in Galway to oversee and implement the merger.

Every TD and Senator not connected with the Governing Coalition rallied against the provision and Fianna Fail led by Deputy O Cuiv, with strong support from all the TDS in Ballinasloe's constituency, Fitzmaurice, Murphy and Naughton put down an amendment removing the appointment and won.

At the County Council Annual Estimates meeting in December

a book of estimates was passed by the Fianna Fail and Fine Gael member majority on the basis that some €4 million of Dept. money would arrive to plug the shortfall as part of the merger process.

Many deputies from the Eastern side of the County cited the facts of the way both the city and county are being denuded of staff and resources to force the merger and have been explicit in demanding before any merger take place the resourcing gap be fixed first.

Galway is the second largest county with a per capita spend on services in 2008 of €1,312 in the City now down to €994 and a drop in a decade from €1004 to €626 for the county a drop of 38% in 10 years while the population grew by 8%. The average per capita spend county wide based on 2017 figures is €1000 but currently if a merger took place, we would be €738!

The League Table of annual budgets for counties shows how we lag in 4th place with a €104 million allocation as opposed to the kingpins of Tipperary €135m, Mayo €125m, Kerry €124m, based on 2016 figures.

The Expert group met with the politicians in mid-January and conceded that no cost benefit analysis had been done and accepted that there would be no administrative savings as there were "significant revenue funding and staff deficiencies current to both".

They are now to complete a report for the Cabinet by the end of March on the Funding Issues involved and the Government will push through a Dail Vote again on the merger in May.

Many Deputies and Councillors have called for a greater role, rating and oversight powers be given to the Municipal Districts if a super authority is to be created to protect the interests of the Clifdens, Ballinasloes, Tuams, Portumnas, Gorts and Loughreas against the hoovering of resources, money and investment of a city that will increase its population by 40,000 in 20 years!

Former Ballinasloe Mayor Johnny Walsh has been to forefront of a campaign with his Labour colleagues that has the support of a lot of TDs to reconstitute Town Councils.

AUGHRIM'S UNIQUE CHRISTMAS TREE

BY KEN KELLY

The great community spirit in the historical village of Aughrim was evident with the erection of a very unique Christmas Tree in the local Heritage Park over the festive season. The 20-ft. high spiral tree was designed and constructed by local craftsman Shane Martin and was the centre of attraction for visitors from near and far.

The oriental like tree was made from 230 special planks, which were supplied by Aughrim Sawmills and illuminated with 750 lights, with a huge star on top, by Shane Martin. And for the switching on ceremony, piper Niall Kelly entertained the large crowd, after the Aughrim Choir had gathered around the open-air crib with a fine rendering of Xmas carols.

Back in 2013 local woman Helen Mannion decided her village should be lit-up for the Xmas and she bought solar lights which were erected on the trees in the centre of the village. The following year she was joined by John Burke and Shane Martin who organised fund-raising events to buy extra lights and have an outdoor crib built.

With the help of many sponsors, the recent festive season saw Aughrim illuminated with over 7,500 Xmas lights and a most unusual Xmas Tree. When asked what was in store for Xmas 2019, all Helen and Shane would say was "It will be a very special surprise."



Shane Martin in front of the Xmas Tree he built and also the outdoor crib which he made two years ago.



RACHEL'S XMAS CONCERT RAISES €6,500

Local Soprano, Rachel Goode, held a Christmas themed Concert in St. Michael's Church recently. The concert, titled 'The Magic of Christmas', was free of charge, and all donations and proceeds went towards East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support Centre.

Rachel was accompanied by local organist Marie Power, as well as tenor Tom Smith, baritone Conor O'Meara and bass baritone Kevin Neville. Not only that, but the Ballinasloe Town Band and Ard Scoil Mhuire Choir also lent their musical talents to the proceedings.

Rachel, who hails from Birchgrove, is no stranger to performing in

St. Michael's, but this Christmas concert marked her first time also producing such an event. Rachel and her event managed to raise €6,500 from the event, all in aid of East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support Centre.



Rachel Goode presenting a cheque for €6,500 raised at her Concert in St. Michael's Church to Edith Ward & Jacqueline Daly from EGM Cancer Support, Brackernagh.



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TOWN SET TO BE FOCAL POINT OF NEW WALKWAY AND CYCLEWAY

Ballinasloe is set to be at the focal point for recreational tourism in Ireland, as over €200,000 has been allocated for the development of the new greenway between Athlone and Galway City.

This money has been allocated under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme which will see the completion of the greenway cycling route that links Connemara, in County Galway, to the outer docklands in Dublin City.

According to Denis Naughten TD, the route is nearing the closing stages of finalisation. "Working with local landowners to get agreement and consent to agree a route that will bring cyclists right from the docklands, to Galway City and on out to Connemara is the next step in this initiative" stated Denis. He also told of how this cross-country cycling path will be "crucially important in bringing tourists to this part of the country, and promoting Ireland's 'Hidden Heartlands'."

Another step to promoting the midland areas is the development of the walkway which spans from the Beara Peninsula in West Cork, up to Blacklion on the Cavan/Fermanagh border. This walkway, dubbed as Ireland's answer to the Camino de Santiago, will see budding walkers be able to walk directly from the Beara Peninsula, right up the country through the Hymany Way, which is way marked from Meelick to the Aughrim Battlefield - on through the Suck Valleyway and onto Blacklion.

The Beara-Breifne Way follows the 14-day march of the last great Irish Chieftain, Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare, following the siege of his castle at Dunboy. On New Year's Eve in 1602, with 1,000 soldiers, men, women and children, O'Sullivan fled from the Beara Peninsula to escape the forces of Queen Elizabeth I.

The Chieftain had the responsibility to get his people to a safe place in Co. Leitrim, as it was their only hope for survival. After the 14 days, only 35 people arrived safely, with many having been killed, fallen ill or leaving to join other villages.

The development of the Beara-Breifne Way trail is the largest community-led project in Ireland to date. Many community groups and committees along the trail route have joined forces to create

the trail based on the epic journey of Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare, taking in many sites of historical interest as well as landscapes of natural beauty.

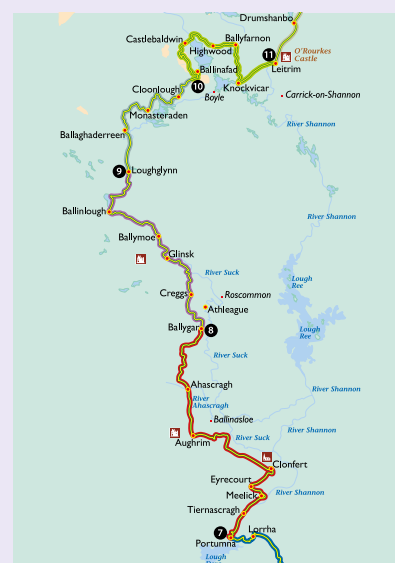
To date the trail has cost over €3-million to develop and more funding has been made available for the completion and further development of the trail. Stage 8, Suck Valley Way is finalising their wheelchair route.

Once completed, there are plans to link the northern side of the Beara Breifne Way with the Ulster Way, which will see the walk extended. Travelling from West Cork, walkers can travel up along the walk, through Ballinasloe, on up to the Glens of Antrim.

Minister Naughten also added: "These projects are all part of a bigger jigsaw of developing a range of tourism activities throughout the Heartlands region of Ireland to encourage tourists to visit and stay in our local towns and villages."

With Ballinasloe being at the near-centrepoint of both the greenway, as well as the planned walkway, it is hoped that business in and around the area will grow, increasing the number of activity and culturally curious tourists.

- 1 → 2 Beara Way
- 2 → 3 Sli Gaeltacht Mhuscraí
- 3 → 4 Duhalloo Area
- 4 → 5 Ballyhoura Way
- 5 → 6 Multeen Way
- 6 → 7 Ormonde Way (to be developed in 2012)
- 7 → 8 Hymany Way
- 8 → 9 Suck Valley Way
- 9 → 10 Lung Way (to be developed in 2012)
- 10 → 11 Miners Way & Historical Trail
- 11 → 12 Leitrim Way
- 12 → 13 Cavan Way



BY DONOGH MOORE



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ARDSCOIL MHUIRE SPIKEBALL TEAM

ALL-IRELAND FINALISTS



The first and second year students competed in the All-Ireland semi-finals of their Spikeball competition in the school recently. A total of twelve teams from eight schools attended the tournament. The second year team won their games, 3-0, against St Brigid's Killarney and Sacred Heart Westport. The girls will now compete in the All-Ireland Final in Kilkenny.

Ms. Hackett and Ms. O'Brien recently brought the school's Transition Year students to the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre, Dublin to see a production of Victor Hugo's 'Les Miserables'. The students thoroughly enjoyed seeing the production, and for many of them it was their first time seeing a professional show. However, the debate still rages as to whether the students' production was as good, if not better!



TY group outside the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre, Dublin with their teachers Ms O'Brien and Ms Hackett to see a production of Les Miserables.

ALL-IRELAND SCHOLARSHIP AWARD



Brian Burke (Garbally Leaving Cert 2018 Student) receiving the All-Ireland Scholarship Award from sponsor JP McManus at an award ceremony in Limerick recently. Brian is studying Engineering in Trinity College.



ARD SCOIL MHUIRE'S
ALL-IRELAND
SPIKEBALL FINALISTS

Back row l-r:
Ms Usher,
Emma Mitchell,
Caoimhe Ni Thuairisg,
Emily Hanlon.

Front row l-r:
Emily Riddell,
Caitlin Malone,
Claire Whyte.

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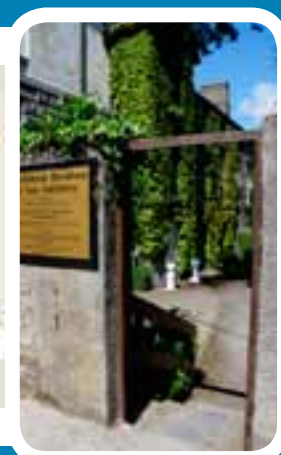
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The children of The Glebe N.S., Aughrim enjoyed presenting a wonderful performance of their Nativity Play, *A Midwife Crisis* on December 14th.



Frances Rose, Josh Sharpe and Rebecca Newton all receiving their 2018 Credit Union Art Awards.



Pupils from Scoil an Chroí Naofa, Ballinasloe pictured with their beautifully wrapped shoeboxes in aid of the Team Hope annual Christmas Shoebox appeal. The school sent out over 80 shoeboxes to Africa and Easter Europe before Christmas.

NEW CLASSROOM OPENED AT SCOIL MHUIRE GAN SMAL



Creagh NS



The plaque for the room dedicated to the late Fr. Dan O'Donovan

The extension, at Creagh N.S., is dedicated to the memory of Fr. Dan O'Donovan. It was officially opened by Bishop John Kirby in a special ceremony in late November.

Members of Fr. Dan's Family attended along with a number of other invited guests. At the ceremony the Board of Management expressed its thanks to the building unit in the DES, the design team, Dolan and Associates and the builders T. Murray and Sons.

Chairman of the Board of Management, Mr. Frank Gallagher, also acknowledged the trojan work of the school caretaker, Joe Murphy throughout the building project.



Some Creagh NS pupils and Senator Maura Hopkins at the opening of Ballinasloe Social Services' new Dining Room



Creagh NS students at the Ballinasloe Social Services new prayer room opening

BUSY FIRST TERM AT NEWTOWN NS.

The school participated in a lot of local events, which included sporting, musical and art competitions.

The school raised money for various charities, had some farm animals and Santa come to visit. The students completed some wonderful projects, fantastic artwork and displays and put on great Christmas plays.

They also started work on their garden and had fun planting seeds. Newtown NS really is a very busy school and most importantly the pupils all have fun learning and doing.



Some of the Credit Union Art Competition prize winners



The school's girl's cross-country team



Newtown NS' football team who competed in the Sean Meade tournament, organised by Creagh NS.

OUT AND ABOUT IN BALLINASLOE



Attending the Nollaig na mBan celebrations in Gullanes Hotel on January 6th 2019 are Agnes Hurley, Helen O'Connell and Eilis Treacy. The Nollaig na mBan festivities raise funds for Kilconnell native Sr. Annette Farrell and the Holy Union Sisters in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Sr. Annette has worked in Tanzania for the last 35 years. Agnes, Helen and Eilis each volunteered to work with her for a number of weeks during 2018. All funds raised at the Nollaig na mBan event go directly to supporting the work of the Holy Union sisters in areas of educational disadvantage in Dar es Salaam.



Denis Naughten TD - shows his support for advancing the Cycle Greenway from Athlone to Balliasloe at the PULSE launch in the Library recently.



Kathleen Croffey & Anna Victoria Mulcahy, representing Ballinasloe Fair & Festival, presenting a cheque for €1,800 to Carol Nott Maloney from the Audrey Morgan Fundraiser committee.



Ballinasloe GAA presents a cheque for €2000 from ticket sales of the Oskars to East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support. Photo shows Mark Ward - GAA Treasurer, Paul Madden - incoming GAA chairperson, Mossey Concannon - EGM Cancer Support, Gerry Seale - GAA Secretary and Seamus Duffy - outgoing GAA Chairperson.

Fish & Chips Evening For Community Hearts Returns



A great gathering of neighbours in Society Street outside Kariba's Restaurant to launch the Fish & Chips evening to support charities in the area by Community Hearts. This event will support one of the neighbours, Jackie Dolan, on her "Road to Recovery." The event will take place on Friday, March 8. To reserve your seat call Kariba's Restaurant at (090) 964 4830.

Left to Right: Michael McCullagh, Marian Cavanagh, Brenda Mongan, Deirdre Hardiman, Shauna Ward, Ita Naughton, John Ward (Kariba's), Maureen Cahalan (Sec. Community Hearts), Marina Downey, Katie McNally, Val Colleran, Aisling Delaney and Philip McGorisk.

OUT AND ABOUT IN BALLINASLOE



L to R: Niamh Forde (Taughmaconnell) Coordinator of the Tesco Staff DeFib Campaign, Frances McCormack, (Store Manager) and Darren Nolan (Staff Sports and Social Committee) Tesco, pictured with the new life saving equipment.

Nearly €2,000 was raised by the 110 employees of the Tesco Store in the Dunlo Shopping Centre before Christmas and this was topped up by their Employers to install a store Defibrillator and train some 12 staff in its use.



Marking a presentation on behalf of all the members to outgoing Ballinasloe GAA Club Chair Seamus Duffy, stepping down after 5 years at the helm were Gerry Seale Secretary and Mark Ward Treasurer.

Lighting up the Town at Christmas



At a gathering on 13th January 2019, St Michael's Folk Choir Ballinasloe presented a cheque in the amount of € 4,250 to Ballinasloe Care and Repair and a cheque in the amount €4,250 to Cosain Galway. The money was collected at their annual Carol Singing on Christmas Eve in the town. The Choir wishes to thank everyone who helped and contributed.

FEBRUARY EVENTS GUIDE

Friday 1st		
B'sloe Country Market	B'sloe Town Hall	9.30-1.30pm
Kids Friday Fun	B'sloe Library	3.30-4.30pm
Pop Up Steak House	Downey's Bar	6-9.00pm
Matchmaker	B'sloe Town Hall	8pm
Find The Joker	An Tain	9-11pm
2nd Annual Dancing	Shearwater Hotel	9.30pm
Toxic Twins	Brewery Lane	10pm
Small Deal	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Ken Solo	Auld Sod	10pm
Trad Session	Dunlo Tavern	10pm

Saturday 2nd		
Bingo	Kilconnel Town Hall	8pm
2nd Annual Dancing	Shearwater Hotel	9.30pm
Joe Glynn	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
The Rutgers	Killeens S'bridge	10pm
Lets Dance	Brewery Lane	10pm
DJ John Finnerty	Downeys Bar	10pm
Wax night	An Tain	10pm
Live Music	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Laker	Auld Sod	10pm

Sunday 3rd		
Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm
Live Music	An Tain	7pm
Live Music	Brewery Lane	8pm
Dave Mills	Auld Sod	9.30pm
2nd Annual Dancing	Shearwater Hotel	9.30pm
Sessions front bar	Valeries Of Aughrim	10:00 PM

Monday 4th		
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8.30pm

Tuesday 5th		
Lego Club	B'sloe Library	4.30-5.15pm
Scoil Mhuire Exhibition	Church Gallery	Day Event
GROW Meeting	B'sloe Library	6-8pm
GAA Bingo	Emerald B'room	8pm
Social Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	9.00pm

Wednesday 6th		
Knitting & Crochet Grp	B'sloe Library	11-1pm
Active Retirement AGM	Gullanes Hotel	3pm
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30-7.30pm
Music - Bobby & Frank	An Tain	9.30 pm

Thursday 7th		
Live Acoustic Session	Brewery Lane	10pm
Steve Reilly	Downey's Bar	10pm

Friday 8th		
B'sloe Country Market	B'sloe Town Hall	9.30-1.30pm
Kids Friday Fun	B'sloe Library	3.30-4.30pm
Pop Up Steak House	Downey's Bar	6-9.00pm
Find The Joker	An Tain	9-11pm
Music with Ken	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
3 Legged Dog	Brewery Lane	10pm
Pub Fiction	Auld Sod	10pm
Steven Reilly	Dunlo Tavern	10pm

Saturday 9th		
Bingo	Kilconnel Town Hall	8pm
Red O' Neil	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Anchor Man	Brewery Lane	10pm
DJ DAVE	Downey's Bar	10pm
Eric Nugent	Killeens S'bridge	10pm
DJ Jeff Collins	An Tain	10pm
Rodneys Glory	Valerie's of Aughrim	10pm
Hickory Wind	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Dusty Bloom	Auld Sod	10pm

Sunday 10th		
J.Hynes & The Crusaders	Shearwater Hotel	5-8pm
Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm
Live Music	An Tain	7pm
Robie & Brian	Brewery Lane	8pm
Gerry Guthrie	Shearwater Hotel	9.30pm
Sessions front bar	Valeries Of Aughrim	10:00 PM
Live Music	Auld Sod	10pm

Monday 11th		
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8.30pm
Lee Lynch Benefit Night	Gullanes Hotel	7.30pm

Tuesday 12th		
Lego Club	B'sloe Library	4.30-5.15pm
ConTempo Lunch Concert	Church Gallery	1-2pm
GROW Meeting	B'sloe Library	6-8pm
GAA Bingo	Emerald B'room	8pm
Social Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	9.00pm

Wednesday 13th		
Cuidiu Breastfeeding Grp	B'sloe Library	9.45-11.45am
Knitting & Crochet Grp	B'sloe Library	11-1pm
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30-7.30pm
Music - Bobby & Frank	An Tain	9.30 pm

Thursday 14th		
Live Acoustic Session	Brewery Lane	10pm
St. Valentines Steak Hse	Downey's Bar	6-9pm
Live Music	Downey's Bar	10pm
Singers Circle	Dunlo Tavern	9.30pm

Friday 15th		
B'sloe Country Market	B'sloe Town Hall	9.30-1.30pm
Kids Friday Fun	B'sloe Library	3.30-4.30pm
Adrian Rabbit	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Pop Up Steak House	Downey's Bar	6-9.00pm
Find The Joker	An Tain	9-11pm
John Finnerty	Downey's Bar	10pm
The 2 Q's	Brewery Lane	10pm
Trad Session	Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Small Idea's	Auld Sod	10pm

Saturday 16th		
Bingo	Kilconnel Town Hall	8pm
Yng Farmer & Farmerettes	The Pillar House	9pm
Small Deal	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Live Music	Brewery Lane	10pm
DJ DAVE	Downey's Bar	10pm
Last man standing	Killeens S'bridge	10pm
Cold Poter	An Tain	10pm
The Live Wires	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Nightowls	Auld Sod	10pm

Sunday 17th		
Showbud	Shearwater Hotel	5-8pm
Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm
Live Music	An Tain	7pm
The Hoppy Bar Stars	Brewery Lane	8pm
Liam's Country Rd Show	Auld Sod	9.30pm
Jimmy Buckley	Shearwater Hotel	9.30pm
Sessions front bar	Valeries of Aughrim	10:00 PM

Monday 18th		
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8.30pm

Tuesday 19th		
Lego Club	B'sloe Library	4.30-5.15pm
GROW Meeting	B'sloe Library	6-8pm
GAA Bingo	Emerald B'room	8pm
Social Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	9.00pm

Wednesday 20th		
Knitting & Crochet Grp	B'sloe Library	11-1pm
Music - Bobby & Frank	An Tain	9.30 pm
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30-7.30pm

Thursday 21st		
Live acoustic session	Brewery Lane	10pm
John Molloy Live	Downey's Bar	10pm

Friday 22nd		
B'sloe Country Market	B'sloe Town Hall	9.30-1.30pm
Kids Friday Fun	B'sloe Library	3.30-4.30pm
B.Power & K.Herm Connolly	Town Hall	8pm
Dollar Daly	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Pop Up Steak House	Downey's Bar	6-9.00pm
Find The Joker	An Tain	9-11pm
Live Music	Brewery Lane	10pm
Ken Solo	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
David Mills	Auld Sod	10pm

Saturday 23rd		
Bingo	Kilconnel Town Hall	8pm
Happy Bar Stars	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Red Tape	Brewery Lane	10pm
Dj Crazy Chris	Downey's Bar	10pm
Maggie D	Killeens S'bridge	10pm
Luke Warm James	An Tain	10pm
Paul Burns	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Pacifica	Auld Sod	10pm

Sunday 24th		
P. McKenna & Glenshane	Shearwater Hotel	5-8pm
Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm
Live Music	An Tain	7pm
Brego	Brewery Lane	8pm
Ken Solo	Auld Sod	9.30pm
J. Glenn & The Mainliners	Shearwater Hotel	9.30pm
Sessions front bar	Valeries of Aughrim	10:00 PM

Monday 25th		
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8.30pm
Tuesday 26th		
Lego Club	B'sloe Library	4.30-5.15pm
GROW Meeting	B'sloe Library	6-8pm
Fiona Moore Art Exhibit	Church Gallery	6pm
GAA Bingo	Emerald B'room	8pm
Social Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	9.00pm

Wednesday 27th		
Cuidiu Breastfeeding Grp	B'sloe Library	9.45-11.45am
Knitting & Crochet Grp	B'sloe Library	11-1pm
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30-7.30pm
Music - Bobby & Frank	An Tain	9.30 pm

Thursday 28th		
Live Acoustic Session	Brewery Lane	10pm

MARCH EVENTS GUIDE

Friday 1st		
B'sloe Country Market	B'sloe Town Hall	9.30-1.30pm
Kids Friday Fun	B'sloe Library	3.30-4.30pm
Niall Rutledge	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Pop Up Steak House	Downey's Bar	6-9.00pm
Find The Joker	An Tain	9-11pm
Toxic twins	Brewery Lane	10pm
Trad Session	Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Saturday 2nd		
Bingo	Kilconnel Town Hall	8pm
Billy Garvin	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Bojangle	Killeens S'bridge	10pm
DJ Upstairs	An Tain	10pm
Live Music	Brewery Lane	10pm
DJ John Finnerty	Downey's Bar	10pm
Take 2	Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Laker	Auld Sod	10pm
Sunday 3rd		
Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm
Live Music	Brewery Lane	8pm
Live Music	An Tain	7pm
Sessions front bar	Valeries Of Aughrim	10:00 p.m.
Shane Moore	Auld Sod	9.30pm
Monday 4th		
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8.30pm
Tuesday 5th		
Lego Club	B'sloe Library	4.30-5.15pm
GROW Meeting	B'sloe Library	6-8pm
GAA Bingo	Emerald B'room	8pm
Social Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	9.00pm
Wednesday 6th		
Knitting & Crochet Grp	B'sloe Library	11-1pm
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30-7.30pm
Music - Bobby & Frank	An Tain	9.30 pm
Thursday 7th		
Quiz Meanscoile	Gullanes Hotel	7pm
Live acoustic session	Brewery Lane	10pm
LIVE MUSIC	Downey's Bar	10pm
Friday 8th		
B'sloe Country Market	B'sloe Town Hall	9.30-1.30pm
Kids Friday Fun	B'sloe Library	3.30-4.30pm
POP UP STEAK HOIUSE	Downey's Bar	6-9pm
Find The Joker	An Tain	9-11pm
Adrain Rabbit	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
The 2 Q's	Brewery Lane	10pm
Pub Fiction	Auld Sod	10pm
Live Music	Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Saturday 9th		
Bingo	Kilconnel Town Hall	8pm
Small Deal	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Let's dance	Brewery Lane	10pm
DJ John Finnerty	Downey's Bar	10pm
Dai Thai	Killeens S'bridge	10pm
Pink Shirt	An Tain	10pm
Paul Watchorn	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Nightowls	Auld Sod	10pm
Sunday 10th		
Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm
Live Music	An Tain	7pm
Live music	Brewery Lane	8pm
Sessions front bar	Valeries Of Aughrim	10:00 p.m.
David Mills	Auld Sod	9.30pm
Monday 11th		
Quiz do Bhunscoileanna	Gullanes Hotel	7pm
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8.30pm

Tuesday 12th		
Lego Club	B'sloe Library	4.30-5.15pm
GROW Meeting	B'sloe Library	6-8pm
GAA Bingo	Emerald B'room	8pm
Social Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	9.00pm
Wednesday 13th		
Cuidiu Breastfeeding Grp	B'sloe Library	9.45-11.45am
Knitting & Crochet Grp	B'sloe Library	11-1pm
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30-7.30pm
Music - Bobby & Frank	An Tain	9.30 pm
Thursday 14th		
Singers Circle	Dunlo Tavern	9.30pm
Live acoustic session	Brewery Lane	10pm
Steve Reilly Live	Downey's Bar	10pm
Friday 15th		
B'sloe Country Market	B'sloe Town Hall	9.30-1.30pm
Kids Friday Fun	B'sloe Library	3.30-4.30pm
Pop UP Steak House	Downey's Bar	6-9pm
Find The Joker	An Tain	9-11pm
Dollar Daly	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Live music	Brewery Lane	10pm
Trad Session	Dunlo Tavern	10pm
Saturday 16th		
Bingo	Kilconnel Town Hall	8pm
Dave Mills	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Live music	Brewery Lane	10pm
DJ Dave	Downey's Bar	10pm
Bumble bee honey	Killeens S'ridge	10pm
16 Paddy's Day warm up	An Tain	10pm
Jiggers of Erin	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Off The Wall	Auld Sod	10pm
Sunday 17th		
Aifreann	S. Mhichil	9.15am
St. Patricks Parade	Fair Green Asseemby	1.30 pm
Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm
Live Music	An Tain	7pm
Live music	Brewery Lane	8pm
Booths in	Killeens S'bridge	10pm
Live music	Downey's Bar	10pm
Sessions front bar	Valeries of Aughrim	10:00 p.m.
Pacifica	Auld Sod	10pm
Live Wires	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Monday 18th		
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8.30pm
Tuesday 19th		
Lego Club	B'sloe Library	4.30-5.15pm
GROW Meeting	B'sloe Library	6-8pm
GAA Bingo	Emerald B'room	8pm
Sister Act (Musical Soc)	B'sloe Town Hall	8pm
Social Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	9.00pm
Wednesday 20th		
Knitting & Crochet Grp	B'sloe Library	11-1pm
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30-7.30pm
Sister Act (Musical Soc)	B'sloe Town Hall	8pm
Music - Bobby & Frank	An Tain	9.30 pm
Thursday 21st		
Sister Act (Musical Soc)	B'sloe Town Hall	8pm
Live acoustic session	Brewery Lane	10pm
LIVE MUSIC	Downey's Bar	10pm

Friday 22nd		
B'sloe Country Market	B'sloe Town Hall	9.30-1.30pm
Kids Friday Fun	B'sloe Library	3.30-4.30pm
Pop Up Steak House	Downey's Bar	6-9pm
Sister Act (Musical Soc)	B'sloe Town Hall	8pm
Find The Joker	An Tain	9-11pm
Happy Bar Stars	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Patrick Feeney (Jive)	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
3 Legged Dog	Brewery Lane	10pm
Small Idea's	Auld Sod	10pm
Steve Reilly	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Saturday 23rd		
R. Carty & M. Barber Art	Church Gallery	2pm
Bingo	Kilconnel Town Hall	8pm
Sister Act (Musical Soc)	B'sloe Town Hall	8pm
Celtic Swing	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Derek Ryan (Jive)	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Live music	Brewery Lane	10pm
DJ	Downey's Bar	10pm
Small Deal	Killeens S'bridge	10pm
Cold Porter	An Tain	10pm
Live Music	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Dusty Bloom	Auld Sod	10pm
Sunday 24th		
Trad Session	The Pillar House	6pm
Live Music	An Tain	7pm
Robbie & Brian	Brewery Lane	8pm
Jimmy Buckley (Jive Comp)	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Sessions front bar	Valeries Of Aughrim	10:00 p.m.
Liam's Country Rd Show	Auld Sod	9.30pm
Monday 25th		
Line Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	8.30pm
Tuesday 26th		
Lego Club	B'sloe Library	4.30-5.15pm
GROW Meeting	B'sloe Library	6-8pm
GAA Bingo	Emerald B'room	8pm
Social Dancing	Gullanes Hotel	9.00pm
Wednesday 27th		
Cuidiu Breastfeeding Grp	B'sloe Library	9.45-11.45am
Knitting & Crochet Grp	B'sloe Library	11-1pm
Unislim	Gullanes Hotel	5.30-7.30pm
Music - Bobby & Frank	An Tain	9.30 pm
Thursday 28th		
Live acoustic session	Brewery Lane	10pm
Live Music	Downey's Bar	10pm
Friday 29th		
B'sloe Country Market	B'sloe Town Hall	9.30-1.30pm
Kids Friday Fun	B'sloe Library	3.30-4.30pm
Pop Up Steak House	Downey's Bar	6-9pm
Find The Joker	An Tain	9-11pm
Small Deal	Shearwater Hotel	10pm
Live music	Brewery Lane	10pm
Trad Session	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Saturday 30th		
Bingo	Kilconnel Town Hall	8pm
Red Tape	Brewery Lane	10pm
DJ	Downey's Bar	10pm
Maggie's drawers	Killeens S'bridge	10pm
Out The Gap	An Tain	10pm
Boithrin	Dunlo Tavern	10.30pm
Treblemakers	Auld Sod	10pm
Sunday 31st		
Live Music	An Tain	7pm
Brego	Brewery Lane	8pm
Sessions front bar	Valeries Of Aughrim	10:00 p.m.
Ken Solo	Auld Sod	9.30pm

To advertise your events here contact: ballinasloelife@hotmail.com or Call **090 964 5831** by March 13th.

CELEBRATIONS AND EVENTS



Iggy Colohan (right) winner of the Ballinasloe Golf Club 2018 "Senior Golfer of the Year Trophy" presented by Ollie Dooley (Seniors Captain).



William Duthie and Eugene Shields, Ballinasloe Bowls Club, overall winners of the Western Bowls Association "Doubles Championship Cup".



Ballinasloe Singers Circle

(L-R) The organisers Thomas Corcoran, Johnny Johnston, and Damien Clarke (The Dunlo Tavern).



Ballinasloe store extended opening hours

Monday to Saturdays
9am - 6pm
(open lunchtime)


Haven
Pharmacy

Haven Pharmacy Hollis, 7A Marina Point, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway | Phone: 090-9645676

CREDIT UNION LAUNCHES NEW LOAN PRODUCT

The reasons for taking out a personal loan are as varied as life is. From car purchases, to weddings, to home improvements, to wanting that little bit extra for a well-deserved holiday or needing a quick bail-out to cope with those unexpected events life throws you - the list is endless.

People can often find personal loans confusing and may struggle to choose the right one.

Managing your personal finances is not always a simple task and for some it can be very stressful trying to keep control of your credit card (s), loans and other credit agreements that you may have in place. Missed payments tend to create a lot of unnecessary stress and anxiety.

Ballinasloe Credit Union recently launched a new lending product called consolidate. As the name suggest this new low-cost loan aims to provide individuals with the opportunity to no longer have several monthly repayments to make – you just have one loan with one payment each



In addition to their sponsorship of the OsKaRs, Ballinasloe Credit Union offered to make a donation to a charity chosen by the Best Film winners, Calendar Girls. Shane McNeill, Credit Union Manager, presented 2 cheques for 500 Euro each to the Oncology and Paediatric Units of the hospital. Pictures show Shane presenting the cheques to James Keane, General Manager and Marita Fogarty, Director of Nursing, Portiuncula Hospital along with cast members from Calendar Girls, Margaret Connaughton, Carmel Dillon, Therese Dillon, Geraldine Dolan, Terri Dolan Farrell, Dymphna Headd, Caroline Kerr, Caroline Layng, Martina Reynolds and Stephen Kerr. Absent from photograph were cast members, Diane Dolan, Miriam Murphy and Avril Noone.

month to cover your debts. Consolidating all your debts into one easy repayment is much easier to manage and more importantly it will reduce the overall interest you pay on loans.

Commenting on their personal Loan, Acting CEO of BCU Shane McNeill said "At Ballinasloe Credit Union, we understand how many different life events any one person can experience, and how each event calls for a different approach. Therefore

we look at things differently too. So, if people are experiencing higher than normal interest rates, and you want to find ways to control and pay off these debts in a much simpler manner then consolidating their debt is an option for you. There is no confusion or worry with a Consolidate loan. The interest rate is just 7.75% APR* with fair and transparent terms and conditions.

At Ballinasloe Credit Union, we are always available with financial help and guidance, no matter what the reason might be. Whether our members are celebrating a high point in their life or just trying to cope with those daily bills, we are always there to assist them. So why not seize the day and get in contact with us to see how we can be of help to you."

Finance is available up to €30,000 at 7.5% apr over 5 years, For more information contact Ballinasloe Credit Union at 0909643179 or on our website www.ballinasloecreditunion.ie



Car Draw Winner

Teresa Kilmartin,
Kilmartins Garage,
Ann Marie O'Donnell &
Geraldine Ward.

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'WHOSE SHOES' MATERNITY

The Maternity Unit at Portiuncula University Hospital is holding an information sharing event for staff and former and current patients of the unit on March 1 next.

'Whose Shoes' is a maternity experience workshop that brings together women (and their partners, should they wish) and maternity staff to share experiences and learning.

Deirdre Naughton, Midwifery Practice Development Coordinator at Portiuncula University Hospital said: "We want to facilitate the opportunity for the women who use our service here in PUH and the staff that provide it to come together in an informal and relaxed way and talk about their experiences. The



Maternity Unit staff at Portiuncula University Hospital are inviting former and current patients to an information sharing event in Ballinasloe on Friday 01 March. From left: Anne Murray, Clinical Midwife Specialist in Neonatal Resuscitation; Deirdre Naughton, Midwifery Practice Development Coordinator; Mary Burke, Clinical Midwife Manager 3; and Anne Regan, Assistant Director of Midwifery.

BY DONOGH MOORE

Whose Shoes format has worked very effectively in other maternity services both in Ireland and the UK and provides really important feedback to maternity service providers on how they can better understand and improve the service they provide women and families.

"We are holding this event in Ballinasloe on Friday March 1 and we would be delighted if women who attended the unit here in PUH, or are currently attending it would come along.

We hope the ideas generated at this workshop will help us plan and further improve the service we provide".

The event will take place on Friday 1st March, from 9:30am to 12:30pm at the Dunloe Suite, in the Shearwater Hotel. To register for the event, please email WSportiuncula@hse.ie or telephone (090) 962 5142.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE TO GO AHEAD ON ALTERED ROUTE

Preparations are now underway for this year's St. Patrick's Day Parade. Chairperson of the parade committee, Johnny Walsh, stated that it is extremely important and appropriate that the town celebrates this national feast day – on Sunday the 17th of March.

The annual celebration which tends to gather in the Fair Green at lunchtime has proved to be a welcome and significant boost to the various businesses in the locality every year.

The Committee are currently reconsidering this year's parade route however, as the Town Enhancement disruptions on Society Street have rendered the traditional route impassable.

Secretary Carmel Greally, advised that the parade advertising materials, such as hoardings, posters and entry forms will be circulated throughout the town over the coming weeks.

In the meantime, should any individual or group require details on the parade, they can contact Johnny Walsh on (087) 997 3008, or Carmel on (087) 620 7477.

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TOM PURCELL CATALOGUES A SPORTING LIFE

Tom Purcell of Kilgarve is a man who lives and breathes sport. The Barefield, Co. Clare native was an integral part of the rugby club in Graigueawoneen and played an equally important role in the broader Connacht region, whilst being a dab hand in hurling, tennis and indeed golf!

In 1959, Tom played minor hurling for Clare (his first love) and also for his local club Doora-Barefield, winning three minor Club Championships and one Juvenile. In the same year, Tom first played Senior Hurling for Galway in a challenge match v Tipperary, operating at corner forward at the age of 17.

In 1960, Tom went on to play minor hurling for Galway in the Munster Championship. Galway beat Limerick in the Munster semi-final and lost to Tipperary in the final by four points. The following year, he went back to play senior hurling for Clare, losing to Galway on one occasion. Tom travelled down to Clare for the game with Sean Meade, a Galway footballer. Tom was a sub as he hadn't trained with the team, but was brought on early in the game to play at corner forward where he was marked by Sean!

Three years later, Tom played senior hurling for Galway. In a Championship game between Ballinasloe and Carnmore, Tom scored 3 goals and 13 points, then an individual scoring record in the Galway County Championship.

He was suspended for 6 months by the GAA for playing rugby for Ballinasloe, missing the season. Not long after, Tom was again suspended by the GAA for playing rugby and this time was banned for 2 years. He was allowed back to play a year later. Such were the



times.

Tom recalls one of the few times he swapped the hurley for a hockey stick: "During the early 70s, a friend of mine, Larry Swan, invited me to play on the Galway City Hockey Team. During the first game, still trying to navigate the stick, I arrived in the penalty area. As the ball presented itself to me, I shot and somehow managed to break the crossbar of the goal! It took a long time for them to replace the goal, quite a bit

less to replace me, as I was substituted!" he chuckles.

He came to town after accepting a job in Hogan's Menswear in Society St, where he stayed for three years in 1960. "When I arrived in Ballinasloe I was surprised to discover a really thriving town, where people had leisure time and disposable income not like Clare at the time" he recalls.

He didn't just play hurling however, as he joined the rugby club in 1962. Playing at flanker/number 8, Tom quickly established himself as a quality player, and became club captain from 1967 to 1969. However, he was forced to retire in 1975 due to a knee injury.

He first met the late Kay Flynn in 1962, in the Emerald Ballroom. They married nine years later. They enjoyed rearing a family of three Darragh, Colin and Ria, as well as two grandchildren, Lauren and Torin in later years. He joined Beecham (later Pfizer) Animal Health as a Sales Representative and worked with them until his retirement in 2001.

As a coach, he won both the u20 Connacht Cup and u20 Connacht Leagues twice. Ballinasloe RFC also won 3 Under-18 Connacht Cups under his stewardship, leading the Connacht Branch to pass a motion to prevent players playing with a schools team to also play for a club, such was the success of Garbally players also playing with Ballinasloe. Those successes at underage level had an enduring effect at the Club, providing the backbone of the Senior Team that would go on to win the Connacht Senior Cup in 1992 – the first time they'd won the competition since 1950.

Tom was appointed as a selector for the Connacht Senior Rugby Team by the Connacht Branch in the mid- 1980s, a post he held for three seasons.

In 2003 he completed a Certificate in Irish History and Philosophy at NUIG, Galway, something he never had the opportunity to do before.

In retirement, Tom attends as many Clare hurling games as he can and also follows the Buccaneers Rugby Team, which he was involved in the formation of in 1994, with David Henshaw. Sean Brooks, a longstanding Clubman, swears that it was Tom that even came up with the name "Buccaneers." Looking at the modern game he believes "The effect of the professionalisation of Rugby on the clubs has been very detrimental in terms of profile, but when you look at the current success of our national team, it's very hard to argue with the system".

In recent years he became very involved with the Baireoiri na Gaillimhe GAA Society for former Galway Hurlers.

"I would encourage kids playing sport to play as many as you can until you decide which one is absolutely right for you. The opportunities today for talented young Athletes in Ireland are better than ever. If you have a talent for a certain sport there will be opportunity for you to learn and develop your skills."

BY COLM CROFFY



Eugene Murphy TD
Roscommon - Galway

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FIT TOWNS REWARDED AND LEGACY PROJECTS UP AND RUNNING BY DONOGH MOORE

Accessibility Ballinasloe and Fit Towns Ballinasloe were both rewarded for their hard work and community efforts at the National IPB Pride of Place awards held in Cork City Hall recently. The group were runners-up in the 'Community Wellbeing Initiative-Holistic' category. The judges were impressed by the evidence they saw of what can be achieved by a group of people dedicated to creating a better place to live in and life for all its residents and visitors. Those nominated joined with 800 community heroes from across the country at the awards which are operated in association with peace building charity Co-operation Ireland.

Some of the key projects Accessibility Ballinasloe have delivered to date include: installation of outdoor accessible double swing, picnic bench and hoist at Coral Leisure Centre, upgrade of paths and road markings through funding received from the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, visual menu project with Downey's Bar and Restaurant, Buddy Bench Programme for Scoil an Chroí Naofa.

They also continue to work with groups and businesses to further promote awareness around accessibility, and to highlight the positive changes taking place with the community. Together with the Speech and Language Unit in NUI Galway and Galway Sports Partnership, the group have provided training to sports



L-R: Ken Campbell, Teresa Coughlan, Deborah Brady Accessibility Ballinasloe Team, Dr. Christopher Moran Co-operation Ireland, Marion Ruane Fit Town & Accessibility Ballinasloe, Tom Dowling Chairperson Pride of Place, Alan Farrell A/Director of Services Galway County Council, Kieran Coyne Enterprise & Economic Development Galway County Council, Peter Sheridan Co-operation Ireland.



Front Row, L-R: Anthony Cawley, Daragh Flynn (our social inclusion officer) and Caroline Loughnane. Back Row L-R: Carol Pender, Mary Hazlett (Area Manager), Kevin Heffernan, Deborah Brady and James Murphy.

clubs and hospitality businesses. Keep an eye on Accessibility, Ballinasloe's Facebook page for details and updates regarding this year's Sports Ability Day.

The Fit Town Project has also had success in implementing their two legacy projects. The Outdoor Gym Equipment is now installed at the Dunlo Recreational Track and

will be launched in the coming weeks. The gym is accessible to persons with additional needs and includes a number of wheelchair friendly exercise stations.

Work is ongoing to develop a number of walking routes within the town. The group have been working with representatives from local running, walking and cycling groups and an Audit and Feasibility Study was completed last year. An application for funding was made under the Rural Regeneration Scheme, and the group are awaiting the outcome of this submission in order to progress the project to the next stage.

"Accessibility Ballinasloe and Ballinasloe Fit Town would like to extend a very sincere 'Thank You' to all the clubs, community groups, businesses and organisations for their continued support to make us an accessible, inclusive area where everyone can live an independent life regardless of age or disability. A special mention to the local Engineering team, Galway County Council and Galway Sports Partnership whose input and support has been invaluable" stated Chair Marian Ruane.

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PASSING OF MUCH LOVED MAIN ST. BUSINESSMAN

The New Year celebrations were overshadowed locally, as news trickled through of one of Main Street's prominent businessmen's sudden shock passing.

Martin Grenham was one of twins (brother Peter) born to parents Teresa and Joseph on 31st March 1950, who ran a prominent Bar, Grocery and Undertakers from their Main Street premises.

Martin spent many summers as a young child in his Aunt Margaret's farm in Castlepollard (including a long stay after he broke his leg chasing Peter around the kitchen table).

He attended St.Grellan's N.S. but was also known to hide behind Hill's sweetshop for an odd day instead. After his secondary education in "The Tech", he worked as manager in the Sheaf of Wheat, Coolock with his brother John. While he had dreamt of becoming a guard he changed his mind instead he returned to work in the family business. This proved to be a wise move as he soon met his beloved wife Mary in 1974. Two years later on the 15th of June 1976 they married in Athleague.

A year later Martin Junior arrived, coincidentally the same day Elvis Presley departed! Two years later, Tracy completed their happy family.

He worked tirelessly in Grenham's bar for years; always to be found



Martin Grenham and his late wife Mary

with a cloth in his hand cleaning. His hobbies included watching cowboy and true crime movies, listening to country and western and traditional Irish music.

His daily routine in later years included caring for his adored granddaughter Ava.

Many people have said they knew they were late for work when they saw Martin's car outside the school in the mornings. He was an invaluable help and companion to his nephew-in-law Niall.

His love and care for his wife Mary during her illness was his main priority, often sleeping in a chair beside her hospital bed. Her loss, broke Martin's heart and he would often visit her grave daily, if not more often. He revered their memories together and she would have been so

proud of how he cared for Ava and his new found housekeeping abilities!

He was a well know man around town, known for his generosity and usually had a witty comeback for most conversations. He was deeply loved by all that knew him. The family of the late Martin Grenham Snr. especially his son Martin, daughter Tracy and granddaughter Ava brothers John, Peter and Gerry and four sisters Mary, Patricia, Anne, Connie and mother Teresa, all express their heartfelt thanks to everyone who has offered support, expressed condolences and for all their kind words. They are deeply indebted to the paramedics, fire brigade and to the wonderful staff in ICU in Galway University Hospital.

BALLINASLOE SINGERS TO CELEBRATE 14TH ANNIVERSARY

Ballinasloe Singers Circle will host its 14th Anniversary in The Dunlo Tavern, Dunlo St. on Thursday March 14, from 9.30pm.

All singers and listeners from far and near are welcome.

The Circle was started in March 2005 by Thomas Corcoran and Johnny Johnston. It is held on the second Thursday of each month, from September to June. The organisers are delighted with the progress and the increasing popularity of the Singers Circle.

"We thank everyone, from far and near, who supported the Circle over the past fourteen years" states founder Johnny.

A further invitation has also been issued to all singers and storytellers in the surrounding area to come along. Admission is free, and finger food is served on the night. The next Circle is being held on Thursday February 14 (St. Valentine's night).

For more details contact Thomas on (086) 377 7532.



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BY MAUREEN CAHALAN

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Maureen's experience in working with diamonds is firmly understood by her customers, as the renowned Jeweller is quick to point out that it's how the diamond is worn on the finger that

reflects this unique beauty and brilliance.

In addition to her flourishing business of precious gems, Maureen is also one of Ireland's leading suppliers of trophies, medals and corporate gifts.

When Celine Dion won the Eurovision for Switzerland it was Maureen's hand-crafted piece that sparkled on stage with the winner.

Furthermore, the Ballinasloe woman is trained in Pearl Wearing, Stringing and Re-stringing of bracelets and necklaces, which can be clasped or magnetized for ease of wear. Having worked with one of Buckingham Palace's Pearl Experts Lady Margaret, Maureen's vast knowledge of these gems, coupled with her innate openness and ambition, allow the doors of opportunity to continue to open for her in this growing market.

Cahalan Jewellers, 35 minutes from Galway City on Ballinasloe's Main Street is home to Maureen Cahalan. For further information call Maureen on Tel: 087 678 7667. Find her on LinkedIn, Facebook or email maureen.cahalan@gmail.com



LATE CHRISTY RYAN



Retired Garda Christy Ryan, Beechlawn, Ballinasloe, who passed away was a native of Easkey, Co. Sligo. He joined the gardai in 1958 and came to Ballinasloe in 1974, having previously served in Cavan, Crossmolina and Kilconnell.

Christy's career was tragically affected after he was involved in a horrific road accident while on duty in Ballinasloe in 1980. Following several months in hospital, he returned to office duty in the Ballinasloe station before retiring. Earlier last year Christy was presented with the Liddy Medal, which is awarded to retired gardai who were injured in the line of duty.

A gifted craftsman and DIY enthusiast, Christy's funeral was attended by former garda colleagues from many districts. He is survived by his wife Dymrna, sons Sean, Ciaran and Rory; daughters Mairead, Anne, Sinead and Orla, as well as many other relatives and friends.

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TOWN BAND'S NEW HOME IN OLD PAROCHIAL HALL

The Ballinasloe Town Band has contracted to purchase the Parochial Hall in Ballinasloe. Santa came early to the Town Band - for on 23rd Dec 2018 the band was notified that the Church of Ireland had accepted the Bands' offer to purchase the Parochial Hall on Dunlo Hill Ballinasloe. The Hall will now become the home base for the Town Band and it will be rebranded as the *Town Band Hall*.

The *Town Band Hall* is an old nineteenth century building which requires refurbishment and upgrading. An independent engineers report tells us that the building itself is sound structurally – but that a chimney and the roof area around same require repairs. The Town Band will undertake the necessary repairs immediately, which are expected to be completed later this year. The costs of purchase and refurbishment are estimated at €120,000 - €180,000.

The Parochial Hall in the past was the recreational hall for many in the locality and many of the "over 50s" will remember the "hops" held there in the 70s and 80s. Many more will remember the Irish dancing classes held there over many years. It was the foremost recreational hall during the 20th century for the Ballinasloe community and not just exclusively for Church of Ireland use while it was also used by the Credit Union during its early life in the late 1960s.

Now the Ballinasloe Town Band, in taking possession of the hall, intends to renew it and make it available once again as a community facility. It will become the base facility for band practices and the



Rev John Godfrey (Church of Ireland)
Presents the keys to the Parochial Hall to Noel Madden Bandmaster

training centre for brass, woodwind and percussion.

But it requires the long-term commitment of individuals, businesses and supporters in general to maintain and develop the band in the years ahead. Part of this development includes the provision and the maintenance of band practice facilities and music instrument teaching. The Town Band will provide such facilities in the new Hall by renewing and upgrading the building.

Ballinasloe Town Band is an organisation dedicated to having a community based band in our town. Historically the Band is believed to be in existence since 1878. Tadhg Mac Loclainn's book "Inniu agus Inne" revealed that no less than two bands existed in the town during the past century alongside dance bands and ceili bands.

Since its' reformation in 2014 by a small group of wind players who are committed to providing a Town Band for Ballinasloe, the band members – all volunteers – have realised their dream. This core group now number 25, seniors and juniors alike, provide music for community events such as St. Patrick's Day, October

Darragh Leonard with his uncle JJ Smyth - Darragh is the fourth generation of the Smyth family to participate in the band. JJ's father Jimmy was the euphonium player with the Band in the 1960s and his father Willie was the side drummer.





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BY NOEL MADDEN



Brian Derrane and his daughter Lorna - Brian's dad Tommie was a member of the band in the 1950s / 1960s.



John Flynn and his daughter Sinead



Joe Duane (trombone) with his grandson on recorder.



The Reynolds family - all joined the band in 2018



Some members of the beginners class on 2019

Fair, Christmas Festivities and concerts and is available as required by local community organisations.

In Sept 2018 the Band initiated "beginner" music classes for anyone interested in playing a wind instrument and now has in excess of 50 students enrolled. This consists of 8 adults on various instruments, 27 new young instrumentalists playing flutes, clarinets, saxophones, trumpets, trombones and tubas and 20 students on recorders. This number of "beginners" ensures the sustainability of the band into the future. The juniors held their first concert at Christmas in the Shearwater Hotel. A feature of the new musicians is the number of siblings and indeed parent and child groupings and indeed families (see photos).

"As a community-based Town Band we aim to provide access to music education through participation in the Town Band for anyone in the locality with a musical talent. We will strive to harness the abilities of any person and seek to release their musical talent in a real and expressive way. The Town Band is committed to equality of opportunity to any person who wants to participate. We will supply the education and the musical instrument (brass, woodwind and percussion) to anyone who

wishes to learn how to play music. Together we work to provide a bigger and better band into the future" said a spokesperson.

In the near future the music making will continue uninterrupted - however the focus for the medium term is to renovate the *Town Band Hall* and bring it back into use for the benefit of the entire community. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

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LEE LYNCH REMEMBERED IN CHARITY TRIBUTE NIGHT

Best known for his songs "Paddy's On The Move Again" or "Famous Seamus" there's only one name that comes to mind; the famous Irish singer and recording artist, Lee Lynch. Born in Ballinasloe in 1937, the local legend went on to perform all over Ireland and England, as well as finding fame with his music in Belgium, Holland and France.

Lee was a born entertainer, and so in 1956 he decided to pursue his dreams. In his own words, he details how he "rode out of town for the boat to England and followed my dream of working in the music business". There he was lucky to meet up two other Ballinasloe men who were involved in the music business, Natie Fahy from Beechlawn and Dessie Dolan from St. Michael's Square. Lee later became a weekly attraction in the Black Swan in Fulham, thanks to Pierce Courtney-a Brackernagh native.

Lee enjoyed a career spanning over 35 years as one of England's top Irish entertainers and recording artists. His many achievements include two appearances at the Royal Albert Hall, London as well as representing Great Britain at an international song contest in Belgium, topping their charts with his song "Stay Awhile". He also represented Ireland in a song contest in Bulgaria. Lee was the frontman for the Premier Aces showband, touring Irish dance halls for two years before succeeding Brendan Bowyer as lead singer in the Royal Show band in 1971, and in 1980, he was voted London's favourite Irish vocalist.



Lee Lynch

He appeared on stage with many other notable artists, such as Emile Ford and The Checkmates, Tom Jones, Van Morrison and Jim Reeves. However, Lee never forgot his Ballinasloe roots and always boasted that his first "big break" came when he was only a teenager. He admitted though, that it was only on top of a stone pillar under a street light in St. Brendan's Terrace. Not far from that stone pillar in 2013, the Year of the Gathering and the year after Lee's death, a plaque in memory of him was unveiled by his sister-in-law Helen Lynch, commemorating the famous singer and all his achievements.

Now Ballinasloe-born Billy Joe Ward, a long time friend of Lee's, plus a great bunch of singers and musicians have decided to remember and honour Lee, while at the same time raising money for Down Syndrome Galway.



Jennifer Malone & Peter O'Mahony



Helen Lynch viewing the memorial plaque

On the night dancing will be to the sounds of Billy Joe, The Conquerors, T R Dallas, Tony Allen, Johnny Carroll, John Glenn, Shaun O'Dowd, P J Murrihy, Eileen King, Natasha Magee, Kristen Orsborn, The Duets, Cowboy Larry, and Ger Timmons. Special guest on the night will be Jennifer Malone, famously remembered from when Peter O' Mahony gave her his Natwest 6 Nations winner's rugby medal back in March 2018.

The fundraising event will take place in Gullane's Hotel on Monday February 11. Doors will open at 7:30pm, and dancing will commence from 8:30pm onwards. Tickets, priced at €20, are available at the hotel reception

BY DONOGH MOORE

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SISTER ACT TO HAVE OVER 40 VEILS SERENADING TOWN HALL CROWDS BY DONOGH MOORE

The cast of Ballinasloe Musical Society came together recently to begin rehearsals for their 2019 production of the well-known musical "Sister Act", in which Whoopi Goldberg starred in the 1992 film. This will be the first time the Society has staged this popular modern musical show and is eagerly awaiting its unfurling on local audiences.

Fresh from their acclaimed presentation of the modern Dolly Parton stamped "9 to 5" last year, auditions for this show were held back in November and the principle parts were cast as follows: Emily Lohan as Deloris Van Cartier, Madeline Fleming as Mother Superior, Clorise O'Moore as Sister Mary Robert, Catherine Dempsey as Sister Mary Patrick, Mags Mulligan as Sister Mary Lazarus, Seamus Feerick as Monsignor O'Hara, Paul Drysdale as Curtis, Niki Lawless as Eddie, Ciaran Smith as TJ, Mike O'Reilly as Joey, Barry Dunne as Pablo, Frances Leahy as Sister Mary Martin-of-Tours, Gretel O'Sullivan as Sister Mary Theresa, Emma Grealy as Tina, Gerard Sweeney as Ernie, and Brian Derrane as Cop.

The chorus for this year's production spans over fifty incredibly hard-working individuals. Over the next few weeks all of these onstage stars, as well as the Stage Crew managed by Pat McGovern, will be extremely busy assembling a show under the expert tutelage of the magical trio of the director Paul Norton, the choreographer Aoife McClafferty and the musical director Shane Farrell.

"Sister Act" follows the trials and tribulations of club singer/gangster's moll Deloris who, having witnessed her boyfriend murder a member of his gang, is forced to hide in a convent; an arrangement that is unpalatable to all parties at first. However, her love of music and the convent choir is where she and the nuns find something in common.



Back Row: Paul (Too Tall Paul) Drysdale - Curtis
Centre: Madeleine Fleming - Mother Superior,
Nicky Lawless - Eddie
Front: Emily Lohan - Deloris Van Cartier



Back Row, L to R: Rachel Walker - Chorus,
Jacinta Keane - Chorus
Centre: Seamus Feerick - Monsignor O'Hara
Front Row, L to R:
Cherise O'Moore - Sr. Mary Roberts,
Margaret Mulligan - Sr. Mary Lazarus.

This is a hilariously heart-warming story with a wonderfully tuneful score that will have you laughing, clapping and stamping your feet all the way home. It's a definite date for your diary.

The show runs in Ballinasloe Town Hall Theatre from Tuesday 19 to Saturday 23 March @ 8pm nightly. Tickets will be available from March 4 in Gerry Stronge's Photography, Ballinasloe Town Hall Theatre or online at ballinasloetownhall.com Prices are Adult: €17, Concession: €13. No concession tickets available online.

Ballinasloe Musical Society will host a launch party for 2019's Sister Act in Gullane's Hotel on Friday 1st March. The launch party will be followed by a Fundraising Table Quiz to help raise much needed funds for the production. As in seasons past, members of the Committee will be reaching out to businesses and individuals to become sponsors, patrons by pledging some resources to help defray the typical annual costs associated with live musical theatre.

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FOUR SEASONS EXHIBITION FOR NEW LIBRARY

Mary Barber (née O'Regan) and Rosemary Carty are holding an upcoming exhibition, showing off their paintings in the Church Gallery, in the new Library on Society Street. The showcase, titled "Four Seasons" will be on display from March 18 for two weeks and will be officially opened on Saturday March 23 at 2pm.

Mary Barber is originally from Dunlo Hill. She left the locale at age 17 to attend school in Dublin, and from there spent many years in both Dublin and Galway city. In recent years Mary has retired back to the town, where she really began to focus on her art and painting skills. She always enjoyed art, especially in school, and while she took it back up as a hobby after the turn of the millennium, it's only since she met up with Lily Kelly and began attending her art studio, located in the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre, that she has really begun to love her craft again.

Rosemary Carty is originally from Tipperary, but she worked in the area for many years, before retiring in recent times. Both of the artists featured have held exhibitions on a few occasions in the Church Gallery before, as well as in Gort, Portumna and Birr.



Inspiration for both ladies' paintings came from a variety of places. "Primarily", says Mary, "our inspiration is from our love of both art and nature." Not only that, but inspiration for both pieces further comes from the Wild Atlantic Way, and also the beautiful, natural surroundings here around the townlands.

Rosemary's painting will be used as the theme of the exhibition, and depicts a set of trees undergoing the changes that come with the passing of the four seasons. Mary's painting showcases a crashing seascape along the capes of the Wild Atlantic Way. Both women are hopeful that their creations will do the title of the exhibition justice.

Mary and Rosemary have invited five guest artists to the showcase: Lily Kelly, Nicola Bowes, Kathleen Frehill, Nuala Murray and Emel Osman. They would also like to thank the Library and its staff for permitting them to use the wonderful facilities of the Church Gallery to exhibit their latest pieces.

The official opening will take place on Saturday 23rd March at 2pm in the Church Gallery, Library, by renowned Ballinasloe artist Ann Hill. There will also be a wine reception and all are welcome.

BY DONOGH MOORE

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TOWN HALL THEATRE BUSY WITH RENOVATIONS AND NEW SEASON

BY DONOGH MOORE

The Ballinasloe Town Hall Theatre is set to undergo extensive renovation works to repair damage caused by a leak in the front offices. The Theatre, which is located on Society Street, sprung a leak recently, which has come through the ceiling and damaged it in the process. However, it has just received over €12,000 in grant aid from the Community Enhancement Programme, as recently announced by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring T.D. As well as going towards fixing the damage in the front office, this money will also be used to do up the toilet facilities backstage.

The theatre and its board have plans for the next stage of development, pending further successful grant applications. These works include an update to the heating system in the building, as well as the

purchasing of entirely new seating for the auditorium. While there are some issues that need resolving in the building, most of the other facilities are operating as normal.

There's a large rehearsal space upstairs available for various dance classes or rehearsals, and the theatre's board wish to make two more rehearsal spaces available to the public, given that the funding objectives are fulfilled. Two additional dressing rooms are set to be completed and ready for use come the beginning of the spring season. These renovations include the laying down of new flooring, adding new mirrors to the rooms, as well as the introduction of water heaters. These updated facilities should prove to be a welcome addition to all users of the dressing rooms.

The theatre experienced positive audience numbers throughout their run of programming in 2018. This surge of popularity can only have been helped by the establishment's varied and popular productions such as the Roscommon Solstice Choir, the Blossom Harp Ensemble, and Seamus O'Rourke's production, "From Under the Bed".

Over the course of the upcoming year, the Town Hall Theatre is set to showcase the usual local shows and societies, such as the Musical Society, the B'Sloe Panto, the Instep Dance School, Kathy Hopkins' Dance School, the Ard Scoil Mhuire choir, as well as many more. Patrons of the theatre can look forward to the Musical Society's production of 'Sister Act', which will begin running in March. The weekly popular country market continues each Friday.

Not only that, but the theatre will be home to 'Sloe Sessions' this year. This is a new venture for up and coming musicians, be they local or from distant towns, who will get the chance to play some acoustic sessions in the foyer of the theatre, on Feb 22. The Board are looking to expand their programme over the year, and any interested parties should contact the theatre.

As always, Ballinasloe Town Hall Theatre is looking for volunteers to help out around production season, from cleaners, to ticket sellers, to front of house staff. From February 4 onwards, the theatre crew can be contacted from 9:30am – 1:30pm, on Monday – Friday at the theatre, or via email at ballinasloetownhalltheatre@gmail.com, via telephone on (090) 964 6540, or on their website at: www.ballinasloetownhall.com.

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LOCAL SPORTS MAD DARREN IS NEW CLARE FM HEAD OF SP

Affectionately known around the locale as “Mr. Sport”, Darren Kelly has had an interesting career. Not everyone can say they got the chance to attend an All-Ireland Final in which their home county was victorious, let alone commentating over it. Darren has spent over twenty years in his chosen field of sports journalism and his list of achievements and momentous events glows with excitement. A Ballinasloe native, the sport fanatic spent years having his voice broadcast from Galway Bay FM, but a new posting sees him take up a position as Head of Sport at Clare FM.

Darren explains his fascination with sport came from the World Cup in Mexico in 1986. With little to do during the summer, as many children find themselves, his mother recommended he watch a soccer match on television; the rest is history.

The fact that he remembers it was Italy playing Bulgaria is a testament to the man’s love of sport. He cites that as being a starting point on the journey to where he is today and he has many people to thank for getting him to where he is today; his mother Josephine and his uncle Tommy, both who ensured he never missed a match before he started driving; Frank and Ann Kearney who did the same when Darren began covering Galway camogie, and Kevin O’Dwyer, Sean Walsh, Ollie Turner and Gerry Murphy, who were all great sources of mentoring and advice during his time at Galway Bay FM.

Darren is a keen observer of the sporting scene locally. He praised the strength that the town has across a broad spectrum of sporting codes. He admitted that the town had underperformed or struggled at senior level in recent years, but certainly does not rule out that being corrected in the future. He spoke highly of the Gaelic Club’s ability to bring underage players up to senior level, but also that they haven’t been able to translate this success to the senior stage – the 2013 All-Ireland Junior Football success aside, in which

Ballinasloe were triumphant over Kerry’s Kenmare Shamrocks. He cites the ladies’ football and camogie clubs as having the same issues, although he recalls how the ladies’ football team had a particularly good year in 2018. However, all that said, he refuses to rule out any of the teams, as the potential for success is there, he firmly believes.

He mentions the rugby clubs, and the triumphs that (women’s rugby, in particular) they have had in recent years.

The Connacht under-18’s squad was home to eleven girls who played for Ballinasloe, (Aoibheann Reilly, Meabh Deely, Beibhinn Parsons, Emily Gavin, Niamh Kenny, Aine Galvin, Macy McDermott, Mia Fahy, Claudia McNichols, Hannah Gullane and Jordan Hopkins) eight of whom regularly started for the team. He mentions the strength Garbally College has always held, in terms of rugby – with special mention to the teams that won both the Junior and Senior Cup competitions. Lastly, he praises Ballinasloe Town AFC for giving the town some great memories in recent



Darren on stage preparing to welcome home All-Ireland champions.

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years, through Connacht Cup victories as well as long runs in the FAI Junior Cup.

However, when asked for any advice he might have for the clubs in the town, he couldn't stress enough the importance of consistency when it comes to social media, and the PRO's job. He emphasises that if a club's social media accounts can't even be bothered to share the result or score of a match, then they shouldn't expect media or supporters to take an interest. He maintains that while pictures are essential in a PRO's job, details of events and match fixtures and results are equally important.

He uses the local chess club, with which he is involved, as an example. While it's a



With Galway GAA Players.



In Croke Park with Imelda Hobbins



Darren with Christy Archer playing Chess.

relatively small sport in a town full of different competing codes, having an annual membership count of between 80 and 100 is impressive, and shows just what can be done in a short space of time.

George Hamilton commenting at a game as a twelve-year-old was his spur to study and follow Sports Journalism. He decided he'd fancy doing that. He was already a self-proclaimed backyard commentator at that stage, so the transition wasn't too tough, although he does reminisce at the missed opportunities of scoring the winning goal in a World Cup or All-Ireland Final. While he adores the career he's had for the last twenty years, he is keen to remind any prospective sports journalists that the job entails a lot more than just going to watch matches in Croke Park or any sports ground – a successful journalist has to keep up to date with everything that's going on in the sporting world; you're never really off.

"I really recommend getting a qualification in a weekday job – something to fall back on – and then going on to qualify in sports journalism. Aspiring Reporters should get involved with PROs in local clubs, and to look for work experience in places like Galway Bay FM and the Connacht Tribune, although with the rise and prevalence of the Internet in recent years, new opportunities have arisen that even I struggle to keep up with". He takes care to remind students that although covering sports is a fun and engaging career, the jobs aren't always there to back it, and that freelancing is hard work for few hours.

Looking forward, he is excited to take up his new role with Clare FM, and believes that the passion that Clare people have for their sport will bring him a variety of new challenges, all of which he's excited to face head-on. However, that being said – he took special care to mention that he's not going anywhere – Ennis is only an hour's commute, so don't be surprised to see him in Duggan Park during the year!



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GAA CLUB CELEBRATES A SPECTACULAR FUNDRAISING NIGHT



THE FIELD: Aiden Lonergan **Director**, Jim Lally **Bull McCabe**, Aiden Lonergan **Tadhg**, Seamus McGuinness **Bird**, Úna Ní Bhroin **Widow**, Niall Poland **Flanagan**, Cathy Winters Murray **McCority**, Gearoid Coleman **Yank**, Harriett Bruce **Tinkers Daughter**, Willie Stankard **Priest**.



SISTER ACT: Kevin Murry **Detective**, Mary Cuddy **Reverend Mother**, Dean Flanagan **Joey**, Breda Larkin **Sr. Mary Lazarus**, Joanne Jordan **Sr. Mary Roberts**, Ellen Egan **Sr. Mary Austin**, Brendan Boland **Vince**, Tom Ryan **Garda**, Fiona Burke **Alma**, Linda Hayes **Sr. Mary Patrick**, Catherine Devine **Sr. Mary Paul**, Fr. Colm Allman **Monsignor**, Lisa Whyte **Deloris**, Barbara Naughton **Director**, Ruth Waldron **Sr. Mary Joseph**.



THE SNAPPER: John Donnellan **Lester**, Noel Dillon **Old Man**, Pat O'Sullivan **Director**, Michelle Kelly **Doris**, Caoimhe McMorro **Jackie**, Miriam Hurley **Mary**, Ber Coughlan **Neighbour**, Karen Tierney **Nurse**, Helena Coughlan **Mrs. O'Leary**, Tina Kelly **Yvonne**, Kevin Cunniffe **Georgie**, Rachel Walker **Sharon**, John Mitchell **Dessie**, Kathryn Gibbons **Kay**.

The GAA is all about Community and inclusive involvement in all aspects of life in a parish and a "Night at the OsKaRs" has further cemented this ethos with just short of 1,000 people attending the gala night show in the Shearwater Hotel.

The weeks and months prior to the event had been about a few things, firstly it brought people together some of whom had never met before, it reached out to people who knew very little about the GAA before and shows the network of people that the organisation represents and is involved with. Many of the stage first time actors and actresses will all look back on their stage and acting experience with some great memories.

As a result of this event the cast have made new friends for life, we have new adults involved in the club and last but not least the project has raised nearly €47,000 for further Club Development.

It is four years since the last major fundraiser when over 250 cyclists made it from Croke Park to Ballinasloe and four years before that again when they held their Monster Auction in the Emerald Ballroom, now home to weekly GAA Bingo on Tuesday nights.

The Club has invested over €2.5m in facilities over the last 10 years and need to maintain and invest further in the fabulous state of the Art facility for future generations and funds raised will continue to support this. The clubhouse is used by many different community, voluntary organisations which is great to see.

Speaking on the night Seamus Duffy, outgoing Club Chairman, thanked all sponsors, main Sponsors Supermacs and Ballinasloe Credit Union, everyone who worked on this project, the Committee, Film Directors, Actors and Actresses and of course our Judges on the night Eamonn O Donoghue, Declan Kelly & Valerie Hughes.



THE FULL MONTY: Cian Dooley **Horse**, Fiona Cruise **The Girls**, Derek Colohan **Gaz**, Graeme Gullane **Guy**, Jack Mitchell **Dave**, Anita Killeen **Director**, The Girls, Ciaran Smyth **Gerald**.

Special mention was made of property owners around the Town who allowed the Club Film Crews use their Premises for filming. The DVD which will be available for sale shortly will treat viewers of the Town from many different camera shots rarely seen.

The Clubs chosen charity on the night was East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support Unit and a cheque was recently presented to them for €2,000.



The following were the OsKaR winners on the night

BEST GROSSING FILM:
Calendar Girls

BEST USE OF LOCAL LOCATIONS:
Rocky

BEST DIRECTOR:
Pat Potter (Shawshank Redemption)

BEST ACTRESS:
Lisa Whyte (Sister Act)

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS:
Kathryn Gibbons (The Snapper)

BEST ACTOR:
Jim Lally (The Field)

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR:
Ciaran Smyth (The Full Monty)

BEST FILM:
Calendar Girls.



SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION: Pat Potter **Director**, Judge, Gerry Seale **Prisoner Floyd**, Michael O'Brien **Andy**, Noel Cotton **Captain Hadley**, Donal Fenton **Guard Trout**, Brendan Kelly **Head Bull Haig**, Ruairi O'Hanlon **Red**, Mark Ward **Warden Norton**, Andy Naessens **Prisoner Heywood**.



CALENDAR GIRLS: Terry Dolan **May**, Martina Reynolds **Celia**, Geraldine Dolan **Marie**, Stephen Kerr **Director**, Caroline Kerr **Cora**, Caroline Layng **Annie**, Therese Dillon, **Director**, Dymrna Headd **Chris**, Avril Noone **Ruth**, Miriam Murphy **Trudy**, Carmel Dillon **Cruise Lady**, Diane Dolan **Top Judge**, Margaret Connaughton **Jessie**.



ROCKY: Owen Jennings **Paulie**, Cormac Casey **Apollo**, Craig Keighrey **Rocky**, Niall Fahy **Referee**, Paul Madden **Director**, Darren Kelly **Ringside Announcer**, Alan Caulfield **Business Man**, Eleanor Shanley **Adrian**, Niall Cunningham **Assitant Director**, Seamus Duffy **Mickey**.

TOWN AFC PREPARE FOR BUSY SPRING SEASON



Ballinasloe Town A. F. C. Under 11/12 team who reached the final of the A. D. S. L. Futsal Indoor Tournament.



Ballinasloe Town A. F. C. Under 9/10 team who reached the final of the A. D. S. L. Futsal Indoor Tournament.

Excitement is growing and preparations are under way for the club's biennial trip to Liverpool, which will take place over the coming Easter period. During this fantastic tournament, which is now over 20 years old, the club's under 11 and 12 teams will compete against the Liverpool-based club Hailwood for the Bob Paisley Cup, and for the Irish Cup. A group of over 100, including players, mentors and parents, will take part in the trip which will also include a visit to Old Trafford and Anfield.

Every other year, Hailwood visit Ballinasloe for this special tournament, which has the added bonus of providing an economic boost to the town.

Former Ballinasloe Town AFC player Heather Payne, who progressed up through the youth ranks of the club, was once again capped recently by Ireland for the international friendly versus Belgium. The game, which was played in Murcia, Spain, saw the Irish narrowly defeated by Belgium by one goal to nil. Heather, who now plays for Bristol City, played the full game for Ireland.

Three of the underage teams made it through to the finals night of the Futsal indoor tournament in Athlone, ran by the Athlone and District Schoolboys League. The under 11/12 team, managed by Sonya Coyne-Dowd and Shane Fallon, lost to Hodson Bay in the final and finished second overall out of 29 teams. The under 9/10 team also got to the final but lost out by three goals to one on penalties. The club's other under 9/10 team also performed well and qualified for the finals night. Both of the under 9/10 teams were managed by Mark Duffy, James Kinsella, Darren Fallon and John Conway.

At adult level, the club's senior team are just one point behind the leaders in the Premier Division of the Roscommon and District Soccer League, with a game in hand to play. In a new departure this season, the top six teams will play off against each other in a series of games to decide the league title.

On the development front, the club have submitted a detailed plan to the Sports Capital Programme which includes the upgrading of the astro-turf pitches and the full floodlight system at the club's main grass pitch. The club have been in touch with the local Oireachtas representatives for support with this vital application, and are hopeful of a decent allocation when the successful applicants are announced in late March.

For more information on all fixtures and results, see their Facebook page: Ballinasloe Town AFC.

BY DONOGH MOORE



Ballinasloe Town A. F. C. Under 9/10 team who qualified for finals day in the A. D. S. L. Futsal Indoor Tournament.



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WOMEN'S RUGBY CONTINUES TO EXCEL LOCALLY

In 2018, Ballinasloe RFC had eleven girls in the Connacht squad: Aoibheann Reilly, Meabh Deely, Beibhinn Parsons, Emily Gavin, Niamh Kenny, Aine Galvin, Macy McDermott, Mia Fahy, Claudia McNichols and Jordan Hopkins.

The Connacht girls won the inter-provincial title for the first time ever, with Meabh, Aoibheann and Beibhinn being selected for the European Championship, in which they came third. From there, they travelled to Scotland and England for the Home Nations, winning on both occasions.

Aoibheann and Beibhinn were also both selected for the Senior Irish Women's squad to train for the November series. Beibhinn made history as the youngest ever player, at only 16 years of age, to play Senior Women's rugby for Ireland. She toggled out in Energia Stadium, Donnybrook against the USA, and again in Twickenham against England. She was also selected to play in Dubai with the National 7s Development squad in November and will travel to Sydney in February as part of the Irish Senior Women's International 7s.

The U16 team, coached by Dermot Frehill, Noel Gavin, Ann Marie McCann and Sinead Manning, topped Division One in the league this year. Their final, against Claremorris, was played in Ballyhaunis. Ballinasloe emerged victorious to take the title, winning ten points to five. This current group of players are presently unbeaten this year.

With new facilities set for development in 2019, including the new 3G astro-turf pitch, the club's resources are expanding to meet the growing membership. According to coaches, the club's ultimate

BY DONOGH MOORE



Ardscoil Mhuire National Schools 7s Champions



Beibhinn Parsons making history as the youngest player ever at International level at 16



U16 Girls after their league final win



2018 U18 Cup final winning team

goal is to be able to field a ladies senior squad, and with 96 girls currently registered to play, that goal doesn't seem too far off.

A number of girls from both the u16 and the u18 teams, who attend school in Ardscoil Mhuire Ballinasloe, won the National Schools 7s Final in Dublin this year. Yet again the team met Westport

in the final, but managed to beat them again. It was the first time this competition has been won by a school outside of Leinster.

The u12s, U14s and U16s train on Thursday evenings, from 7:30pm to 8:30pm. The u16s train again on Sunday mornings from 11:00am to 12:00 noon, and the u18s train every Friday evening, from 6:30pm to 7:30pm. Skills

training with Connacht development coach, Dermot Tierney, take place every second Monday evening, from 7:30pm to 8:30pm. The next skills session is Monday February 4.

The club's "Last Person Standing" competition is kicking off on February 2, with tickets currently on sale from committee members, coaches and players, at €5 each. All proceeds will go towards the funding of the new 3G astro-turf development.

For more information, find the club on Facebook: @rfc_ballinasloe, or their website: www.ballinasloerfc.ie

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OVER 150 ROAD RUNNERS BRAVE THE START OF THE COUCH TO 5K



Some runners enjoying a Sunday morning run as part of the 'Couch to 5K' programme

The Ballinasloe (and District) Road Runners launched their 'Couch to 5k' campaign recently. The aim of the campaign is to get the people of the locality more active, and

to show them that doing a five kilometer run or walk is easier than one would think.

The running group are facilitating this event, free of charge, in the Dunlo Running Track, Brackernagh. The campaign is for six weeks, during which the Road Runners meet every Tuesday and Thursday night at 7:45pm, as well as Sunday mornings at 10:00am.

The event, which is being organised by members who are voluntarily giving up their time, proved to have sparked interest as over 150 new participants showed up to the Dunlo Running Track for the first meeting.

The members are on standby at every meeting to offer advice and guidance to newcomers. Runners attending these events are advised to carpool to the event, due to the high numbers attending and the lack of available parking spaces. However overflow parking can be facilitated in Dunne's Supervalu car park.

The Ballinasloe Road Runners will also be continuing their normal training, separate from the 'Couch to 5k', on every Tuesday from 7:30pm. This involves running on the road, so high-visibility jackets and gear is essential to take part.

For more information regarding the 'Couch to 5k' event, or about the Road Runners in general, check out the running group on Facebook: Ballinasloe (and District) Road Runners.

BY DONOGH MOORE

WINNER OF WILLIAM DIVILLY BILLIARDS FINAL



Paul Keighery won the Willie Divilly Billiards Final recently, making it two in a row, by defeating Joe Walsh in the final. The Willie Divilly Billiards Competition is the longest running tournament in the Ballinasloe Snooker Club's history, starting back in 1985, and has run every year since.

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CYCLING CLUB COUCH TO 50 KM

BY DONOGH MOORE

The local Cycling Club have many events and activities planned for 2019. At the forefront is their 'Couch to 50km' - for anyone in the locality who wants to start cycling. It begins on March 24th for a period of six weeks. These six weeks will entail trained lessons, to get any cyclist to a goal of 50km.



Some of Ballinasloe Cycling Club's members after finishing week 2 of 'Couch to 50KM'

Not only that, but they also have club cycles all year, on every Sunday between 8:00 and 9:30 to midweek spins and Saturday morning trips, which typically take place from Barry's Cycles on Sarsfield Road.

Also planned are day trips away to Kinnitty, Co. Offaly, to the newly opened mountain bike trails. As well as that, the club has a few summer days away in Clare in mind for members which should prove to be a nice chance to get away for a brief few days, as well as giving ample time to get a good few cycles in.

Lastly, 'turbo sessions' are going ahead for January and February, so all club members will have many opportunities to get out cycling.

The Cycling Club's 'Annual Charity Cycle Tour D'Shams' will be on early this year, on Sunday May 12. The cycle is in aid of the Special Care Baby Unit in Portiuncula Hospital, which was chosen for all the helpful work they provide for the community.

For all updates and more information on how to join or just have a try out, find them on Facebook @BallinasloeCyclingClub.

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LOCAL UNDERAGE ATHLETES PERFORM WELL IN GALWAY INDOOR TRACK AND FIELD

BY DONOGH MOORE

The Galway Indoor Track and Field Athletic Championships took place at the AIT Indoor Arena recently. Ballinasloe and District Athletic Club had a strong contingent of athletes representing the club in various categories.

In the U9 group, Lauren Loughrey and Laura Berrigan both competed, with Lauren winning a bronze in the 60 and 200 metre races.

In the U10 group, Lisa Herity, Caoimhe Hogan and Kate Kilkenny all ran in the 400 metre race. Lisa was placed in sixth position overall. Aidan Óg Gallagher represented the club in the 60 and 400 metres. Aoife Berrigan, Lauren Doran and Erin Arru all partook in the U11, 60 and 600 metre event. Aoife was placed in the top six in both events. Keith Coughlan also competed in the 60 metre sprint.

Sinead Greene and Hannah Clarke competed in the U12 group. Sinead was placed seventh in the sprint and eighth in the 600 metre. Sinead was placed in thirteenth in the long jump. Brian Fitzpatrick, Louis Markham and Cillian O Tuairisg took part in the sprint and the shot put events. Brian and Louis were placed eighth and ninth in the shot put, and Cillian won silver.

Eva Ruane, Aoibhín Coughlan and Saorla Gallagher represented the club in the U13 competition, all running the sprint. Adam Doran,



Aaron Hogan, Daniel Mooney and Keelan Kelly all ran the 60 metre event, with Keelan running a best of 2.07.64. Adam ran the 60 metre hurdles and was placed seventh position overall. Daniel and Adam competed in the high jump and were placed fifth and seventh.

Aoibheann Fitzpatrick placed in the top 20 at the All Ireland Juvenile Cross Country Championships.



Sinead Daly, Caoimhe Kilkenny, Leah Clarke and Aoibheann Fitzpatrick all ran the U14 sprint with Caoimhe, who has struggled with injury, winning a bronze medal. Caoimhe, Leah and Sinead also competed in the 800 metre race, placing sixth, eighth and eleventh respectively.

Aoibheann Fitzpatrick and Sinead Greene who both competed in the All-Ireland Juvenile Cross Country Championships held at Navan Racecourse recently, with Aoibheann being placed in the top twenty athletes in the country in the U13, 2,500 metre event.



Veronica Burke won the silver medal in the National Senior Race Walking 20km Championships

Veronica Burke won a national silver medal in the 20km senior women's race walk held in Raheny, Dublin.

Meanwhile athletic training continues every Tuesday and Thursday at the track, in Brackernagh from 5:45pm to 7:00pm.

Lauren Loughrey U9 won 2 bronze medals in Galway Indoor Championships

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ROYAL KATE CHOOSES DUBARRY

BY KEN KELLY

The Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton, became the fourth member of Britain's Royal Family to sport a Irish brand Dubarry product when she appeared in a Bracken Heath Jacket, which costs €480.00.

As a result of publicity featuring the Duchess in the Irish Tweed jacket, sales at the Dubarry factory in Ballinasloe have rocketed according to Marketing Director Michael Walsh. "The extended British Royal Family have been loyal customers of Dubarry of Ireland for many years now with Her Majesty The Queen, Princess Anne and Zara Phillips regular wearers of our iconic Galway Boots. Kate Middleton's choice of our Bracken Tweed Utility Jacket is no surprise to us as it is one of our best selling jackets in the UK and a piece that is a perfectly natural fit for her styling" said Michael.

Dubarry, which was established in Ballinasloe in 1937 as a shoe retailer,



has already enjoyed a celebrity endorsement boost from the likes of Geri Horner and Amanda Holden. Now the "Kate Effect" is expected to provide a huge boost in sales for Dubarry and Irish designers, among whom is Ahascragh's Philip Treacy, who has been designing headwear for the Royal Family for over ten years.

Michael Walsh concluded "There has been a notable uplift in our website traffic and indeed sales of the Bracken jacket in the immediate aftermath of the extensive online coverage in the UK by The Daily Mail, Hello Magazine, Elle Magazine and You while Irish daily papers and the Ryan Turbidity Show have also highlighted the Ballinasloe product."

Photo shows The Duchess Kate wearing the Dubarry Jacket.

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THIS, THAT AND THE OTHER.....

BY KEVIN KAVANAGH

ST. MICHAEL'S FOLK CHOIR and friends raised over €8,500 for local charities, during their annual Christmas Eve Carol Singing session in Ballinasloe. This year's beneficiaries are the Cosain Mental Health Support Group and the Care and Repair service unit. The organisers again praised the generosity of the public in supporting their annual charity event.

96-YEAR-OLD JOHN LEONARD of Kilmalaw, Aughrim had the honour of opening Aughrim's new national school, being the oldest living pupil, shortly before his death. He was predeceased by his wife, Kathleen, who passed away five months prior to his demise.

AUGHRIM ACTIVE RETIREMENT GROUP recently spent a Country and Western dancing weekend in Donegal town. They are now planning a series of tours throughout the country for the coming months. The first outing will be to Craggy Island in Co. Clare, which was made world famous with the TV filming of "Fr. Ted."

FINE GAEL have yet to select their candidates in the Roscommon/Galway area for the next general election. However they have picked outgoing Cllrs. Aidan Donohue and Michael Finnerty as well as Glenamaddy's Peter Keaveney to contest the Co. Council elections for the Ballinasloe Electoral Area, in May.

SEAN LYONS has retired from the Maintenance staff of Dubarry Shoes after 33 years' service. He joined the company in 1985, having previously worked as a baker in McGuire's Bakery in Brackernagh and Shanley's Bakery in Society Street.

AUCTIONEER MICHAEL McCULLAGH has sold the Parochial Hall on Dunlo Hill, which was in the ownership of the Church of Ireland authorities. The cut-stone building has catered for socials, meeting, auctions, schools, clinics etc. over the past

two centuries. According to auctioneer McCullagh the new owners propose to turn the hall into "a worthy community activity."

TINSMITH MICHAEL WARD who has passed away in his 92nd year, was the last of his trade in the West of Ireland. He was the third generation of the Ward family to ply the trade throughout most of Co. Galway but none of his family took up the art. The father of ten boys and five girls, Michael was a native of Mountbellew but had lived in Gortnahorna, Clontuskert for many years. He was predeceased by his wife, Mary, who passed away in 2005.

BALLINASLOE'S SHANE O'GRADY, the golfing coach at the Black Bush Club in Co. Meath, has seen two of his daughters shine in under age golfing competitions in Miami, USA. Caoimhe tied for ninth place in the Junior Honda Classic 12-13 category while her sister Niamh tied for 11th place in the U10-11 section. Shane, the son of Willie and the late Vera O'Grady and a former member of the Ballinasloe Golf Club, is best known for coaching the Maguire twins to international stardom in the golf world.

NOEL LOHAN has been appointed Acting Principal of Creagh National School, succeeding Stephanie Keating who has been appointed Director of Athlone Education Centre. Mr. Lohan, who joined the teaching staff in 1981, will now be in charge of over 400 students and a staff of over 30 at the Creagh school.

THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH will be officially opened shortly at the Marina Point in Ballinasloe, having recently purchased part of the old Guinness Store at the former Grand Canal basin. The forty members had previously attended the Church located in Liscapple for Sunday worship at 11 am.

GARDENING TIPS FOR SPRING

Adv. BY BARRY WARD

It's the time of year that we look forward and planning ahead helps to create a positive vibe about the garden.

Pruning fruit trees and bushes help to keep the plants to a reasonable size but also serves to reduce disease and improve fruit quality. The principle of pruning is to promote vigorous young branches as this is where the new fruits will be carried. The rule of thumb is to cut out the branches by one third to a half. This allows air flow through the plant and light to all parts of the plant. Removing dead, broken, older and crossing over branches to achieve best results. This technique can be applied to larger hardy summer flowering woody plants that need to be tidied up or shaped to encourage fresh leafy growth and flowers.

Do not prune Silver leaved plants –leave unpruned until late March. Fruiting and ornamental Cherries should not be pruned in winter, plums and damsons also to avoid silver leaf disease. Japanese Maples should be pruned in late summer or early autumn when less sap is flowing.

Ornamental Grasses are best cut back as the new shoots appear and



start to grow in early spring.

Get your compost heap in ship shape for spring. For best results a compost heap needs an even balance of chopped up green nitrogen based material such as freshly mown grass fruit and vegetable peeling and brown carbon rich material, cardboard shredded waste paper chopped up woody branches or plants and plenty of air to assist the aerobic microbes to break down. Turning the compost speeds up the

breakdown process.

Tidy your borders ready for the first flushes of spring growth. Weed the beds and look in the soil along paths and walls, or near plants, to remove snails or slugs or their eggs. Use a rake to break up large lumps of clay and get ready to find nice new additional plants to brighten up your home in spring and summer. Ask for advice at your local garden centre. Bring photos and measurements if possible as this greatly assists when looking for advice.

Check the soil pH value as a pH OF 6.5-7 allows the nutrients to be taken up more effectively by the plants. If the pH is low and the soil is acidic lime can be added to the soil and later on manure can be added separately for best results.

NEW CONSULTATIONS ON THE FUTURE OF AUGHRIM BATTLE CENTRE

BY COLM CROFFY

There are not too many battlefields on the island of note, the OPW only manages one - the Battle of the Boyne site - which attracts visitors of about 70,000 per year; Shannon Heritage manages King John's Castle, the site of three sieges; the most notable being the end of the Cogadh na dtri Ri (War of the three Kings) in 1691, which enjoys 100,000 visitors annually.

The battle in the middle of this momentous period took place 5 miles from the town of Ballinasloe, at Aughrim where over 6,000 perished - 4,000 more than the Boyne and the Siege of Limerick.

A seasonally opened Interpretative Centre on the outskirts of the village was built by Galway Co. CI. and Bord Failte in the early 90s with EU structural funding and ambitious plans. Visitor numbers are hard to find but it's believed to be less than 8,000 a year.

Galway County Council is conducting a community engagement exercise, to seek the views, opinions, and feedback of the local community on how best to maximise the historical, tourism and community potential of the 1691 Battle of Aughrim Visitor Centre for the benefit of visitors and all stakeholders. The first open public meeting was facilitated by Dr. Hugh Maguire (Formerly of Director of the Hunt Museum and now a Cultural & Heritage Consultant) in late November in Valeries.

A broadly representative attendance from the community and some of the heritage groups along with members of the Council and Oireachtas gave an animated and robust exchange of views.

The meeting was informed that this was the start of a facilitated dialogue between the owners of the Centre - Galway County Council and the stakeholder community.

The meeting was told of the acute lack of resources being provided to the project by the Council which is impacting on the visitor footfall, staffing, opening hours and decaying condition of some of the exhibits. Many neighbouring schools have not visited the centre in years owing to the lateness in providing mid week, pre

June opening or indeed marketing co-ordination for the groups wishing to make bookings in the shoulder season.

A contributor referred to a visiting delegation from the house of Orange in Holland that summer, who wished to bequeath some antique weaponry used at the battle but could not consider leaving the objects to the Centre because of the lack of appropriate means to curate, exhibit and display such treasures.

There was a groundswell of opinion that the community was very enthused to explore different ways to unlock the potential of the site with Failte Ireland about to roll out massive investment in Ireland's hidden heartlands and the role the centre could have in international and domestic tourism.

The meeting learned that that the project currently had no European funding, no University Historical, Archaeological or Military partners. There was no marketing plan for the next few seasons and there were no plans from the owners as to how to progress the facility as an anchor for East Galway Tourism.

Attendees from the village of Tulsk who manage the Rathcroughan Visitor Centre, with a fulltime manager and year round staff and crew - explained how their turnover has grown by 60% and visitor numbers by 200% in the six years that Roscommon County Council divested the site and building to the community on a long term lease.

The meeting closed with a message that the Council would be returning for more dialogue.

Cllr Aiden O Donoghue called for all the signage for the centre to be upgraded on the approach roads at a Ballinasloe Municipal District Meeting.

However at the Annual Estimates meeting of Galway County Council Cllr. Dermot Connolly made a plea for additional opening hours and that €200,000 worth of grant aid be sought by the Council urgently from Minister Ring's Rural Regeneration Fund of €63 million for urgent capital works and a professional marketing campaign.

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THE BALLINASLOE TENANT DEFENCE ASSOCIATION

In the decades between 1850 and 1880 local tenant defence associations became a feature of rural and small-town life in Ireland. Unquestionably the most significant of these was the Ballinasloe Tenant Defence Association which was set up in May 1876 and became a template for the Land League three years later.

James Kilmartain, who hailed from Shannonbridge, was possibly the instigator of the organization. A Poor Law Guardian in Ballinasloe Union, he had a 112-acre farm under lease in Creagh. The Association, however, owed its real driving force and appeal to Michael Malachy O'Sullivan, a Fenian and local schoolteacher, as well as to Matt Harris, after whom the Harris Road is named and whose photograph accompanies this article. A native of Roscommon town and lifelong Fenian, he was a building contractor and proprietor of a licensed premises in Main Street, known in more recent times as Minnie Sullivan's pub.

The Association was governed by a 23-man committee, elected annually, which met each month, at first in members' houses, but in September 1877 rooms were rented in Church Lane, latterly Duggan Avenue. Made up of 7 priests and 16 laymen from Ballinasloe and neighbouring parishes, the committee was unique amongst organizations of this kind inasmuch as clergymen never served as officers.

Isaac Butt, leader of the Home Rule Party in the Westminster Parliament, introduced a bill to deal with the inadequacies of Gladstone's 1870 Land Act, and throughout the summer of 1876 the B.T.D.A. campaigned for support of the measure by holding a series of demonstrations in places such as Moore, Creagh, Taughmaconnell and Shannonbridge. At a meeting in Creagh churchyard on 31st July the following resolution was passed: "That we the electors and people of Moycarn and adjacent parishes, in a public meeting assembled, hereby emphatically condemn the action of our representatives, the O'Connor Don and the Hon.

Charles French, in voting against the Butt Land Bill."

Oddly enough, a year was to pass before the B.T.D.A. publicized its aims: to advocate through the public press and from public platforms the undeniable right of the Irish people to occupy, to till and enjoy the soil of Ireland; to protect the people from the harshness and capriciousness of bad landlordism by every means at its disposal; and to secure the support of public opinion which had for long seemed dormant.



Eventually, though, the Association became critical of Butt's approach and, instead, favoured the obstructionist tactics of the group led by Parnell, who addressed a major demonstration in Ballinasloe on 3rd November 1878. Another prominent speaker on the platform was John O'Connor Power. Born near Tulsk, Co. Roscommon, into a farming family resident in Creagh, he lost both his parents during the Great Famine and was raised by a maternal aunt in Society Street where her husband operated a bakery. At the age of 15 he emigrated to Lancashire to join his brothers who worked as painters and decorators. After involvement in the Fenian

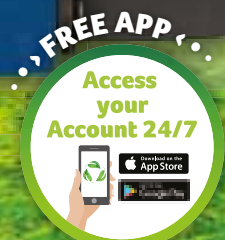


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movement, he embraced constitutional politics and in 1874 was elected an MP for Mayo.

Because of Parnell's involvement, the Ballinasloe demonstration received widespread coverage in the local and national press. It is generally believed to be the first occasion on which he addressed a meeting in Ireland on the land question. Some historians hold the view that Parnell had no real interest in the struggle for agrarian reform, but that the Ballinasloe demonstration convinced him of its potential use in mobilizing rural Ireland to agitate for the object dearest to his heart, Home Rule. At this meeting the slogan "The land of Ireland for the people of Ireland" was first used by O'Connor Power and was to become the motto of the Land League.

The Association held approximately 20 public meetings from its inception to the end of 1878, and was credited with curtailing landlord excesses in the region. At one such meeting Matt Harris was reported as saying: "The typical grazier cares little for his country; he is as remarkable for his want of public spirit as he is for the absence of every quality that fits men for social intercourse or the amenities of civil life." O'Connor Power stated that one of the main achievements of the B.T.D.A. was its success in preventing the eviction of people who would otherwise have been turned out of their homes.

Unlike some other contemporary agrarian associations, the B.T.D.A. was never dominated by large cattle farmers. Included in its ranks were both large and small tenants, shopkeepers and other townspeople, as well as advanced nationalists, resulting in its acquiring a major influence outside the Ballinasloe area. In this it was undoubtedly assisted by the sympathetic coverage of its activities in the principal Galway and Mayo newspapers, especially "The Connaught Telegraph".

Despite its successes, the Association went into a decline in 1879,

for which a number of reasons have been suggested: subscriptions were not being renewed; management was slipshod, with no minutes being kept or records of resolutions passed; and the rift between moderate and radical members was widening. Finally, the B.T.D.A. merged with the Land League in February 1880. Harris and O'Sullivan were both engaged by the new organization as full-time, paid officials.



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THE DUBARRY LADIES AT ONE OF THEIR DINNER DANCES

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Can anyone guess what year ?



BALLINASLOE VOCATIONAL SCHOOL PUPILS 1959

Front Row L-R: Lal Kelly, Tony Johnson, ? Coen, Jackie Dunne, Declan Rankin, Kieran Egan.

Middle Row L-R: Joe Rice, Tom Coleman, Johnnie Smyth, Paddy Guider, Liam Farrell, Seamus Fahy, Brendan Fahy.

Back Row L-R: J.J. Hyland, Timmy Dwyer, Sean Dolan, Seamus Fahy, Bill Scott, Conor Morris (Teacher).

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John Raftery receives his trophy from Festival Chairman Michael Mullins and sponsor Francis Donoghue

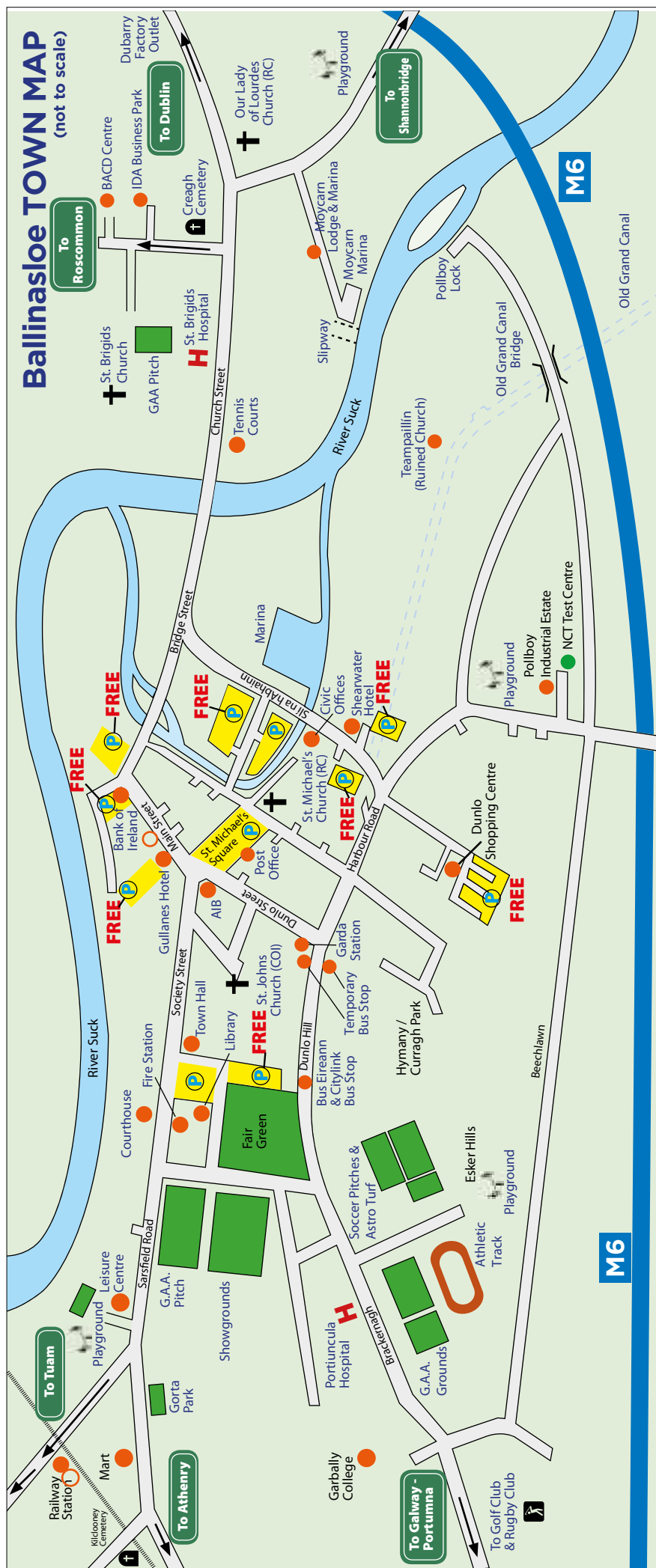
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Ballinasloe History Walk

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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