

# BALLINASLOE LIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Issue 05 Dec 2011/Jan 2012



**SOCIAL SERVICES  
REVIEW A BUSY YEAR**



**INTERVIEW WITH  
TOWN BOXING LEGEND**



**GARBALLY STUDENT  
ON IRISH U18 SQUAD**





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# BALLINASLOE LIFE

AN INSIGHT INTO THE AREA WE LIVE IN

Issue 05 Dec 2011/Jan 2012

## RÉAMHRÁ



Welcome to the Christmas/New year bumper edition! Bristling with articles and features on what makes our locality a busy, active spot. Please remind loved ones home for the holidays that each edition of "Life" is available online on the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre webpage. Spare a thought for the many households who will face into their first Christmas without a loved one, it's a cruel time for them. Some 70 plus locals have passed on since last Christmas.

Contained in the leaves of this edition and the previous ones is a snapshot into the four seasons we have just witnessed here. It's hard to believe that there are over 90 voluntary organisations, clubs and activities in the locality, raising over €3 million a year, to keep the show on the road for the citizens and visitors alike. They too are worried about how the bills will be paid, keeping the Lotto sales going and paying for the fuel to move young and old around to live healthy, engaged and normal lives. Examining their stories in detail - should provide huge reserves of hope for us all.

Yuletide encourages us all to look back. We have (despite what we hear and read) reasons to still be cheerful and optimistic. We need to spend the few days doing less reminiscing but more planning and strategy on where we want to be, or what we wish to achieve. Hope is not a strategy. What has often passed here for development is too piecemeal, too fragmented, too chaotic and perhaps too parochial for our own good. Predictable howls of protest occurred after we learnt the decentralisation bus will now never arrive but in reality who or what organisation led the charge on NRA headquarters moving here since announced in 2004? How many questions were raised about this matter in the Dail or Senate in the last seven years? Closer to home, the business people on the local council are aghast at the amended Town Development plan as in their view it doesn't serve retail or service consumers. Protests, Petitions, Campaigns and talk of costly legal disputes? Really are we to continue to condemn the current generation with the antics that we were all so disheartened with in the last century.

There must be a more productive way, we all deserve better locally and nationally. We sincerely hope that as we face into the new year, wiser more strategic counsel will prevail from all our political, community, civic, business and faith interests. We have no more time left to be complacent. The Bundestag is not just writing our cheques it will soon be deciding on what we eat.

Beannachtaí na Nollaig agus Ath Bliain Nua faoi mhaise daoibh go Léir.

Le gach Dea Ghuí.  
Colm Croffy, Editor



It is a proven statistic that the largest proportion of our disposable income is spent in the month of December. We ask you in December 2011 to think twice about where you will spend that money.

While we in the Enterprise Centre are focused on job creation it is just as important that we support existing jobs. There is immediate payback by doing this as money stays in circulation in the local economy.

As regards Ballinasloe Life we are committed to proceeding with Volume 2 in the new year and again I ask you to support our advertisers as without them we would not be able to go from strength to strength.

In conclusion and on behalf of the Board of Directors of BACD Ltd. we would like to wish all of our readers a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Seamus Duffy, Chairman  
Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd.

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# Christmas & New Year Greetings



## Mayor Mike Kelly

*As Mayor of Ballinasloe, I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a peaceful and joyous Christmas. Christmas is a time for family, friends and community, a time to enjoy the simple things in life. I would like to give a very special Christmas greeting and warm welcome to all who visit Ballinasloe over the festive season to spend time with family and their loved*

*ones. Christmas is also a time of good will and I would like to encourage people to give of their time to visit the elderly and those who live alone and be considerate of those less fortunate than ourselves.*

*In the hectic weeks in the run up to Christmas I would like to encourage people to support local businesses by shopping local. Ballinasloe like all towns is going through challenging times and it is vital that we support one another. As we look to 2012, I would encourage people to have a positive and optimistic outlook. I believe that we all have a part to play in promoting our town in a positive way as we face the challenges ahead. It is also important that we support our local groups and organizations. With this in mind can I take this opportunity to ask people to give their support to Ballinasloe Panto in their Christmas production of Jack and the Beanstalk at the Town Hall Theatre from 12th to 18th December and also Ballinasloe Musical Society in their production of Beauty and the Beast, scheduled for February 2012. Wishing you a peaceful and joyous Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.*



## Mark O'Donnell (Town Clerk)

*As we approach Christmas I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on what has been a busy year in a difficult economic situation. While available resources are much less than in recent years much was still achieved, including in more recent times the approval for the design of a new library in the Convent buildings, another successful Ballinasloe Fair, the approval of the*

*Town Enhancement scheme and the opening of the Dunlo Recreational Park including the 400m running track. I would like to acknowledge the staff of the Town Council who have responded positively to the challenge of scarce resources and have displayed flexibility in the continued delivery of services to the town and surrounding area. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Elected Members for their work and assistance in 2011 and I look forward to working with the Members, the staff and the wider community to achieve the best for Ballinasloe in 2012 and the years ahead. On behalf of the Town Manager, Mr Kevin Kelly, myself and all the staff, may I wish you and your families a Happy and Peaceful Christmas and a prosperous New Year.*



## Donal Scannell (Chamber of Commerce)

*On Behalf of Ballinasloe Chamber of Commerce and its members, I would like to wish all citizens of Ballinasloe and the surrounding area a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. While our Government has concerns over billions of Euro, locally many are worried about tens of Euro, but*

*working together we can help each other. When shopping this Christmas I would urge you to think how you can help your community and your country, buy in Ballinasloe when you can and buy Irish when you can. Many businesses need your support to stay open and if smaller shops close, they will not easily be replaced. There's great value to be had in Ballinasloe and I would ask you to come into town, have a look and help to keep your shops and jobs local. Keep your business in your community and your community in business.*



## Fr. John Garvey ADM

*A mother and father and their newly born child were part of the first Christmas. May all of those who are struggling to pay bills and make ends meet be supported over the Christmas and throughout the coming New Year. May you all have a very happy, peaceful and holy Christmas. Best Wishes to all locals and visitors for the New Year.*



## Rector George Flynn Aughrim and Creagh Parishes

*Best wishes to all as we all prepare for the Christmas season this year under difficult circumstances: recession, unemployment, illness, bereavement all of which my family have experienced this past year. On a personal note I am delighted to have this opportunity to express our deepest appreciation for all*

*your prayers during my step-son's critical illness, a second bout of Pneumococcal Meningitis which befell him in the middle of April. He has made a miraculous recovery. My father-in-law died in August and again we appreciate all your support at that time.*

*We face the future with strength and hope and faith enriching our lives at such time. At this season of Christmas and as a New Year approaches, it is my wish that you will all have a very peaceful and blessed time with your family and friends. Please also remember that many will be lonely at this time living alone and when at all possible give them some time, a visit to brighten their day. We in the Church of Ireland love to see visitors coming to our churches and in the calendar are some events that will take place during December that may be of some interest to the people of Ballinasloe and it's surrounding areas.*



## Colm Keaveney T.D.

*I would like to pass on seasonal best wishes to all the readers of Ballinasloe Life Magazine and hope that all have a happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year. The country, as everyone is aware, is facing huge challenges and adversity in 2012 but as the Labour Party T.D. for this constituency I will*

*continue to represent your concerns and be a voice for fairness. No problems are unsolvable if faced wisely and courageously to paraphrase FD Roosevelt and that will be my mantra going into the New Year. Making sure that everyone gets through this, that no-one gets left behind and that the best that is possible can be made of a severe situation. I believe we will turn the corner in 2012 and the way will be paved for confidence, growth and new jobs for this region and in the meantime lets work together to make it happen.*



**Ciaran Cannon T.D.**

*It has been nine months since my election to Dail Eireann and I am enjoying my new role immensely. I feel privileged to have received the support and the trust of so many people in our area and I am intent on honouring that trust in the years ahead. Christmas is a time for reflection upon the true meaning of love, peace, joy and justice. I am grateful for this opportunity offered*

*to me by Ballinasloe Life Magazine to wish all of you, the people of Ballinasloe and its environs, a very happy and peaceful Christmas. Thank you for your ongoing support and encouragement, it means a lot to me.*



**Paul Connaughton T.D.**

*I would like to extend good wishes to the people of Ballinasloe and surrounding areas and wish them a very happy and peaceful Christmas. Since being elected in February of this year, I have established an office at Main Street, Ballinasloe, which is open Monday to Wednesday and I regularly meet constituents there on Monday afternoons. I can be contacted at 090 96 46878 or 087 2354682. In*

*2012 I intend to continue to work on behalf of the people of Ballinasloe and East Galway and will continue to highlight the difficulties faced by the small and medium enterprises in the region, as well as working to attract new businesses into the region. I will also continue to work to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our society are protected from the harsh cuts that will continue to have to be made in coming years.*



**Michael P Kitt T.D.  
Leas-Cheann Comhairle**

*I would like to wish the people of Ballinasloe and surrounding areas a very Happy Christmas and New Year. I hope we can all look forward, with our families and friends to positive new year. Well done on Ballinasloe Life.*



**Sen. Lorraine Higgins**

*Christmas is for most of us a time for a break from work, for family and friends, for presents, turkey and crackers. It is a time for children to have their night of fun and laughter and for the gifts of Santa to delight their play. But we should not forget those who are alone, those we have lost, those serving abroad and those in distant lands far from their families. Wishing you every good wish for Christmas and the New Year.*



**Sen. Michael Mullins**

*My wish is that there will be some light at the end of the tunnel for all us all at the end of this austerity campaign. We need to continue to build on the things we are doing well - exports, tourism and the agricultural sector. I'd like to see more employment creation measures similar to the tourism sector in the new year and particularly like to see Govt. provide a measure of help for people with distressed mortgages on their*

*homes. I will be keeping a vigilant eye on the protection of our health services especially our local hospital. I hope that the Govt. will refocus their efforts on getting real support to small businesses in the first quarter and I would love to see the refurbishment of the Town Hall project fast tracked as a priority. To all our visitors and locals a happy and peaceful Christmas and new year!*



**Cllr. Carmel Greally**

*Christmas is the season of goodwill so let us try to be positive about all of the good things we have in Ballinasloe i.e. our excellent education facilities, recreational amenities, hospitals, hotels etc and try to be proactive and build on all the positives. Three things I would like this Christmas, firstly, to encourage people to shop in Ballinasloe and support local business where possible. Secondly, living in an age of recession and cutbacks let us try to share a little of what we have with those less fortunate. And finally, Christmas can be a very happy time for the majority of families but can also be a time of desolation and loneliness, so let's call on our neighbours living alone and ensure that they are okay. So, best wishes for a happy and Holy Christmas.*



**Mary O'Connell  
Chairperson Town Hall Theatre**

*On behalf of the Town Hall Theatre committee I would like to extend the warmest good wishes to you all for Christmas and 2012. It has been a busy time for us here recently with two shows presented by Acorn and Ard Scoil Mhuire and we are looking forward to Jack and the Beanstalk in December, Beauty and the Beast in February and many more in 2012. Next year we hope to begin fundraising in earnest for the total makeover of the Town Hall. If you would like to volunteer your time and skills we would love to hear from you! We hope that the restoration will bring happiness to the Society Street, Ballinasloe and our wider hinterland . Health and Happiness to you all for 2012.*



**Fergus Curran  
Lions Club President 2011-12**

*On behalf of the Ballinasloe Lions Club, I would like to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you a very peaceful and enjoyable Christmas and a wonderful new year. I would like to particularly remember those who are most needy this year.*



**Jane Enraght-Mooney  
President of Soroptomists  
Ballinasloe & District**

*Happy Christmas to all readers of Ballinasloe Life from the Soroptimists Ballinasloe and District. I would like to thank all those who supported our Poker Classic in Gullane's recently. The proceeds are going to Ballinasloe Mental Health Association and Social Services Ballinasloe. The Ada English School will be taking place during the May Bank Holliday weekend in the Shearwater Hotel Ballinasloe. This event last year was very enjoyable and should prove to be even better this year as more information about the town during that period in history is uncovered. Every Good wish to all our families and visitors.*

# Best Competition Launch 2012

## Writes Caitríona Ní Chadhain

The fourth round of the Ballinasloe Entrepreneurial Skills Tournament (BEST) competition has been launched in the town with the aim of promoting an entrepreneurial spirit in the youth of the town, the next generation of entrepreneurs. The Competition is open to all students in both Ardscoil Mhuire and St. Joseph's College, Garbally Park.

A presentation on the competition was given at each school recently by the BEST Team. The BEST team includes the Competition Judges: John Power, Declan Lenehan, Mary Molloy, Helen Kelly (Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre) and Michael Staunton, a previous chairperson of Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd. (BACD) who came up with the idea of the competition. Thomas Burke is the BEST Co-ordinator for St. Joseph's College and Eilis Finnerty the BEST Co-ordinator for Ardscoil Mhuire.

The students are encouraged to focus on creativity for a new business idea. The judges will evaluate each application and choose a number of finalists to pitch their 'BEST Idea' to them in a Dragons Den style presentation during the final stage of the competition. Application forms are available from the BEST Co-ordinator in each school or can be downloaded from [www.ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie](http://www.ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie) and the closing date for applications is the 15th December. All participants are then invited to an awards ceremony in March 2012 where the winners will be announced and a prominent entrepreneur will give a speech to the students and their parents. The BEST Winner receives a Cash Prize of €1,000 and runners up prizes will total €1,500. The competition is sponsored by The Ballinasloe

Enterprise Centre and The Ballinasloe Credit Union. There is also a prize of a laptop kindly sponsored by The Galway City and County Enterprise Board.

The Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre is an initiative of the Ballinasloe Area Community Development Company (BACD) and is now home to 14 enterprises employing in excess of 180 people. If you are in business or thinking of starting a business in Ballinasloe, the Enterprise Centre is on hand offering affordable, quality enterprise space to individual enterprises, companies and community groups with viable business ideas who wish to become part of the Ballinasloe business community. For more information call 090 9646516 or visit [www.ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie](http://www.ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie)



BEST Competition Joint Winners Emily Brewer, Aisling Kelly and Rachel Kelly with BACD CEO Seamus Duffy, GCEB CEO Breda Fox and Manager of Ballinasloe Credit Union, Noel Madden

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# The First Paramedic Training Programme Outside Dublin

Writes Caitriona Ní Chadhain

**Ballinasloe has become home to the country's first Paramedic training programme outside of Dublin. Here they train the men and women who are on beck and call day and night, to save lives and provide help in whatever way they can and in all sorts of circumstances.**

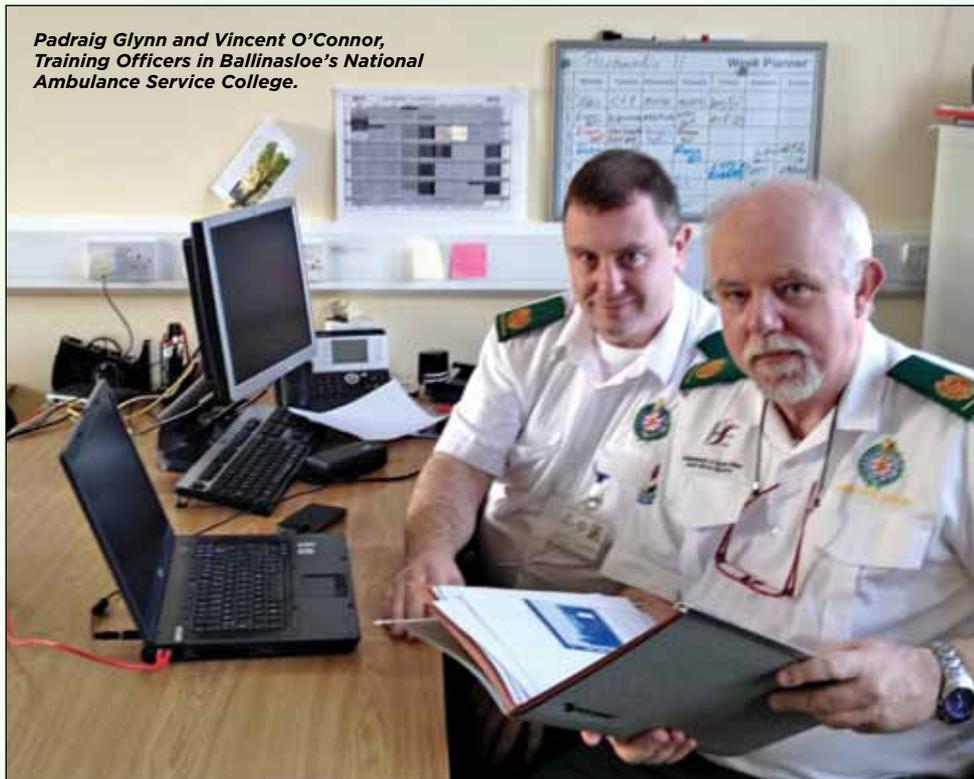
The Ballinasloe division of the National Ambulance Service College have trained about 320 paramedics since they opened in March 2008. The paramedic training course is a very intense programme and one which is in very high demand. Of 3,000 applicants last year, 100 were accepted to the course. Of those hundred, due to the great deal of pressure involved, there are quite a high number of trainees who are unsuccessful in completing the course.

The course is extremely intensive and runs full time over four months. The first 10 weeks is theoretical, with a 9 to 5 day. Trainees also spend a good deal of their time out on the road with mentors, this is where most of the practical work is done. Out of the 100 who are accepted, roughly around 80 trainees graduate from the course." It's not about whether or not they pass the exams, it's about whether or not I'd be happy to let them out to treat my family," said course director Pdraig Glynn.

"It's one of the best jobs in the world and it's dynamic, you see a lot of new things and meet new people every day. It's a rewarding job as well and it's the type of job where there's a sense of adventure to it." Training to become a paramedic takes two years, with an option to go on to do advanced paramedics after that which is run in UCD.

"It's not easy to get a place in this training course. We put so much time and effort in to ensuring that we hire the correct applicant for the job. Because we're going to invest significant money in to their training we want to ensure that we hire the right candidate," said Pdraig Glynn. Upon graduation, trainees can be sent to any unit in the country based on requirements at the time.

There is no need for people to have a background in medicine to apply to become a paramedic, but they do look for people with good education and people skills. "You could wallpaper your sitting room with certificates but



*Pdraig Glynn and Vincent O'Connor, Training Officers in Ballinasloe's National Ambulance Service College.*

if you can't make an elderly person feel comfortable then you're in the wrong job." said Vincent O'Connor, Deputy Director of Ballinasloe's Ambulance Training College and Training Officer for Galway, Mayo and Roscommon. "The program is focused on the student, they come in with no experience and we turn them in to wonderful paramedics."

The training college brings a good deal of business to the town with its students often taking residence up here while they complete their training. "Ballinasloe is an excellent location for the college, it's easy to get to, there's a train station and bus station, it's away from an urban built up area, nice grounds to walk around and we don't have the same high costs of living in Dublin," said Pdraig.

The Civil Defence run some major incidents during the year which gives the Ambulance Training, the Air Corps, Coast Guard, Defence Forces and the Fire Service a chance to train together. Incidents are set up and all units of the rescue services are given a chance to work together and prepare for the occurrence of such incidents. One such practice-drill took place in Ballinasloe recently.

The Ballinasloe division of the Ambulance training college had their first graduates in 2010. This college is based in the Enterprise Centre and focuses purely on paramedic training, hosting on average 25 trainees per class, the current age

range is 18 to 54. It takes two years to train for the role of the paramedic, with an option to go on to study advanced paramedics after that which is run in UCD. Paramedics are currently able to administer 15 drugs, can put in supra-glottic airways (airway in to the throat) and give injections, amongst other things. Advanced paramedics are able to administer about 50 drugs. Can give IV injections and can give medication such as morphine for pain.

"The ambulance service has changed significantly in the last 10 years, we're now on a world stage as one of the best places in the world to train to be a paramedic," said Pdraig. The Ambulance service have 11 control rooms at the moment around the country.

Plans are in place to invest €26 million in to improving the Ambulance Service's communications in the next year. "We'll have a world class communications centre, which will benefit the public and the patients by ensuring that we always have a vehicle available to respond." Dispatch life support is available country wide, the main communications centre is based in Dublin and the backup centre is located in Donegal. These centres provide paramedic pre-arrival advice and information.

The tutors of the Ambulance Service College work hard to produce the best paramedics they can and make sure they provide the best service possible.

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# Starting Off on The Right Foot



Dubarry Managing Director Eamonn Fagan in the Dubarry Factory Shop.

## Writes Caitríona Ní Chadhain

**Ballinasloe is the birthplace of worldwide footwear and clothing manufacturer, Dubarry. The Firm was established in 1937 by local dignitaries of the town in an attempt to create employment for the young people of Ballinasloe to put a stop to them emigrating.**

The Dubarry firm has progressed onward and upward since their foundation and have built a thriving international brand with its headquarters still based in Ballinasloe.

The main family involved in Dubarry's establishment were the Cullen's from Athlone, original shareholders also included members of the clergy and a number of prominent local business people. With no history of footwear manufacturing in the area, expertise was needed. Expertise came in the form of Jim Scott and his family, from Leicester, which at the time was the home of footwear manufacturing in Britain. The company started off making plain black shoes but soon expanded their range. The factory started on Society Street, in a building which was originally the first workhouse in Ballinasloe.

A management buyout took place in 1983 when Eamonn Fagan, Finance Director at

the time and Philip Boswell, the Design Manager took over the company. They focused on targeting the niche-market of sailing by developing "the best non-slip sole in the world" and using a leather that dries soft and quick when it gets wet. Original designs were done by Ballinasloe man Philip Boswell, based on the design of a car tyre. Dubarry have gone on to develop a big name for themselves in the sporting world. They are strongly associated with sailing, horse riding and many other outdoor pursuits.

The Dubarry factory ceased operations in Ballinasloe in 2004 with the loss of 75 jobs. This was due to the high costs of manufacturing here, products are

now made in Portugal, Eastern Europe and the Far East. "If we were still attempting to manufacture in Ireland, we'd be gone now," said Eamonn. The company's international headquarters however, remain in Ballinasloe where they control product development, marketing, distribution and quality assurance. The factory shop located in their headquarters is still very popular and offers discontinued stock and end-of-line products.

2010 reported a 44% increase in overseas sales. The clothing market was growing fast for Dubarry and last year's harsh winter also gave them a great spike in sales. "In the footwear and clothing business, a beautiful spring and a harsh winter is what's best for business," said Eamonn. Dubarry's two eye-tie boating shoes, called admirals or more commonly known as "Dubes" have become a favourite amongst Irish teens. "It's a classic shoe and brings in great business, long may it last," said Eamonn.

Local man Brian Geraghty is Dubarry's Design Director. The company design all their own footwear and clothing and they are made to specification by their sub-contract manufacturers. Dubarry shoes are designed for performance; "The shoes perform but they still look good as well. They do what it says on the tin with regards to being a lifestyle product but you can wear them shopping on Grafton Street too," said Eamonn. Dubarry have been partnered with a company called Gore-tex for 15 years. Gore-tex produce a high quality material, which is durable, breathable and waterproof. This material is based on the fact that a water molecule is bigger than an air molecule and its pores are big enough to let air through but not water. There are currently over 300 Dubarry stockists in Ireland alone and they also supply to over 20 countries the world over.



One of Dubarry's best known shoes 'Dubes'.

The Dubarry brand is resilient in the face of the current downturn. Although Dubarry's Irish market turnover has dropped 50% since 1978. Exports now make up 83% of the company's turnover. The export market is hugely important to the company because of this. "That's one of the reasons we're going to survive this recession and a lot of the companies who are dependent on the Irish market aren't." said Eamonn.

Dubarry's senior management all come from Ballinasloe or close-by and consequently the success of Dubarry filters down through local businesses. Quality Assurance is managed by Micheal Grenham, Sean Óg Hurley is Personnel Director, Finance Director is Michael Larkin, the Marketing Manager is Michael Walsh and Bernie Greene is the Purchasing and Planning Manager. 40 people are currently employed in Dubarry in Ballinasloe. At it's peak up to 250 people worked at the factory.

The company find Ballinasloe as a great place to do business from. "The roads are a tremendous help, the one legacy we have left from the Celtic Tiger is great, that you can get to Galway in half an hour and you can get to Dublin in an hour and fifteen minutes, travel is no longer a big issue and it's quite central." Dubarry work closely with many sporting

companies and events throughout the world including the Volvo Ocean Race the Dublin Horse Show, the Ploughing Championships and the Chelsea Flower Show. Dubarry engage directly with the public by having a presence at events such as this. They believe in having direct contact with clients. "It's your product, your baby and nobody will describe it better or present its benefits better than you will." said Eamonn.

The company have only branched into clothing in the past eight years. "It's a different business, but we've learnt a lot about clothing now and we feel it will be an important part of our future."

said Eamonn. At the moment it accounts for approximately 10% of their business, but they are hoping it will account for 50% in future.

Dubarry have always maintained great pride in their origins. Product names in the Dubarry collection come from Irish regions, towns, rivers, flora, ancient names, tribes and literary figures. Many of their world famous boots are named after Irish counties and regions including their signature 'Galway' boot. Dubarry's branches have spread successfully across the globe but the company remains firmly rooted in Ballinasloe.



# AMAI Conference in Ballinasloe

**Writes Caitríona Ní Chadhain**

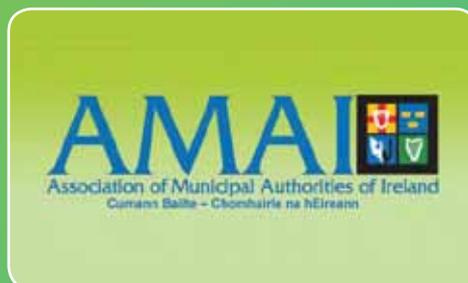
*The town council have made a successful bid for Ballinasloe to host the 100th conference of The Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland (AMAI) next year.*

*This will be two-day event spanning a weekend in September 2012. Over 400 public representatives and official delegates will be in attendance at the conference which is expected to bring over €100,000 in to the local economy. The main programme will be held in the Carlton Shearwater Hotel.*

*Councillor Johnny Walsh proposed the bid and secured agreement from the council executive and the other council members to make the presentation. Lobbying involved personally contacting the 40 standing council members in an attempt to secure their support.*

*This will be the first time this conference will be held in Ballinasloe. "It's about the Town Council being pro-active in encouraging the local economy." said Councillor Johnny Walsh.*

*The Ballinasloe delegation who made the pitch consisted of Johnny Walsh, Pat O'Sullivan (who was mayor at the time), Councillor Lucy Keighery and Eveanna*



*promises to be gala affair for their anniversary year. A small working group is now liaising with the AMAI Executive in ensuring that a full cultural and recreational programme can be woven into to the main convention activity which will see a galaxy of Government speakers and local authority specialists gathering in the town.*

*It is hoped that publicity surrounding this Conference and it's themes will re-enforce the attractiveness of the town with it's 200 plus quality approved rooms in the town and access to another 450 in a 30 minute coach ride - in gaining more national conferences and meetings.*

*Other significant events the council have been actively supporting during the past year include sponsorship of the Rose of Tralee Escort Boot Camp, the new summer river festival, The national Rose Tour Stop, the St. Patrick's Day Parade, the AOIFE Conference and are involved in the local Tidy Towns initiative.*

*"The success of this bid will help promote our strategic location as a quality convention centre and proves that with a progressive town council in partnership with the Hotel interests and local sponsors of events we can deliver positive results" said Cllr. Walsh.*

# Retailers Expect A Busy Xmas

## Chamber of Commerce

For the local business community Christmas is fast approaching and retailers are doing their best to get ready for what hopefully should be a busy shopping period. The Local Chamber of Commerce are making every effort to bring a bit of festive cheer to the town with the lighting display installed. The estimated cost of providing the lighting and other festive features is €16,000, which is covered by local retailers and the Town Council. It's hoped that shoppers will respond to this effort by supporting local. With over 500 people employed in the town centre in retail - it is hoped that people will consider the local retailers when making their Christmas present decisions.

To make it easier for you to support local businesses this Christmas, participating retailers will be extending opening hours until 8pm every Friday in December for the first time. Most businesses will have special Friday Night Offers available only between the hours of 6-8pm. A draw for gift vouchers will also take place in participating shops for customers that purchase on Friday nights between



The Siobhan and Pat Byrne with their Family at the Switching on of the Town's Christmas Lights last year.

6-8p.m. and for customers that purchase on any of the Sundays in the lead up to Christmas. See participating shops for more details. The majority of businesses in the town centre will be open on Sunday the 11th and all will be open on Sunday the 18th December.

From the 8th of December onwards the pay and display car parks at the back of St. Michaels Square and The Town Hall car park will be free from 11am each day until the end of December.

Shoppers will be delighted to know that this year there will be free parking all over town for the final week in the lead up to Christmas (19th to the 24th). This was agreed between the Chamber and the Town Council to promote the town centre and make it easier for the festive shopper.

The Gables Art Group will have an exhibition of their paintings at Dunlo Street (Old Ladbrokes Shop). Many of the pieces of Art done for the Mental Health Association project will also be on view.

The Chamber President Donal Scannell "Thanked all the people of Ballinasloe for their continued support and custom over the years and wishes them all the best this Christmas and for a prosperous new year." On Saturday, 4th February, The Chamber will be holding it's Annual Dinner Dance in the Shearwater Hotel. All are welcome. Contact Terry Noone 087 259 1855 for tables and tickets.



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## Headstones Ballinasloe



### Writes Kieran McMahon

Liffey Memorials is a locally owned headstone and memorial business directed by two Ballinasloe men, Darren Raftery and Mark Forde. Both men were educated in the town and went on to train in the stone industry together. For the past fifteen years Darren and Mark have worked separately in different areas of the Monumental Stone Industry throughout Ireland and after gaining vast experience in the stone industry they joined forces and established Liffey Memorials.

Liffey Memorials offer a professional, individualised and affordable service. They specialise in providing the highest quality headstones and memorials in Ballinasloe and are happy to service any graveyard nationwide. "We have brought to the market an exclusive range of high quality carved stones never seen in the area before and we are also able to replicate any headstone design that

a customer may require." said Darren. They deal directly with manufacturers in Ireland and abroad to bring top quality headstones at the best prices for their customers. Further more they offer cleaning/maintenance of headstones and graves and provide one off cleaning treatments which can restore even the oldest of stone back to its original state. They also provide an annual maintenance service, cleaning and tending to grave sites on a regular basis. This package appeals to people whom for whatever reason, be it time, distance, age or ill health, cannot tend to their loved ones graves. Liffey Memorials will tend to the grave every 4/6 weeks as well as Easter, Christmas, Anniversaries and birthdays and also for the annual Blessing. All works are guaranteed and crafted to the highest standards.

For further information about Liffey Memorials visit our website at [www.liffeymemorials.ie](http://www.liffeymemorials.ie) or Phone 090 9644433 for a brochure or free consultation.

# Local Groups Excel at Awards

Writes Caitriona Ní Chadhain

Ballinasloe Community groups did us proud recently at Galway County Council's County Mayor Awards. Over 250 people from Community and Voluntary groups from around County Galway attended the County's first ever Mayor's Awards in the Connemara Coast Hotel.

Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre fought off tough competition to pick up the Community Enterprise Award. Speaking after receiving the award, the Manager of the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre, Helen Kelly, said that they were "delighted the centre was being recognised for its enterprise activities. Helping and developing enterprises is so important in these challenging times, especially when many people have lost their jobs and are looking to diversify into other areas".

Ballinasloe and Claregalway had the most nominations in the Volunteer of the Year Awards which recognises the efforts of people volunteering within their communities. The four Ballinasloe nominees were Tom Naughton, Pat Dillon, David Kingsland and Pdraig Lyons. The award was won by Margaret McNulty of Oranmore.

A special presentation was given to Ballinasloe Community Response to Safety for their entry to the Pride of Place Competition. "The Pride of Place initiative is a great opportunity for showcasing community efforts at a national level. Community group activities commonly bridge the gap in areas where public services and facilities may not reach." said Mayor Cllr Michael Maher.



Above: Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre receiving the Community Enterprise Award. (L-R) Mayor of County Galway, Cllr. Michael Maher, Seamus Duffy, Helen Kelly, Paul Hargadon from the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre and Seamus Bree, Regional Manager Enterprise Ireland. Photo: Mike Shaughnessy.



Above: A special presentation was given to Ballinasloe Community Response to Safety who were nominated by Galway County Council in Pride of Place 2011. Cllr. Mogie Maher County Mayor with Patricia Tierney accepting the certificate joined by Alan Madden and Imelda Finneran.

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**E: [info@ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie](mailto:info@ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie)**

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



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# Ballinasloe Business Alliance

**Writes Caitriona Ní Chadhain**

*Despite the Town Council's 5 - 3 vote to proceed with an altered Town Enhancement Scheme at their latest meeting, the group representing the rate payers and businesses of the town centre remain hopeful that further elements of the plan can be tweaked to reflect the huge concerns expressed.*

*The Ballinasloe Business Alliance engaged the services of Stephen Dowd, a well known Town Planner, along with local architect Gerry Dolan to compile their submission to the public planning process on the new Town Enhancement scheme. A public meeting of all business owners, residents, customers and local and national public representatives was held with a huge attendance, to reflect on the problems presented by the Enhancement plan in its current format. Stephen Dowds gave a visual presentation on the night, of ideas on how Ballinasloe could be enhanced and took a question and answer session from the audience regarding the development of this size, nature and its implications on a provincial country town servicing a large agricultural catchment.*

*A large and detailed submission to the Town Council as part of the Part 8 Planning process was exhaustingly compiled, it contained a map of the current parking strategy and a map of the town with our suggested parking strategy incorporated. A large deputation of concerned citizens and business leaders held a rally outside the town council premises on the night of the vote. The group were very disappointed with the outcome of the council's monthly meeting and the fact primarily that their parking strategy had not been properly considered or adopted into the plan. Communication with officials and*



*representatives is ongoing as they draw up a revised plan, which has to come before the council for final ratification and they hope that a general consensus can still be reached. In the event that it can't all possibilities are being explored to prevent any further unwarranted destruction of the town centre's already fragile retail environment.*

*The focus now though is on making Ballinasloe a valuable shopping destination this Christmas. The group would like to see more parking concessions over the festive period on the principal streets. Many of the members are holding mid-season sales in their shops at the moment and recently many have participated at local craft fairs, so there is no better time to grab a bargain in Ballinasloe.*

*The Business Alliance are constantly recruiting new members and are always open to positive suggestions and ideas. They can be contacted by email at [ballinasloebusinessalliance@gmail.com](mailto:ballinasloebusinessalliance@gmail.com)*

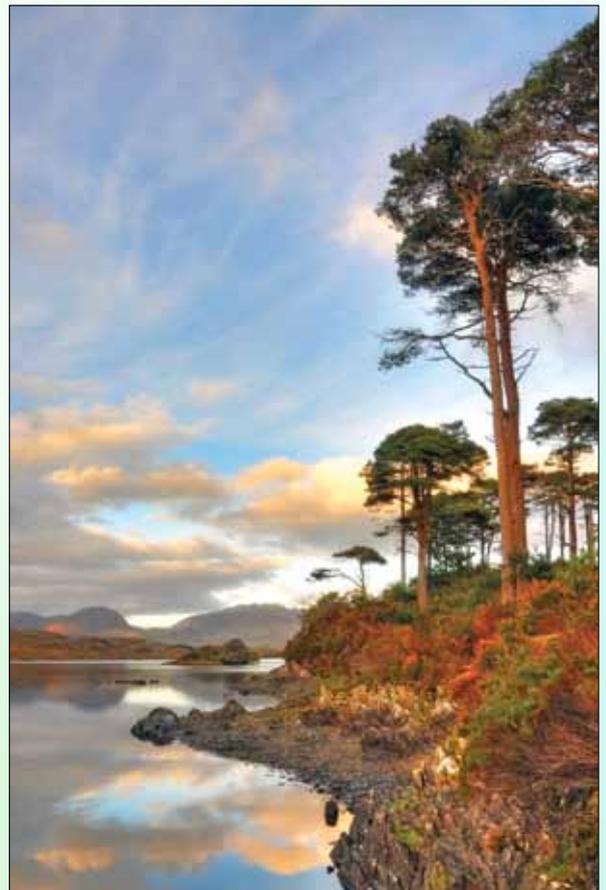
## Robert Snaps and Clicks Again

**Writes Ken Kelly**

*A Ballinasloe camera enthusiast has captured a national photography award for the second successive year with a landscape entry. Robert Riddell is a keen amateur landscape photographer in his spare time, with his photos featuring in an array of publications.*

*From over 500 entries Robert won the Met Eireann photography competition last year with his picture of "The McGillycuddy Reeks." This time round he was runner-up, from a field of over 800, with his entry of "Pine Island" in the nationwide competition. Both winning photographs were featured as part of the Met Eireann 75th Anniversary Weather Exhibition, held in Glasnevin, Dublin. The winning snapper explained "The colour and light of the Irish landscape is constantly changing due to our mild climate and I try to capture this on my travels around the countryside. Most of the images are from the western counties but I hope to visit the other regions more often to capture the scenery." Robert, who is a design artist with KPW Print and a VEC tutor in Digital Media in Canal House, Ballinasloe, has had his photographic images printed on the cover of Ballinasloe Life as well on the Ballinasloe Credit Union calendar for four successive years. The stained glass windows of St. Michael's Church are featured in "Windows to the Soul" while his photo of St. Matthew's Church in Clontuskert has been used by CROI on their Christmas Card collection.*

*Some of Robert's other photographs have featured on the Garbally College Christmas Cards, the "What's On" tourist guide to Connemara, on a TV documentary about the voyages of St. Brendan the Navigator (to be screened on the History Channel in the near future) as well as the Accord Family Centre in Brackernagh. Married to Finola with three children, Christopher, Darren and Emily, Robert said one of the highlights of his photographic experiences has to be his image of the Owentooey River in Connemara which hangs in the livingroom of the home of well-known actress Dame Judy Dench. To view more of Robert's striking photography visit his website: [www.robertriddell.com](http://www.robertriddell.com)*



# Social Services Review Busy Year and Prepare For Survival



Tea, cake and chat at the Social Services Centre.

Writes Teresa Coughlan

**Eamon Lally, the Chairperson of Ballinasloe Social Services, welcomed the attendees to its Annual General Meeting, held in the Social Services Centre recently. In his opening address, Eamon Lally told the meeting that in the past three years of cutbacks, Ballinasloe Social Services has managed to maintain its services; the key word is “survival”.**

There are many groups and organisations to thank for that – HSE West, Mercy Ministry Fund, Maureen O’Connell Fund of St Vincent de Paul, Michaelan Ensemble, Lions and Soroptimists Clubs, Bridge Club, Golf Club, Ard Scoil Mhuire, Garbally College, Clonbrock Walkers, Galway County Council, Go 4 life and Portiuncula Path Lab.

The support from the local community is humbling and he expressed gratitude to the people of Ballinasloe. Next year is the 40th anniversary of the organisation and it is due to the vision of the founders

– Joe Tarpey, Sister John, Margaret Mansfield, Stephen Connell – whose initial steps have grown into such a vital part of Ballinasloe. Eamon thanked the Mayor of Ballinasloe, Mike Kelly, for the support that the people of Ballinasloe have given to this organisation over the years. The organisation has also stood shoulder to shoulder with HSE West (formerly WHB) and is proud of this association.

The Elder Abuse seminar held in June highlighted some disturbing facts – lack of legislation in this area and the fact that so little can be done to resolve such matters. Eamon stated it was incumbent on the Social Services to now do something about it – perhaps, to start a discussion group with other groups dealing with the elderly.

In the Day Centre report, Nurse Eilish Gillane stated that the aim of the service is to enable clients and carers remain living independently in the community. This is being achieved as there are 69 clients on the attendance list with between 25 – 30 availing of the service daily. Eilish thanked the staff, volunteers and Tuesday musicians for their input. Needlework classes and an artwork

project are currently underway, thanks to the Ballinasloe Mental Health Association and Galway Rural Development marking Year of the Craft 2011.

Teresa Coughlan, Administrator, in her report, acknowledged another busy and successful year for the organisation. She thanked RAPID for funding the organisation’s new website [www.ballinasloesocialservices.ie](http://www.ballinasloesocialservices.ie) and invited the audience to visit it.

The Tuesday Club is now in its 6th year and is accomplishing what it set out to do – offer an opportunity for foreign nationals to meet, to network and to improve their English. Thanks was expressed to the volunteers who run this service.

The Care and Repair service is in its 2nd year and has 18 volunteers on its books. 74 elderly people have benefited from small jobs performed by the volunteers. Again, gratitude was expressed to the volunteers who are involved in this service

17,200 meals were delivered by Meals on Wheels in 2010. Kay Cunningham thanked her staff and 11 volunteers for their input. She also thanked the Vincent

de Paul and Civil Defence for their assistance during the year. Elaine Murphy and Lucy Dolan gave a presentation of the new programme being introduced in Ballinasloe Social Services pre-school – “Incredible Years” with the help of puppets Wally and Dino. This is a social and behavioural programme, which also involves parents.

**The newly elected Committee for the coming year is:**

**Chairperson:** Annette Lynagh.

**Vice-Chairperson:** Margaret Oliver.

**Secretary/Treasurer:** Teresa Coughlan.

**Committee Members:**

Sr. Alacoque, Eamon Lally, Ann Kenny, Marie Staunton, Martina Staunton, Jenny O’Sullivan, Michael Lally, Margaret Oliver, Regina Power and Ciarán O’Raghne.

Senator Michael Mullins as guest speaker – chose the topic of “Volunteering in Today’s World.” He began by stating that volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society, local committees, individuals outside the immediate family, the environment, sporting, charitable or other causes. Volunteering is central to the ideals of Democracy, Social Inclusion and Active Citizenship. It is also an expression of the individuals involvement in the Community.

Ballinasloe Social Services is an organisation synonymous with volunteering. Ballinasloe Social Services will celebrate 40 years in existence in 2012. There are 89 Volunteers. This wonderful service has grown and expanded over the years embracing the many changes that were necessary in today’s world.

In response Bishop Kirby stated that a town without volunteers is like a dried up tree without roots. Volunteers give life, energy and vitality to a community. Dan Quaid from the HSE stated that the HSE recognises the valuable work that is being done by Ballinasloe Social Services.

Town Mayor Mike Kelly congratulated Ballinasloe Social Services on 40 years of work and work that has been done in a quiet way. Stephen Connell added his congratulations to the upcoming 40th anniversary

A question from Sr. Alacoque asked what is being proposed for the new St. Brendan’s Ballinasloe Community Nursing Unit and when will it be opened up to the people of Ballinasloe. Adrian Ahern, in response said that with the current staff moratorium in the HSE, it will not be used to its full potential in the near future.

Eamon Lally thanked everyone for their input especially Michael for his inspiring talk on volunteers.



*Ballinasloe Social Service’s Tuesday band.*



*Sr. Alacoque (committee member) and Michael McCullagh at the fundraiser by the Michealleen Ensemble last April.*



*Kay Cunningham’s Meals on Wheels prepared over 17,000 meals in 2011*

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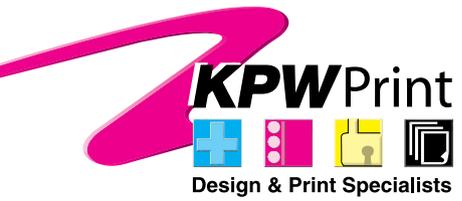


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# Helping Hand from St. Teresa's

**Writes Caitriona Ní Chadhain**

**St. Teresa's School offers help and support to the families who need it most. The strong relationship between the children and the staff of St. Teresa's is instantly apparent and the care they offer is second to none.**

St Teresa's School facilitate children with severe and profound disabilities and children with autism from the age of 4 to 18 years of age and help them to reach the best of their abilities. They also provide a preschool autism class, for children from 3 years of age.

The school endeavours to give the children support and to enable them to reach their potential in whatever way they can. With the help of physiotherapists and nurses, the staff of St Teresa's have seen children progress from not being able to walk at all, to being able to walk with aid.

The staff of St Teresa's school consist of a principal, six teachers, 13 special needs assistants, 3 nurses, a general assistant and an individual nurse from the Brothers of Charity. Having started off with eight children, the school now caters for 24. It is located in Ballinasloe's Enterprise Centre and officially became recognised as a school by the Department of Education under the patronage of Ability West

in 2008, before that it was a Child Development Centre under Ability West. The school started off working between Portumna and Ballinasloe and moved to the Enterprise centre in September 2010.

There are intensive speech and language programmes provided for the children and they are given individual daily programmes. Pictures are used to communicate as most of the children are non-verbal. "The most important thing in this area is to help them to communicate what they need," said Anne Cormican, one of the school's nurses. "Communication is everything, it's a slow process but we use lámh pecs pictures and schedules to help them express themselves."

The optimum way for children with disabilities to learn is through the senses. Plans are in place for a new sensory garden for the school funded by the Saint Vincent de Paul Maura O'Connell fund. The garden will contain specialised swings, including a platform swing for children on wheelchairs, basket swings, drums and different kinds of herbs, all designed specifically to help the children understand the world around them a little better through their senses.

There is currently a multi-sensory room in the school, where lights, music and specialised toys help to develop the child's understanding. St Teresa's get a good deal of support from the local

community here in Ballinasloe. Once a week, some of the children are brought to the Gaelscoil to integrate with the children there and to participate in group work, drama, music and PE.

The town library put on activities for the children, such as puppetry and singing and they regularly take part locally in activities such as horse-riding, provided by Carey's. Some of the children are brought swimming regularly at the Kingfisher pool.

Ability West are the school's patrons, this is a charitable organisation which provides respite, day centres and afternoon care to people with intellectual disabilities. Ability West have four special needs schools in Galway. Three for severe and profound illnesses and one for children with mild and moderate disabilities.

The Department of Education Bus Service brings all the students to and from school. Bus -escorts ensure a helping hand is always there for all the children. "The staff here are amazing, the children are first at every turn, without exception," said Anita O'Reilly, Principal.

St. Teresa's provide the best of care to the children who come to them. The affection the staff show towards the children is heart-warming and it is immediately apparent how fond the children are of the staff who care so much for them.



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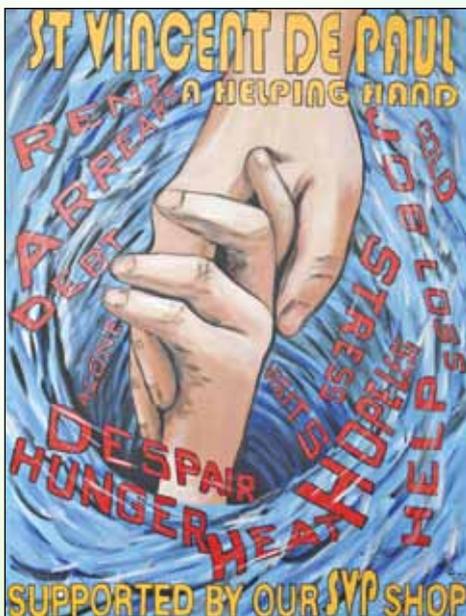
**Writes Caitriona Ní Chadhain**

The Ballinasloe Conference of the St Vincent De Paul was set up in 1912 with 35 members, in what was then known as the Temperance Hall. It discontinued its activity from 1915 until 1926, when it was re-established with the late Andrew Staunton as President and the late Paddy Carroll as Secretary. Calls to St. Vincent de Paul have almost doubled over recent years and over the course of Christmas this year, volunteers of St. Vincent de Paul will make 150,000 visits to homes throughout Ireland.

The St. Vincent de Paul do all they can to help people in all sorts of circumstances. From people in financial difficulties, lone parents, people dealing with unexpected pregnancies, elderly people who may be in need of assistance and even people who mightn't have the money to continue their education.

The organisation have seen a different type of person coming forward for help in recent years. "We're always here to open the door to these people, they feel that they would never need to go to St. Vincent de Paul but things change and circumstances change, we've had a lot of people like that and we're

glad they came forward." said Kevin McMorrow, of Ballinasloe SVP. "We are totally indebted to the public." said Joe Sammon, Chairperson. "If it wasn't for the loyalty, devotion and dedication of the public, we wouldn't be here. The majority of our work is getting out there and helping people cope with short-term emergencies." said Kevin Whyte. Short-term problems could include people in



danger of their electricity being cut off or if they haven't got enough food to last a week. They sometimes engage with electricity suppliers in the event that somebody is in danger of being cut-off. "Most things in life are passing, today you might be needy, tomorrow you mightn't be if you do something about it." said Kevin. Some people seem to think of it as a personal failure to go to the SVDP. "I think what stops a lot of people coming forward is that they're thinking 'will people find out that I'm going?'" said Joe. St. Vincent De Paul promise 100% confidentiality to anyone who comes to them for assistance.

In the early Early 90's they were down to four members. They invested in a building on Jubilee Street, set up a shop and money started coming in. The shop is still going strong and is now the main source of income. They have 16 volunteers at the moment and 20 volunteers for the shop. Church collections on the 10th and 11th of December will be donated in full to the St. Vincent de Paul, or you can send donations to SVP, Ozanam House, Ballinasloe.

If you would like to get in touch with the St. Vincent de Paul, Ballinasloe you can call their 24 hour Emergency Mobile, 086 2307373 or the Conference Number on 090 9645707

## Ballinasloe Lions Club Looking Forward to The Festive Season

**Writes Caitriona Ní Chadhain**

Ballinasloe Lions Club is a part of "The International Association of Lions Clubs". This association is the largest service club organisation in the world with over 1.3 million members, spread throughout more than 160 countries. The Ballinasloe branch began in 1982, with Roger Mulvihill as president at the time.

Current Officers include President Fergus Curran, Joint Secretaries - PJ Lenihan and Noel Lohan and Joe Gaffney Treasurer.

The Lions Club motto and philosophy is "We Serve", they operate closely with other voluntary organisations to give a helping hand to the underprivileged in society. Every Christmas they run a food appeal where they supply hampers to people who may be in need or who might not be in a position to get out and stock up for themselves over the Christmas period.

148 baskets were delivered to people in Ballinasloe and the surrounding areas in 2009, this increased to 184 in

2010; portraying a jump in the need for services such as this. Hampers include food items donated from local people and businesses. The Lions Club offer support to people who may fall between different support agencies in town. They offer assistance to people who may be in need through the advice of the HSE and social services representatives. To donate to the Christmas food appeal, look out for boxes in local shops, they will also be running flag days on the 17th and 18th in the town.

The club run various fundraising events throughout the year, including their annual Golf Classic, Flag Days and Car Park fundraising. They also run a teen talent contest for the youth of the area as well as their youth ambassador competition. Last year's winner Aoife Murray went on to win in the European contest. The Christmas Food Appeal has been running for 25 years now and Ballinasloe are one of the only clubs who still do it the traditional way, with the more personal touch of giving hampers, rather than supplying vouchers.



William Duthie and PJ Lenihan. Members of the Lions Club.



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# Town's Inaugural Literary Day



**Pictured at the event. Back (L-R): Deirdre Mulryan and Margaret Hickey (Authors), Michael Maher (Galway Mayor), Senator Michael Mullins, Colm Keaveney T.D., Nuala Ni Chonchuir (Author), Mike Kelly (Ballinasloe Mayor), Kieran Coyne (Galway Co. Council), Donal Scannell (President, Chamber of Commerce) and Anne McCabe (Author). Front (L-R): Mary O'Rourke (Athlone), Ciana Campbell (Ennis and Literary Day Host) and Mary Mullen (Author and Tutor).**

## Writes Evelyn Parsons

**Ballinasloe Booksuckers Club is a group of individuals with a shared interest in reading and an appreciation of the written word. It is inclusive of all genre and texts believing that much can be gained from a wide selection of works and discussion of varied opinions and insights.**

Ballinasloe Booksuckers' Inaugural Literary Day was held in Gullane's Hotel in late November, with both Mayor Mike Kelly of Ballinasloe and Mayor Michael Maher of Galway County launching the official opening. It was hosted superbly by Ciana Campbell, a former RTE presenter and now Chairperson of the highly successful Ennis Book Club Festival held in March each year, where the Booksuckers this year won a runners-up prize for their written entry in the best book club in Ireland.

A wealth of literary talent was enjoyed by the many attendees, some of whom came from Kilkenny and Dublin for the event. Local writers featured particularly strongly with enthralling readings from Nuala Ni Chonchuir's new poetry collection *The Juno Charm*, which was launched at the event. Author Mary O'Donnell has said of the book: "To read *The Juno Charm* is

to encounter a writer who is modern, white, female and Irish, whose work both charms and challenges. *Nuala Ni Chonchuir* reveals herself yet again as a witty and energetic purveyor of the happiness and pleasure that lie on the far side of the wall of common experience and that are to be discovered simply by following the natural path to our most physical and erotic selves." This is Nuala's third offering and follows on from her short story collection, 'To the World of Men, Welcome' which has been reissued.

Other speakers in attendance included, Deirdre Mulryan, John Boland, Maureen Cahalan, Declan Kelly, Stephen Heery and Eamonn O'Donoghue. Writer and television director Anne McCabe read an evocative extract from her recently published book 'Under the Avalanche', Margaret Hickey treated the listeners to the richly drawn, first handed accounts of past Irish life recorded faithfully in her book 'Irish Days', while Mary O'Rourke read the prologue from her eagerly awaited memoirs due to be published next year. Salmon's Bookshop was on hand to facilitate selling copies of the books which authors were happy to sign.

This inaugural event was deemed a great success by both writers and attendees. Workshops in Journalism, given by Emer Connolly, a journalist and journalism lecturer in UL and memoir writing, given by poet Mary Mullen, were filled to capacity and the feedback from attendees was highly positive.

A Heritage Evening was held later that evening in Hayden's Hotel where Ursula Marmion, Barry Lally and Liam Roche gave interesting and informative talks on Local History, Workhouses and Irish Castles. The Booksuckers Literary Day and Heritage Evening were kindly sponsored by the local charity, Community Hearts of which Maureen Cahalan is the secretary.

The club's name derives from the location of Ballinasloe on the River Suck and Kenny's Bookshop Galway awarded it a prize this year for the best named book club. Sure, its members have different tastes, but they think that happens to be a good thing! In fact, most of them would never have heard of certain worthwhile authors if joining the club had not expanded their horizons beyond their individual reading patterns. They are indeed Suckers for books!

**The Booksuckers meet the first Monday of each month, in Gullane's Hotel foyer at 9pm, to discuss their latest pick. This month's choice is 'A visit from the Goon Squad' by Jennifer Egan. New members are always welcome. Alternatively contact Evelyn on [eveppar@msn.com](mailto:eveppar@msn.com) for more information.**



**Local writer Nuala Ni Chonchuir makes a presentation to Literary Day host Ciana Campbell.**

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# Lourdes Pilgrimage A Success



## Writes Brian Casey

*The diocese of Clonfert has been going on pilgrimage to Lourdes for twenty years. People go to Lourdes for many reasons, such as comfort, retreat and for a sense of renewal.*

*Many have a strong devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes and visit the Grotto every day while there, it is a wonderful time to gather thoughts for the year ahead and can bring a sense of closure to various problems one went through prior to their visit.*

*The various ceremonies planned by the diocese and others that take place within the grounds of the sanctuary play an important role in such a process, these include; the opening mass of the pilgrimage, the anointing of the sick, a penitential service, the stations of the cross and the closing mass of the pilgrimage. There are three other ceremonies that take place every day within the sanctuary and members of the Clonfert pilgrimage participate in these on given days.*

*The Accueil Notre Dame, within the grounds of the Sanctuary was built in 1997, to cater for the large numbers of sick that visit every year. It is a purpose built, hospital style facility, where the very sick can be catered for with dignity. The Clonfert pilgrimage brings a large staff of doctors, nurses, brancardiers (male helpers), handmaids (female helpers),*

*students, parish representatives and members of the Irish Wheelchair Association every year to assist those with mobility.*

*Planning for the pilgrimage is continuous and there is a committee that meet often throughout the year in order to ensure that everything is in place for when the pilgrims arrive in Lourdes on 23 August . There are fifty wheelchairs donated by people living in the diocese that are kept there for use by Clonfert every year. These people donate these chairs in honour of loved ones. The committee also organise fundraisers every year in order to ensure that we can bring over sick people to Lourdes. The selflessness and sense of fun of the staff is something that many people comment upon and helping out gives one a sense of appreciation of the difficulties many face with great fortitude.*

*The pilgrimage gives people time to gather their thoughts in the face of the year ahead and the courage to keep going, no matter how grim the future may be. Working long hours with some wonderful people for five days is an enriching experience. It is something that should be experienced at least once by anybody that is interested in exploring their faith, or looking for closure in a difficult part of their lives. The personalities of those on the Clonfert pilgrimage, coupled with the unique atmosphere of Lourdes itself, makes it a rather memorable place.*

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# Mind Your Head!

**Writes Kieran McMahon**

Ballinasloe Mental Health Association has been in existence since 1970. It aims to raise awareness of mental health issues, raise funds to support mental health related initiatives and promote positive mental health throughout the community. Working in partnership with the National Organisation, Mental Health Ireland, we organise public speaking projects for secondary schools, public meetings and run fundraising events.

Recently, with the assistance of Kieran Coyne from RAPID we secured grant funding from Galway Rural Development (GRD) to promote positive mental health projects. In early November to mark 'Year of the Craft' Mayor of Ballinasloe, Michael Kelly opened a Craft Your Wellness Exhibition in the Carlton Shearwater Hotel to inform the Ballinasloe people what is available to them within the community and present pastimes or hobbies which could enhance their quality of life by getting involved. Ms Mary Claire Brennan, Acting CEO of GRD spoke at the opening of the Exhibition.

Earlier that day Senator Michael Mullins launched the Community Arts Project.

A wide and diverse range of groups and organisations participated to produce artworks in conjunction with local artists to portray positive images of mental health and wellbeing. Thanks to Mr. Tom Madden, Chairperson of GRD these images will now be exhibited on display boards around the town and at the Railway Station. The collection will also be available in a 2012 calendar. During a brief visit to the event Junior Health Minister, Kathleen Lynch was pleased to receive one of the artworks. Senator Lorraine Higgins and the Mayor of Galway County, Michael Maher were also in attendance. To demonstrate the inclusiveness of the projects we worked closely with the National Schools in a Crib Making Project which was facilitated by the Creagh Training Centre. Additionally, we provided craft sessions and materials for Ballinasloe Social Services.

Finally, to acknowledge World Mental Health Week on in October we held a Trialogue in Haydens Hotel. Trialogue is a facilitated circle of conversation that offers people a unique opportunity to freely and safely share their own experiences and stories or ask questions about mental health. This open approach



Josephine Helly of ICA Bootcamp and Senator Lorraine Higgins at the 'Craft Your Wellness' Exhibition.

also offers people the opportunity to observe and listen to gain insight into the lived personal experience of others. The Trialogue is aimed at people working in mental health, people who have mental health difficulties, their carers, relatives or friends and anyone who cares about positive mental health.

Our next event will be An Advent Evening with Classical Guitarist John Feeley in St. Johns Church on Thursday 8th December 2011 at 8pm.

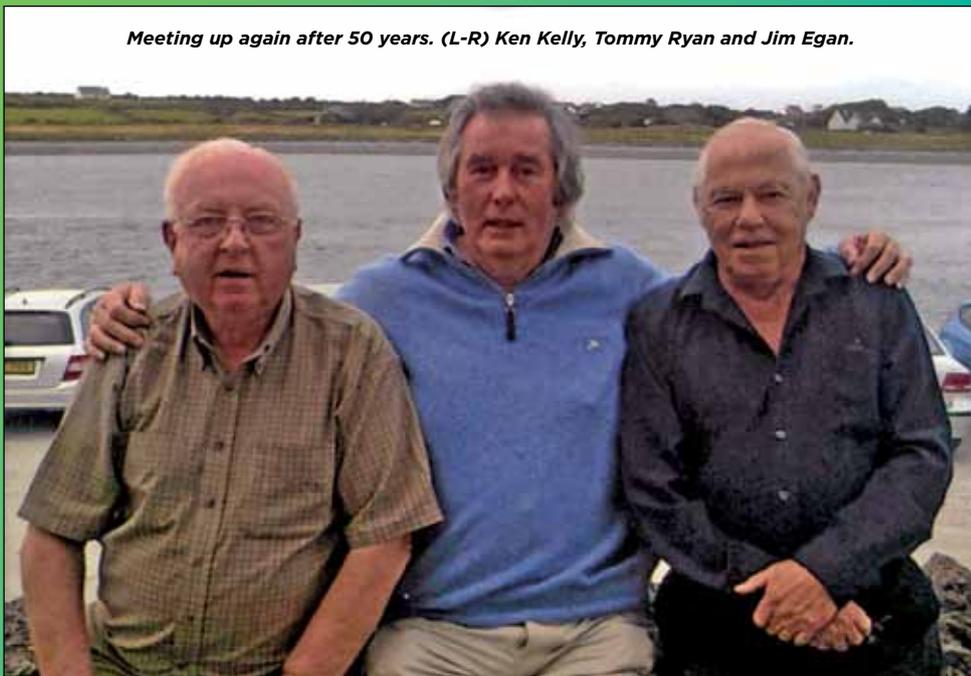
# Reunited After Over 50 Years

**Writes Ken Kelly**

They were school pals, footballing teammates and close friends but had not seen one another for over fifty years. Recently the trio, in the persons of Tommy Ryan, Jim Egan and yours truly, met up and reminisced on their teenage "adventures" of over half a century ago.

Home on a holiday from Toronto for a special family occasion, Jim Egan who was better known as Seamie in the Creagh locality where he was reared, emigrated in 1958 to New York. An outstanding under-age footballer and rugby player, for both Creagh and Ballinasloe, Seamie's talents were soon recognised in the Big Apple and featured on several inter-county teams in the States. He later moved to Toronto, Canada where he is now living in retirement.

Tommy Ryan, who was reared in Harbour Road, also emigrated in 1958 to Birmingham. He was employed for several years as a Council administrator and following his retirement he returned home and now resides near Kinvara. Another talented footballer, whose many magnificent displays in the Jubilee and Ballinasloe jerseys are still talked



Meeting up again after 50 years. (L-R) Ken Kelly, Tommy Ryan and Jim Egan.

about to this day. Yours truly met up with both returned exiles recently and the exploits of more than fifty years ago were recalled. Many of them, fortunately, will never appear in print but suffice to say nobody was ever harmed, hurt or insulted during the teenage frolics. It was

a nostalgic occasion, which highlighted the importance of reunions, whether it be families, friends or schoolmates as the winter years gradually creep up on us all. Thank God we had the health and the memory to relive that happy time. It was special.

# Events Guide - DECEMBER & JANUARY

<b>1st DECEMBER - Thursday</b>		
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
<b>2nd DECEMBER - Friday</b>		
An Táin	Dave Byrne	10pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Michael Regan	10pm
Maud Millar's	Joxer	10pm
<b>3rd DECEMBER - Saturday</b>		
Carlton S'water Hotel	Chris Nash	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Cajun Chicken	10pm
Maud Millar's	Streetwise	10pm
Ahascragh Church	Christmas Musical Evening	8pm
<b>4th DECEMBER - Sunday</b>		
Dunlo Tavern	Trad Session with Still Slopín'	10pm
Gullane's Hotel	Community Christmas Market	All day
Maud Millar's	Hoppy Bar Stars	10pm
New Inn	Car Boot Sale Croffys Yard	10-4pm
<b>5th DECEMBER - Monday</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
<b>6th DECEMBER - Tuesday</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Mothers & Toddlers	11am
	Tea Dance	9pm
St. Michael's Church	Gaelscoil Carol Service	7pm
<b>7th DECEMBER - Wednesday</b>		
An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	10pm
Gullane's Hotel	Active Retirement	3pm
St. John's Church	Healing Service	3pm
<b>8th DECEMBER - Thursday</b>		
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
St. John's Church	Evening with Guitarist John Feeley	8pm
Social Services Centre	Christmas Sale of Work (Brackernagh)	11am
<b>9th DECEMBER - Friday</b>		
An Táin	The Klients	10pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Paschal Brennan	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	The Ramblers	10pm
Maud Millar's	Helium	10pm
<b>10th DECEMBER - Saturday</b>		
Carlton S'water Hotel	Frankie Mc Donald	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Annemarie McLoughlin	10pm
Maud Millar's	Rivulettes	10pm
<b>11th DECEMBER - Sunday</b>		
Carlton S'water Hotel	Santa at the Carlton	2-5pm
Maud Millar's	The Skillet Pot	10pm
New Inn	Car Boot Sale Croffys Yard	10-4pm
<b>12th DECEMBER - Monday</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
Maud Millar's	Jukebox Gypsy	10pm
Town Hall Theatre	Jack & The Beanstalk Christmas Panto	7.30pm
<b>13th DECEMBER - Tuesday</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance Christmas Party	9pm
Town Hall Theatre	Jack & The Beanstalk Christmas Panto	7.30pm
<b>14th DECEMBER</b>		
An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	10pm
Gullane's Hotel	Ballinasloe Flower & Garden Club	8pm
Town Hall Theatre	Jack & The Beanstalk Christmas Panto	7.30pm
<b>15th DECEMBER - Thursday</b>		
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
Town Hall Theatre	Jack & The Beanstalk Christmas Panto	7.30pm
<b>16th DECEMBER - Friday</b>		
Carlton S'water Hotel	Claymore	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Done & Dusted	10pm
Maud Millar's	Converse All Stars	10pm
Town Hall Theatre	Jack & The Beanstalk Christmas Panto	7.30pm
<b>17th DECEMBER - Saturday</b>		
Carlton S'water Hotel	Liam Doyle	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	One 2 One	10pm
Maud Millar's	Al O'Connor	10pm
Ballinderrin N.H	Carol Singing	5pm
Millrace N.H	Carol Singing	7.30pm
Town Hall Theatre	Jack & The Beanstalk Christmas Panto	2.30 & 7.30pm
Pillar House	Kennedy, Lewis & Hick Trio	10pm
<b>18th DECEMBER - Sunday</b>		
Maud Millar's	Hoppy Bar Stars	10pm
New Inn	Car Boot Sale Croffys Yard	10-4pm
Rectory	Lunch SVDP Rectory	
Aughrim Church	Carol Service & Lunch in aid of SVP	11.30am
Town Hall Theatre	Jack & The Beanstalk Christmas Panto	2.30pm
<b>19th DECEMBER - Monday</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Line Dancing	8pm
St. Michael's Church	Service of Reconciliation	7.30pm
<b>20th DECEMBER - Tuesday</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
St. Michael's Church	Scoil an Chroí Naofa Carol Service	7pm

<b>21st DECEMBER - Wednesday</b>		
An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	10pm
<b>22nd DECEMBER - Thursday</b>		
Maud Millar's	Hickory Wind	10pm
<b>23rd DECEMBER - Friday</b>		
Carlton S'water Hotel	Something Different	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Buzz The Agent	10pm
Maud Millar's	The Rivulettes	10pm
<b>24th DECEMBER - Saturday (Christmas Eve)</b>		
An Táin	The Gegan Pagans	5pm
St. Michael's Square	St. Michael's folk choir carol singing	1-4pm
St. Michael's Church	Christmas Childrens mass	6pm
St. Michael's Church	Midnight Mass	12am
Creagh Church	Midnight Mass	12am
Woodlawn Church	Holy Communion Service	9pm
Aughrim Church	Holy Communion Service	11.30pm
<b>25th DECEMBER - Sunday (Christmas Day)</b>		
St. Michael's Church	Christmas Mass	9am, 11am and 12.15pm
Creagh Church	Christmas Mass	10.30am
Ahascragh Church	Holy Communion Service	8.15am
Clontuskert Church	Holy Communion Service	11am
<b>26th DECEMBER - Monday (St. Stephen's Day)</b>		
An Táin	DJ Lee	10pm
<b>27th DECEMBER - Tuesday</b>		
Dunlo Tavern	Kensey 3	10pm
Gullane's Hotel	Tea Dance	9pm
Maud Millar's	Skillet Pot	10pm
<b>28th DECEMBER - Wednesday</b>		
An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	10pm
Maud Millar's	Joxer	10pm
<b>29th DECEMBER - Thursday</b>		
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
<b>30th DECEMBER - Friday</b>		
An Táin	Alan Lawlor	10pm
Carlton S'water Hotel	Chris Nash	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	Gaegan Pagan	10pm
Maud Millar's	Hickory Wind	10pm
<b>31st DECEMBER - Saturday</b>		
An Táin	DJ Lee	10pm
Dunlo Tavern	The Klients	10pm
Maud Millar's	Mike Carty	10pm
<b>1st JANUARY - Sunday (New Year's Day)</b>		
An Táin	The Mac	6pm
<b>4th JANUARY - Wednesday</b>		
An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	10pm
<b>5th JANUARY - Thursday</b>		
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
<b>6th JANUARY - Friday</b>		
Dunlo Tavern	Trad Session	10pm
New Inn	Mummers Festival (Juniors)	All Day
<b>7th JANUARY - Saturday</b>		
New Inn	Mummers Festival (Seniors)	All Day
<b>8th JANUARY - Sunday</b>		
An Táin	The Mac	6pm
<b>11th JANUARY - Wednesday</b>		
An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	10pm
Gullane's Hotel	Flower & Garden Club Xmas Party	8pm
<b>12th JANUARY - Thursday</b>		
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
<b>13th JANUARY - Friday</b>		
Dunlo Tavern	Kiwi Paddy	10pm
<b>14th JANUARY - Saturday</b>		
Pillar House	The Rye	10pm
<b>18th JANUARY - Wednesday</b>		
An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	10pm
<b>19th JANUARY - Thursday</b>		
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
<b>20th JANUARY - Friday</b>		
Dunlo Tavern	Kieran Whyte	10pm
<b>25th JANUARY - Wednesday</b>		
An Táin	Traditional Irish Music	10pm
<b>26th JANUARY - Thursday</b>		
Maud Millar's	Acoustic Session	10pm
<b>27th JANUARY - Friday</b>		
Dunlo Tavern	One 2 One	10pm
<b>28th JANUARY - Saturday</b>		
Dunlo Tavern	The Klients	10pm
<b>29th JANUARY - Sunday</b>		
Gullane's Hotel	Ballinasloe Bridge Club	

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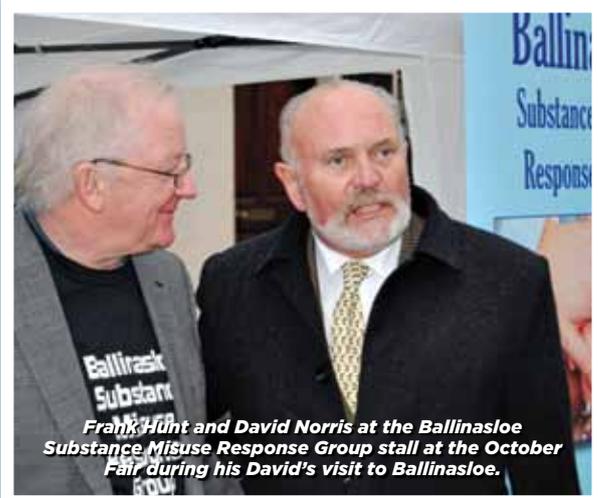
# Out and About in Ballinasloe



*Dog Show Prize winners at the Ballinasloe Fair and Festival Dog Show (L-R) Patrick Finnerty (Beechlawn) Christine Curran (Dèerpark) and Maura Goode (Laurencetown)*



*Michael Kearney CEO of the Garlton Hotel Group speaking at the official launch of the Ballinasloe Fair and Festival.*



*Frank Hunt and David Norris at the Ballinasloe Substance Misuse Response Group stall at the October Fair during his David's visit to Ballinasloe.*



*Large group who attended the presentation to Share A Dream at Melody's at Moycarn Lodge, Ballinasloe.*



*Deirdre Finnerty (Credit Union Car Winner) is presented with keys by Teresa Kilmartin (MD Kilmartins Ford). Also present are John Power (BCU Director) and Mike Kelly (Kilmartins Ford).*



*Presentation of a cheque to Jonathon Griffin on behalf of the Special Olympics by Kevin McMorow. Also pictured are Kevin White, Joyce O'Grady-Finn, Dave McEnroe and Leo Kiernan.*



*Kitty Mulvihill and her eight children on her 90th Birthday. Back: Peter, Thomas, Seán, Michael and Pat Mulvihill. Front: Renee, Kitty, Rita and Ann.*



*Maire Gibbons, Martina Flanagan, Queen of the Fair Catriona Farrell, Claire Gibbons and Bridie Ruane were the best entertainers in the Singing pubs competition for the Ballinasloe Fair and Festival. Also pictured is Fair and Festival Chairman Tim Broderick.*

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# Out and About in Ballinasloe

**Louise Curley (Attyrory) and Declan Mannion Killure who returned from Australia to be married at Killure Church recently. (L-R) Fiona Mannion, Catriona Kearney, Orla Howard, Louise and Declan, Cormac Lyons, Aiden Mannion and David Faulkner. Flower Girls: Chloe Howard, Shona and Leah Kearney. Page Boy: Conor Howard.**



**Horse of the Fair 2011 (L-R) Adrian Ahern (BCU), Jim Kent (BCU) Andrew Gardiner and Neil Henry (Owner).**



**Sales and Marketing Manager at the Carlton Shearwater Eveanna Ryan and newly appointed Restaurant Manager Faolan Sweeney**



**Pantomime Musical Director John Roe and Jack and the Beanstalk crew at rehearsals for the show.**

**Maisie Reynolds recently celebrated her 90th Birthday with Family and Friends in Gullane's Hotel, Ballinasloe. Photo: Padraig Ryan**



**Seamus Duffy (Chairman BACD), Tim Broderick (Chairman Fair and Festival), former Irish international Niall Quinn and Paul Hargadon (Director BACD) at the opening of Fair Week in the Carlton Shearwater.**



**The Spicy Girls Team, who collected €7871.96 for Ballinasloe Relay For Life, are pictured here with John McCormack CEO Irish Cancer Society.**

**Rodney Dolan (Centra Nobber) and Fergal Dunne (Supervalu Ballinasloe), who both completed the Marathon in Aid of Irish Autism, present cheque to Keith Duffy (Irish Autism Action).**



# Unforgiven: Love and Loss

**Writes Caitriona Ní Chadhain**

*Unforgiven, a play written by Irish playwright John McDwyer, was brought to Ballinasloe's Town Hall Theatre recently by the Acorn Theatre Company. Unforgiven portrays an old Ireland tangled with a more modern world, where the traditions that marked the lives of the older generation are clung to but marked by a wider influence. PJ, played by John Boland anxiously awaits the death of his father, who he feels is holding him back from fulfilling his wishes of marrying their neighbour, Mary, played by Mary Cuddy. Little does he know that Mary has other ideas.*

*This play offers an instantly identifiable and comic depiction of Irish rural life in the recent past. As is inherent in much Irish comedy, there is an underlying touch of sadness to the humour which fabricates the play. Seamie, also known by his nickname 'Wan Word', for 35 years has been adamant in his nearly-silent protest. Despite their fathers' remorse he will never be forgiven for the beating he gave Seamie when he was a teenager. His punishment to his father is in his relentless refusal to speak more than one word at a time.*

*After relinquishing his grip on his unshakable protest following his father's death, Seamie, played by Seamus Feerick becomes the star of the show. His monologue where he speaks about his favourite movie Unforgiven starring Clint Eastwood, was the first occasion where he spoke more than one word and the show's crowning moment. He managed to keep the audience teetering on his every syllable. When their third brother Eamonn, just back from America for the funeral, is thrown in to the mix he offers a telling contrast between the Irish and*

*American way of life. Eamonn is played by Pat Canty. His brothers see his lifestyle as completely foreign to their own and Eamonn sees his brothers as being backwards in their way of life. Directed by Eamonn O'Donoghue, the play filled the Town Hall Theatre with laughter. There may have been times where the scripting could have been condensed and the punch-lines were that little bit predictable but all-in-all it made for a very entertaining show, delivered by a sterling cast.*

*Unforgiven is part of a trilogy of plays written by John McDwyer, named the Leitrim Trilogy. These plays encompass a certain character, humour and lifestyle characteristic of the North West of Ireland.*



**Cast and Crew of Unforgiven. Back (L-R): Declan Finn, Eamonn O'Donoghue, John Boland, Mary Cuddy, Pat Canty and Seamus Feerick. Front (L-R): Patrick Byrne and Dave Hardiman.**

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# All Systems Go For Beauty and The Beast in February 2012

**Writes Christopher Day**

*The committee and members of Ballinasloe Musical Society have been extremely busy over the past couple of months. First up they held the very popular "Fair Week - Singing Pubs" competition on behalf of The Fair and Festival Committee, adjudicated by Ray Collins. Winners in the best overall category were the Dunlo Tavern, Best individual Male performer was Jojo Hession and best female performer was Lisa Whyte.*

*On Halloween Night, in conjunction with Meadow Cross Cultural Association, the society hosted a most successful Kiddies (and adults!) Halloween Party. This proved to be an immensely popular event and they received a good deal of contributions from local school children for the Art Competition.*

*In early November, the Society welcomed its new production team of Majella Flanagan (Director), Sarah Griffin (Choreographer) and Shane Farrell (Musical Director). Their first duty was to attend Gullane's Hotel for auditions to cast for the 2012 production of Disney's Beauty and the Beast. After almost 5 hours of singing, dancing and readings the "Three Wise Heads" appeared from under a plume of white smoke to announce that they had fully cast the show, much to everybody's delight. The main players are, Niamh Kelly as Belle, Kevin Griffin as the Beast, Eoin Croffy as Gaston, Declan Finn as Lefou, Patrick Byrne will play Cogsworth, Sarah Corcoran as Mrs Potts, Lumiere will be played by Enda McGrath, Catherine Madden will play Madame de Grande Bouche and Maurice will be played by Brian Derrane. Rehearsals began on Thursday*



*Celine Loughnane, Karen Campbell and Magdalena Garcarek enjoying the Musical Society's Halloween celebrations.*

*the 10th of November and have been continuing apace since for the show which will take place from the 19th to the 25th of February in the New Year. The committee and members of the Society would like to wish you all a very peaceful Christmas and a joyous New Year and are looking forward to seeing you all in the Town Hall Theatre in February!*

*For further details or info about getting involved and giving a helping hand with costumes, publicity, backstage or indeed front of house - Contact Musical Society Chairperson Frances Leahy on Tel: 087 222 0282*

## www.ballinasloecommunity.com and A New Social Enterprise

**Writes Siobhan Byrne**

*At the Community Open Evening and Networking event in the Carlton Shearwater Hotel the launch took place of a new interactive Community Information website. The event was facilitated by the Meadow Cross Cultural Association (MCCA) as a celebration of Galway Social Inclusion Week.*

*In the month of October alone the new website achieved 120,000 hits from over 20 different countries. The website (and linked Facebook page) provides not only an ongoing resource for local people but also serves as a window for tourism.*

*The advantage of a multi-lingual site is that it reaches out, not only to non-nationals living within the community, but also potential visitors and tourists who see a progressive, authentic picture of the community. The website will now be maintained under the auspices of a new social enterprise currently in the making for Ballinasloe. Social enterprise is a business model that puts people*

*and community first, ahead of private or personal gain, while operating in a commercially viable and sustainable manner. As part of its commercial activity the new social enterprise will provide an employment agency, a training agency, management agency and sponsorship, commission activity via the website.*

*Revenue will be re-invested to open up the river, create cycling and walking paths, create tourist package activities, make temporary uses of unused property and create tourist attractions including temporary museums, art, craft and heritage workshops.*

*The enterprise will also support existing Tidy Towns collaborative Horticultural Projects and the creation of more community open spaces, recreational parks and gardens. Social enterprise will play a very significant role in national recovery and a 'can do' community spirit would help drive that recovery. If you would like support new enterprise for Ballinasloe. Get in touch.*



*Magdalena Garcarek, Michael Maher and Siobhan Byrne at the launch of the new website in the Carlton Shearwater Hotel.*

*Contact B-TASC, Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre, Creagh, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway on 090 9631652 or Email: tascagency@gmail.com. Remember to register your business, news and events at [www.ballinasloecommunity.com](http://www.ballinasloecommunity.com) or facebook.com/BallinasloeCommunityDirectory.*

# Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum... Jack is Back!

Writes Caitriona Ní Chadhain

Would you trade your cow for a handful of Magic Beans? Well Jack did and you can find out if it was the deal of the century by heading along to the Town Hall Theatre for this year's offering from Ballinasloe Panto Jack and the Beanstalk.

This will be Ballinasloe Panto's third year to produce a Christmas Panto and after the runaway successes of *Aladdin* in 2009 and *Cinderella* last year, audiences can expect spectacular stage displays, an all singing all dancing cast and one or two surprises!

The cast this year is headed by Enda McGrath who plays our hero Idle Jack, but will he win the fair hand of Princess Rose, played by leading lady Sarah Corcoran? The villains of the piece are Giant Blunderbore who is brilliantly portrayed by Brian Derrane and Poison Ivy, played by popular radio DJ Fergal Darcy who says of the panto: "It's great to be involved again. The sheer effort the crew puts into this show is amazing, from mice changing to carriages, to caves jumping out of the stage. God only knows what you're going to see this year! Eoin Croffy, the show's director, has been working us hard and he's determined to make this performance the best yet. Let's just say he has a knack for producing the goods. There are jokes for kids big and small and it will really light up the community, so as we say in rehearsals: Up The Stalk!"

Director Eoin Croffy and his award winning production team of Musical Director John Roe and Choreographer Olwyn Cronin have assembled a stellar cast chosen from the many enthusiastic people young and old who auditioned in the Carlton Shearwater Hotel back in September, including over 100 young children - many who are appearing on stage for the first time.

Mike Kelly, in his third Ballinasloe Panto production, takes the part of The King



Pat Vaughan and Mike Kelly as the Ugly Sisters in last year's production of *Cinderella*. They play lead roles again in this year's production, *Jack and The Beanstalk*.

and says "Last year I was an Ugly Sister so it's an honour to be crowned King this year and Jack and the Beanstalk is the perfect way to get out, have a laugh and forget about the recession!" Of course, every good panto needs a Fairy Godmother to smooth the way and the part of Fairy Beansprout is taken by the wonderful Marnie O'Cara. The fantastically energetic cast is completed by Pat Vaughan another veteran of Ballinasloe Panto as 'Dame Trott', Mike O'Reilly as 'Dozy Den' and Declan Finn who plays the 'Prime Minister'. According to Declan "A lot of work has gone into Jack and the Beanstalk and if you thought *Aladdin* and *Cinderella* were good then you ain't seen nothin' yet!" Jack and the Beanstalk was first performed almost

two hundred years ago and tells the story of a young boy, who whilst on his way to the market meets a man who convinces Jack to trade his family's cow, their only worthwhile possession for a handful of 'Magic Beans'. Jack returns home to a furious mother who promptly throws the beans out of the window. On waking the following morning Jack discovers that the beans have sprouted into an enormous beanstalk and being the curious young lad that he is, Jack climbs it to investigate. What fun and games will await Jack? Well you'll have to head along to the Town Hall Theatre from the 12th to the 18th of December to find out!

This promises to be Ballinasloe Panto's finest production to date and is the perfect start to the Christmas period, truly a must see for the whole family!

Jack and the Beanstalk runs at the Town Hall Theatre, Society Street, from December 12th to the 18th nightly at 7:30pm, with Matinee performances on Saturday the 17th and Sunday 18th at 2:30pm. **See You There!**



The Female chorus running through their number.

Tickets can be purchased from the booking office, J & S Photos on 0996 31566 or from the Town Hall Theatre. For more information on Ballinasloe Panto visit [www.ballinasloepanto.com](http://www.ballinasloepanto.com).



# Ballinasloe: The New Brooklyn

Writes Caitriona Ní Chadhain

**Milan Jay's music is a mixed pot of funk and ambience drizzled with rock and electro beats. They brew all this up right under our noses here in Ballinasloe.**

John Millane and Joseph Kenny have been described as the Midland's answer to Jay and Silent Bob but you won't see these two loitering around outside Cosmo's, you might however spot them hanging about the Enterprise Centre where they practice most evenings of the week. They have recently brought a new drummer, Tony Higgins on board and have released a trilogy of EP's, branded the Philosophor Trilogy, in the past year.

John released an album on his own in 2008 called Mellow Funk, an 11 track instrumental record which does exactly what it says on the tin, it's a chilled out melodic layering of catchy riffs and funky beats. Joseph came on board in summer 2010 and they played their first live gig together last November, the recent addition of drummer Tony adds that extra something to their live shows.

Milan Jay can't be tied down to any specific genre "We're wide open to experimentation, we go from a straight up rock song to a hip-hop song to an electronic song, we're not really trying to make cutting edge modern music, we're just trying to make good music." said John. Milan Jay have been likened to a number of well known artists including The Beta Band and Super Furry Animals, sharing a certain style in their approach to and experimentation with electro-music.

Mike O'Dowd from the Lakeland Studios has been a big help to the band, helping out in the recording process and often stepping in on drums; "he has a great ear for production, he knows when something is missing or if something doesn't need to be in there, he's very good at what he does." said Joseph.

Having received attention from the likes of Steve Lamacq of the BBC and Jim Carroll of the Irish Times, Milan Jay seem to be getting positive reactions all around. Jim Carroll from the



Irish Times quoted that "Ballinasloe is the new Brooklyn" when he heard the track 'Time to leave computers behind' on the bands 2nd EP. 'To the Night and Sky' is the second EP of the trilogy and comes like a selection box of genres, moving with ease from hip-hop to ambience and what comes between.

It was helping a band unload for a Teen Star competition in Ballinasloe's Town Hall Theatre when he was 17 that inspired John to start playing music. He went halves on a guitar with his brother and has had a keen interest in music since. Coincidentally, Joseph was playing at the same Teen Star competition with his band at the time, before the pair had ever met. It was through ad's on [www.boards.ie](http://www.boards.ie) looking for band mates that the two eventually met in 2009. John is from Ballinasloe and went to school in Garbally, while Joseph hails from Eyrecourt.

The band started their own record label, Philosophor Records on which they have released the 3 EP's in the Philosophor Trilogy, the last of which came out at the end of November. They're hoping to compile an album from the best of these EP's next year at some stage!"

Check out Milan Jay's Bandcamp page where they've been kind enough to offer a number of free downloads at [www.milanjay.bandcamp.com](http://www.milanjay.bandcamp.com) or look them up on Facebook.



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# From Clontuskert to Moscow It's LEGO All The Way!

Writes Ken Kelly

**St. Augustine's National School is situated in the heart of Clontuskert community, just 5 miles from Ballinasloe town. It is a three teacher school with a reputation for excellence in the area of teaching and learning.**

St. Augustine's has a very active Parents' Association and has forged strong links with the community in the area. It holds a Green Flag for Waste Management, three Discover Primary Science and Mathematics Excellence Awards and has been awarded the British Science Council Crest Award for participation in the FIRST LEGO® League.

St. Augustine's is a pioneering school in the use of digital technologies to aid the implementation of the Irish Primary school curriculum. They are the first school in Ireland to use WeDo LEGO® Robotics to facilitate cross curricular project work. Podcasting is used as a tool to aid many subjects. FIS (Film in Schools) is an annual event in Clontuskert where the children script, direct, act in and edit their own films. The school is the only Member of the Empowering Minds Group of Ireland in County Galway.

St. Augustine's is linked to Oak Lake School, Manitoba, Canada and uses Digital

Storytelling to develop literacy levels and encourage co-operation between the schools. It is also linked to seven schools in England, Sweden, Spain, Estonia, France and Latvia as part of a Comenius Partnership. This Partnership is called STAGE-Seven Towards A Greener Europe and explores Green issues such as waste management and wildlife conservation. In March of this year teachers from these partner schools visited the school to learn about the Irish education system and culture. Whilst in Clontuskert, they were treated to a special reception in the school, where the best of Irish music and dancing were showcased. Locals; Mary and Frank Hession, Bobby Kilkenny and Maureen Browne entertained with traditional Irish music while local stars of Irish dancing, the Cúl na Mearagáin Set Dancers with leader, Annette Hurley wowed the visitors with their set dancing skills. A French Language Teacher Ms. Marie Palmucci, has taught French to all classes since September 2010 and students enjoy learning French every day.

## Achievements and Projects

**Heritage and History:** The school receive huge support from Clontuskert Heritage Group in the implementation of project work in the areas of History and Heritage. In 2010, St. Augustine's were Joint Winners with Joe Molloy in the Ballinasloe Electoral Area at the

Galway Heritage Awards. Their Award Winning Project consisted of a visit to Clontuskert Abbey with Joe Molloy, Adeline Finneran and Eileen Curley, members of Clontuskert Heritage Group to learn about, photograph and film the site. The students were also invited to visit Cistercian Abbey in Roscrea to learn about modern monastic life by Abbot Richard Purcell. The students then created a virtual 3-D photo image of Clontuskert Abbey using Photosynth. This 3-D image is linked to the school's blog and can be seen across the world.

**ICT:** This year the teachers in the school have pioneered a cross-curricular project, Keep on Track, that links fifteen Rail Stations and Schools on the Galway-Dublin Railway Line. The innovative venture is co-ordinated by Clontuskert NS and Holy Spirit BNS, Ballymun. The aim of Keep on Track is to use Web 2.0 technologies to link diverse schools and enhance each student's learning through study of trains and rail systems; both modern and historical. It integrates all subjects of the curriculum. It is supported and sponsored by Irish Rail, the NCTE, the Empowering Minds Group and forms an exciting new alliance between Galway, Athlone, Portlaoise, Kildare and Drumcondra Education Centres. History and Heritage will be an underlying element of the project as Clontuskert students learn about Ballinasloe Train Station and train travel in Ireland and beyond. The project was recently chosen to represent Ireland at the Microsoft European Innovative Education Forum in Moscow where it performed extremely well against projects from all across Europe.

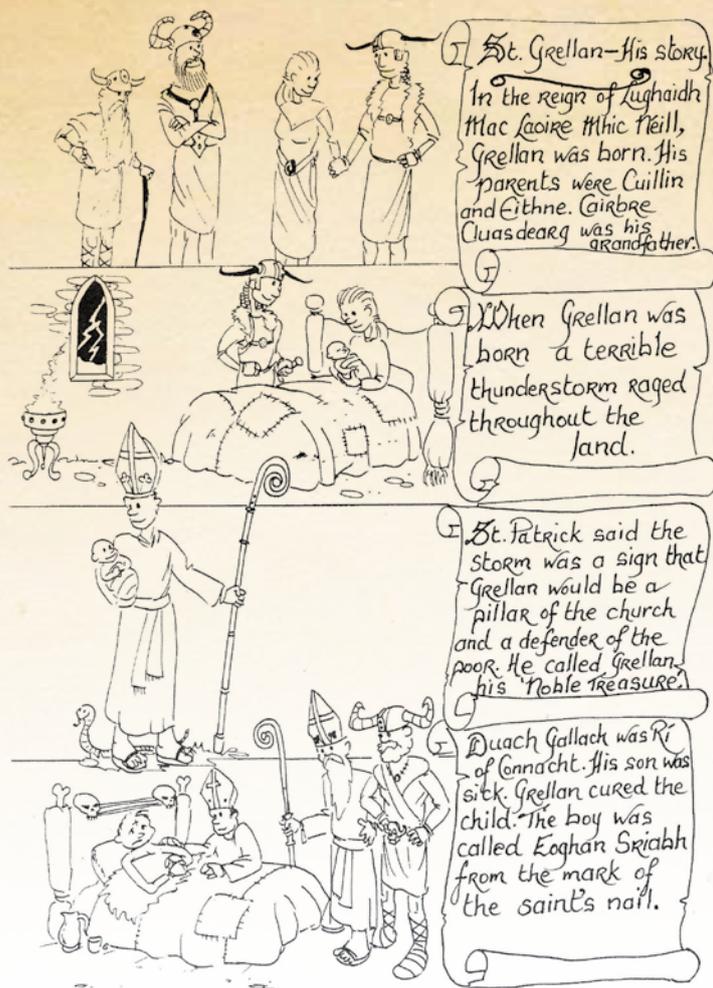
**Sport:** In the past three years Clontuskert have twice been All-Ireland Silver Medalists in Spikeball (Volleyball) and in 2010 were crowned All-Ireland Champions. They have numerous County accolades in Volleyball and in Chess and in 2010 were County Finalists in Cumann na mBunscol Hurling and in the Paddy Manton Hurling Tournament. The students receive Handball Coaching from Peter Mulryan and were featured on the TG4 programme on Handball where the students spoke of their grá for the game 'as Gaeilge.' Swimming takes place in the Kingfisher in Ballinasloe after Easter each year and the students take part in Tag Rugby also.

Clontuskert's blog was shortlisted for an Eircom Junior Spiders Award in 2010. We thank all concerned for their help.

Email: [clontuskertns@gmail.com](mailto:clontuskertns@gmail.com)



Principal Kate Murray with some of the children showing off their LEGO Project.



**St. Grellan—His story**  
 In the reign of Lughaidh Mac Laoire Mhic Néill, Grellan was born. His parents were Cuillin and Eithne. Cairbre Cluasdearg was his grandfather.

When Grellan was born a terrible thunderstorm raged throughout the land.

St. Patrick said the storm was a sign that Grellan would be a pillar of the church and a defender of the poor. He called Grellan his 'Noble Treasure'.

Duach Gallach was Rí of Connacht. His son was sick. Grellan cured the child. The boy was called Eoghan Sraibh from the mark of the saint's nail.



As a reward Duach Gallach gave Grellan a tribute of seven cows from each chieftain and seven garments from each chieftain's wife.

Máine Mór and Eochaidh demanded land from Cian.

Grellan made peace and the sides exchanged hostages.

The wife of Cian's Brekon fell in love with the hostage Amhalgaidh—son of Máine Mór.

# Going Back to The Well

**Writes Pat Johnston**

**Grellan's name has long been associated with Ballinasloe town and with its clubs, schools and many male offspring but what do we really know about this character? Grellan's feast day falls on the 17th September but the saint is no longer commemorated according to the style he was accustomed to.**

That may have something to do with the fact that Grellan's well, located at Tobbergrellan, is on private land and inaccessible to the public and the Kilconnell road is narrow at that point with no room for parking. But the spirit of pilgrimage could be revived, to the benefit of all. From Camino de Santiago in Spain to Croagh Patrick, Lough Derg and Gougane Barra more people are drawn to pilgrimage. Their motives for walking in the steps of the ancients may differ but nobody can deny the contemporary search for meaning and for spirituality.

In early Christian Ireland, water, which had been the source of life itself in the Celtic mind, was still worshipped. Sanctuaries such as wells became shrines where people gathered to thank God for supplying the very essence of life and to commemorate the saint associated with that particular site.

There are 210 holy wells in County Galway, which would indicate that rural communities in particular have a particular fondness for such sites. Many towns still celebrate their local saint with a pattern or Holy Day. On August 15th at Lady's Well in Athenry, Mass was celebrated and 'The Rounds' or prayers around the well were followed by a harvest celebration complete with 'Whoopsies' and music. Maybe we could take a leaf out of

that book and return to the roots of our civilisation. Popular Catholicism, rooted in Gaelic culture focused on such sacred sites as holy wells and participation in rituals known as patterns. People would also visit there alone and, in silence, beg of the patron saint of the well to intercede for them to obtain relief from God and tie a piece of cloth on a branch of a tree overhanging the well as a token of pilgrimage. Many miracles were made on the border of these wells.

A pattern was originally a religious ceremony and was and still is, always celebrated near to a holy well. Although some still frequent the pattern for religious purposes, it is now resorted to as a place of recreation where, after the better disposed have partaken of the innocent amusements of dancing and moderate hilarity, drunkenness and fighting wind up the entertainment.

It is generally accepted that the clergy frowned on these 'pagan' customs and the arrival of Cardinal Cullen with his programme of church building from the 1850's onwards undermined the faith rituals of the people. But such was the strength of the people's rituals that they have held on in many places such as Taughmaconnell and Brideswell and flourished on Croagh Patrick, Maamturk and Athenry.

Alternative places of pilgrimage could be found within the town. The famine graveyard at Bullies Acre could serve as a focal point to go back to our roots. Here we could commemorate, on the weekend nearest to Grellan's Day, both our ancient saint and our more recent antecedents who died in harder times than we are likely to face even in this period of austerity. Only the mercenary would deduct that what could be good for the faith might also be worthwhile for the economy and that perhaps there are times when you can serve God and mammon!



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Longfellow, 1874 (Marituri Salutamus)

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# The Business of Fun Conference



**Writes Colm Croffy**

**Over 260 delegates were in attendance at the Business of Fun festival and events conference which took place in the Carlton Shearwater last month. Over 40 European delegates were in the mix, including 27 students of event management from Holland's InHolland University of The Hague. There was over 40 key industry experts and speakers covering a vast range of topics.**

There are 21 Galway festivals registered as members of AOIFE (Association of Irish Festival Events with their Head Offices in the Old Dispensary of the Town Hall Theatre), many of whom were in attendance at this year's conference. Galway City Arts Officer, James Harrold, said that it's now more important than ever for festival and events to pull together through events such as the AOIFE conference. "I think the sector is under so much pressure, particularly financial pressure, ar scath a chéile a mhaireann na daoine, we really have to pull together and make it happen, there's a great sense of support amongst everyone here over the two days, it's great to see."

Ballinasloe Fair and Festival and the An tSua Fian Summerfest had delegates in attendance and native Brendan Flynn (brother of Leo) led the Clifden Arts Festival delegation which he founded and has successfully directed over 30 years.



*Clem Jacob of Clem Jacob Hire, Steve Schmader, CEO of IFEA World, Ballinasloe Town Mayor Mike Kelly and Miriam Dunne, Chairperson of AOIFE and Programme Director of Waterford Spraoi Festival.*

Representatives from Fáilte Ireland and the Arts Council detailed the difficulties of the year ahead, while festival representatives remained positive in their abilities to deliver quality programmes for their upcoming festivals and events. Steven Schmader, the president of the International Festival and Events Association in the conference's opening address said to festival organisers, "take the time to step back and take a look, you can't imagine the massive impact you have on your community."

There was a strong focus on the up and coming generation of festival and event organisers at this year's conference. A new feature this year was the placement partnering sessions, students from NUIG, UL, LIT, WIT, Sligo IT and UCD and DIT were in attendance, both crew and delegates. They were given the opportunity to bring along their cv's and to meet with festival organisers and suppliers.

It was the Association of Irish Festival Events' 18th annual conference and fourth to be held in the town's four star hotel. It ranks as one of the busiest Winter Conferences in the country and a lot of other venues are naturally interested in hosting it.

It was held in association with Fáilte Ireland and received grateful support from Galway County Council. Delegates and some locals were treated to an impromptu Live Performance by the Jimi Hendrix of the Irish Accordion - Liam O'Connor on the Thursday evening. The event is set to return again next year in November.



*Allan Grige, Chairman of International Festivals and Events Association Europe (IFEA), Joost Ver Waarbeek, Lecturer at InHolland business School, The Hague, Miriam Dunne, Chairperson of AOIFE and Programme Director of Waterford Spraoi Festival, Steve Schmader, CEO of IFEA World.*

# Ballinasloe Tractor Build Team



*The Ballinasloe 20 Build team dismantled and reassembled their Massey Ferguson 20 Tractor in their best time ever of 6 minutes 34 seconds recently. Pictured (L-R): Shane Burns, Ian Donnellan, Niall Hurley, Niall Cunniffe, Mike Cunniffe.*

## Writes Shane Burns

**Competing on a national level in the Irish Vintage Scene Ferguson Build Challenge and becoming National B league champions in their first competitive year, is some outcome for an inaugural year – but that is just what our bunch of locals have achieved!**

The Challenge was to completely disassemble a Ferguson 20 Two Tractor and to reassemble it in the fastest possible time using only hand tools. The rules of the competition state that the tractor is complete when the tractor starts, the lift mechanism to work and the tractor is in a driveable condition. Undaunted by such a task, vintage enthusiasts Shane Burns, Niall Cunniffe, Niall Hurley and Ian Donnellan were to be the crew to deliver under the watchful eye of their team coach Mike Cunniffe.

St. Patrick's Day saw the 20 Build Team launch their campaign in a fundraising event in Gullanes. They were joined that day by a team from Co. Cavan, the Bog Mechanics. Those present watched on in amazement as a Ferguson 20 Tractor was reassembled against the clock in the ballroom. On their first day out the locals won.

At the beginning of the season 4 teams had registered for the championship. Our near neighbours South Roscommon

Vintage Club, The Bog Mechanics from Cavan, The Foxy Spanners also from Cavan and The Ballinasloe Twenty Build Team. This league was for teams who were in their first full year of competition.

Round 1 of the series was hosted by the South Roscommon club in May. A blustery day greeted the teams at Millars on the old Dublin road. The Bog Mechanics drew first blood that day, returning the favour to Ballinasloe by beating them into a close second spot, South Roscommon third and the Foxy Spanners Fourth. Rounds two and three took us all the way to Cavan and to the Windmill Vintage Clubs event just outside Virginia. This time it was the South Roscommon lads who showed their pace to take the number one spot, Ballinasloe second (Again!!), Bog Mechanics third and the Foxy Spanners Fourth.

Round three would see the wily Cavan boys reassert themselves as the top dogs and not wanting to be shown up on their home turf set a blistering time to just pip Ballinasloe for top spot. Three seconds was all that separated the two teams. South Roscommon were third with the Foxy Spanners a close fourth.

Going into round four there was a worrying trend starting to emerge. Ballinasloe were second on all rounds leading into their home event on the 17th July. It was clear that it was time to up the game and the local team were hungry for their first outright win. With

local pride at stake the Ballinasloe lads produced the goods on the day to score a deserved win on home soil. This time it was the turn of the Bog Mechanics to take second, the Foxy Spanners Third and the South Roscommon team unfortunately disqualified on a technicality.

Going into the final three rounds at the National Ploughing Championships, both first and second and third and fourth places were tied on points.

Each day of the ploughing consisted of three builds per each team. The Ballinasloe team were up first and out of the box set a stunning time of 6min and 54sec. This was followed by a 7min 17 sec build and finally a 6min 55 sec build.

As it turned out the Bog Mechanics set exactly the same time as Ballinasloe in the final build of the day. It was only upon a post build inspection that ONE loose bolt was found on the tractor, giving them a five second penalty and a total time of 7min! Again this forced a tie break, having an equal amount of first second and third positions for both teams. The winner was to be decided on the fastest times of the two teams throughout the year with Ballinasloe taking that honour and the championship at the final hour.

Ballinasloe Twenty Build Team now move up to League A for 2012 where they will compete against more experienced teams from Cork, Tyrone, Mountbellew and Donegal.

# A Ballinasloe Boxing Legend

Writes Ken Campbell

**Ballinasloe Boxing has come a long way since the local R.I.C. was forced to ban a training school in the interest of law and order in the town. That was back in the early 1900's when town boxers got their first instruction from a travelling boxer who set up a tent on the Fair Green and invited young men to take nightly lessons at 6d a session.**

However boxers got so numerous in the locality that competition was often carried into the local public houses where free exhibitions were given, hence the R.I.C. ban.

Since then Boxing within the town has become a little more civilized, but the seeds of passion for the sport were well and thoroughly sown. And one young man by the name of William Donnellan or as everyone else knows him, both young and old, simply as Buddy was to embark on a lifetime's obsession with the sport as both a Boxer and a Coach. Born in No. 33 St. Brendan's Terrace, Ballinasloe on the 18th October 1938 to William and Margaret Donnellan; Buddy was the 2nd oldest of 7 children, 5 boys and 2 girls.

Growing up he has memories of playing Football in the old street leagues, but it is boxing that Buddy is best known for, whether it be in the ring himself, or doing the corner for another. Buddy Donnellan's Legacy will be in the Sport of Boxing. At the age of 11 years he would attend his first training session in the old Work House where Barrett's is now, situated on

the top floor an old make shift ring had been erected, He was not brought nor sent-for Buddy boxing was a calling and from the time he heard that first bell he was captivated. A conventional Orthodox Boxer he would box at both Bantam and Featherweight.

With his natural short slim build he never had any trouble or had to exert too much energy to make his chosen weight, he joked "I was made for Bantamweight"

It would be under the watchful eye and guidance of Mickey (ACE) Regan that Buddy would excel. Mickey was highly rated by Buddy and claims he was one of the best boxing coach's this town ever had. He was a hard but fair coach and had both the passion and the ability to take Buddy to the heights he himself wanted to achieve.

As Mickey ACE Regan taught his young compatriots the techniques they would need and use in the ring. Certain few would shine through (Buddy being one), but you also had a Connemara Heavyweight by the name of Colman Hennon, a man who would go on to box for Ireland and K.O the European Champion. Buddy would develop a friendship with this senior boxer, a friendship which lasted a lifetime. Affectionately known as Collie, Buddy remarked "He was one of the best, any man who ever shared a ring with Collie knew all about it".

From the start Buddy had a hunger and would go on to win both County and Connacht Titles, 7 in total, but his one and only Irish Title Challenge seemed doomed from the outset "It was my 13th fight, my bout was 13th on the card and it was the 13th day of the month and I



lost on a split decision". Buddy would never return to contest another Irish final but would build a reputation as a hard fast fighter in the province of Connacht where he would take on all comers from the likes of Seanie Harty, a hard boxer from Galway trained by Chick Gillen who Buddy beat, but recalled it as one of his harder fights.

Buddy was now coming of age and boxing had a firm foothold in the town. He was now starting to coach himself and with his youngest brother Joe Joe now coming through the ranks he decided to hang up the Gloves, he was 27 years old. His record stands at 64-4 with an unbeaten run of 27 fights.

As a coach Buddy adopted the style of Ace Reagan, he believed a good boxer would beat a scrapper any day. Quick hands, quick feet and use your head. These would be some of the skills he would try and bestow on the next generation of boxers coming through, the likes of Peter Keighery and Buddy's younger brother Joe, two boxers he reckons should both have won Irish Titles.

After years of success St. Boscas was to close its doors and would stay that way until a Garda car pulled up outside Buddy's house. As the car door opened a single Garda got out in full uniform, a tall clean cut young man, he came to Buddy's door where he was greeted by Betty "Excuse me Mrs. would Buddy be about" Buddy didn't know who this young Garda was as he had only just transferred to Ballinasloe. It was a simple introduction "Hello my name is Tom Watters I heard you use to do a bit of Boxing". It wouldn't be long now before Bosco's would be up and running again.





*St. Bosco's Club 1967.*

As a married man Buddy was now the proud father of three sons Eamon, Michael and Liam and like their father it was inevitable that they would each don the gloves and enter the ring and continue a family tradition. Eamon would be the first, a tasty boxer who could hit and move. Buddy brought to mind one incident where Eamon had just joined the Navy and he travelled all the way from Haulbowline in Cork to Ballina to contest the junior featherweight Connacht final which he won and was even considered a serious contender for a senior title but Buddy reckons the Navy made him soft and he was beaten the following year in the senior championships.

His two younger sons, Michael and Liam came through together. Michael didn't move much but hit like a truck while Liam was fast, he would have you hit and be gone while you were still bringing up your guard "it was like trying to nail down the wings of a butterfly". In 1982 the two young brothers would both claim the County Galway League, the Connacht Tribune League, both County and Connacht titles and were on their way to Dublin alongside Richie Darcy and Aiden Cruise. Buddy described how he believed that even though all the boxers were well capable of winning it seemed that Liam and Aiden would have difficult bouts but he was convinced Michael and Richie should come through, but as faith would have it on this occasion only Liam would win an Irish Title and would also go on to win the prestigious County Galway Sports Star Award.

Reminiscent of that season Buddy informed me that his two sons had both fought 19 contests each, Liam won

19 Michael won 18. Aiden Cruise was unlucky to miss out on an Irish title and as for Richie Darcy well he would go on to win 3 Irish Titles and as Buddy said "he should have had four" Other boxers Buddy singled out were Thomas Green and a young Walter Reynolds. He said he was a tasty little boxer and it was a shame Walter and Michael were the same weight. But all good things must come to an end and once his sons had

quit the game Buddy pulled back from being involved in boxing and over time the club he loved so much, St. Bosco's A.B.C would fade away into the reservoir of time only to be replaced by the next generation with the formation of The Ballinasloe and District Boxing Club and now my own club Emerald A.B.C.

Nowadays he is enjoying the fruits of retirement. He no longer lives in town as he has moved to the Shannonbridge road where he lives beside the youngest of his three daughters. And over time he has amassed a fine collection of grandchildren of which he is equally proud and now as he approaches his 74th birthday, Buddy looks back at his life and admits he's had his ups and downs good times and bad but he always manages to put a good spin on everything. In the past few years two of his brothers Eamon and Jim passed away and he also lost his beloved son Michael, who died suddenly while on holiday and his mother Margaret passed away in July 2008, aged 101 years, But like a true champion boxer he'll take the count, one to eight, but when that bell goes he'll be back out fighting.

He maybe over seventy years of age but I can safely say he would put a lot of fifty year olds to shame and as I sit across the room with a cup of coffee in hand after having a conversation that lasted over two hours with a man I've known all my life as my uncle Bud and talking about Ballinasloe a town I grew up in, I released I knew them both just that little bit better now.



***Buddy with his son Liam after Liam had been presented with his award at the Sports Stars Banquet in the Sacre Coeur Hotel, Salthill.***

# Handball Club 85 Years Young

**Writes Caitríona Ní Chadhain**

In 1926 when the station master at that time put an end to letting a group of young Derrymullen people play handball outside the Railway Station, a meeting was called and Derrymullen Handball Club was born soon after. They rented a site for £3 (Punt) per annum and set about building an alley on the site. Funds were raised through dances in Harper's Ballroom, plays, card games and other collections.

The club as it is today was started in 1980 by a group of people some of which were Peter Mulryan, John Burke, Vincent Earls, Seán Tully and Seamus Shinnars. It was agreed that the alley would not be played until it could be properly roofed and secure. Originally there was a 60x30 court at the location. It was found technically difficult to roof the existing walls so the Committee settled for the American style 40x20 alley. The finished alley as it is today was opened in March 1985.

The club have had approximately a 20% increase in members every year for the last few years and currently have a senior membership of 28 players. Handball is a sport for all ages. Players start as young as seven years of age and continue playing for life. There's a competition and grade for every skill level. The club started a new initiative two years ago to get local national schools involved in handball. They've started providing a bus service to and from the alley for many local schools. "It was a great success, we had about 200 juveniles coached here last year." said Peter Mulryan, the club's vice-chairman. Peter's also been involved in building basic handball walls in a number of the local national schools to help encourage engagement with the sport from a young age. He

won All-Ireland Masters Titles in 2000 and 2004. Collum Ward, the club's secretary started playing handball at 11 when he was in Garbally College. "It's a great way to get to know people and it's like a big family, everyone knows everyone, that's the great thing about handball." said Collum. The committee at the moment consists of Barry Cormican (Chairman), Peter Mulrany (Vice-Chairman), Collum Ward (Secretary), Johnny Keighery (Treasurer) and Noel Mulryan (PRO).

Each year the club hosts the Barry Brennan Memorial Cup and the Warrior Shoes Trophy. David Bradley was this year's winner of The Warrior Shoes Tournament, with trophies sponsored by Benny Donnellan. Johnny Keighery was this year's winner of the Barry Brennan Memorial Cup, trophies for this competition were sponsored by The Ballinasloe Fishing Club and The Ballinasloe Snooker Club. . Contact: [info@ballinasloehandball.com](mailto:info@ballinasloehandball.com)



Johnny Keighery and Martin Ward (Winners) are presented with the Mike Day Memorial Cup by his wife Anne and son Mike.

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# Boxing Still Serves and Strives



**Writes Caitríona Ní Chadhain**

**Boxing is a sport which takes a lot of dedication and hours of training and devotion to reach the highest standards. Ballinasloe has been a stronghold of boxing for many years now with two clubs here on our doorstep, The Ballinasloe Boxing Club and the Emerald ABC boxing club.**

Ballinasloe Boxing Club was initially started in 1978 by founding members; Coleman Hernon, Tom Waters, Robin Cruise, Buddy Donnellan, Mike Lyons, Bertie Guinan and Jimmy Reynolds. In the early 80's Ballinasloe Boxing Club was the number one club in Connacht gaining a succession of Connacht titles within a number of years from David Morgan, Micheal Cruise, Richard D'arcy, Liam Donnellan and Damien Waters.

The club had European winners in the history of Ballinasloe Boxing Club including Coleman Hernon, one of the founding members. The club closed for a number of years in 2000 due to a lack

of coaches. Ronan Kelly was the only remaining coach, he kept it going on his own for a number of years before finishing up in the year 2000.

The boxing club was started up again in 2004 and have had 10 Connaught champions since then. Today, the club is run by a number of coaches including Michael Ward, the clubs head coach, Aidan Cruise president, Michael Ward secretary, chairman Henry Lloyd and coach Ciaran Silke.

There's a strong sense of community within Ballinasloe Boxing Club. "When we have tournaments here all the families would come in to show their support, win lose or draw it's about the sport", said coach Ciarán Silke. "Even when the lads move on to college or wherever, the couple of years in Ballinasloe Boxing Club will always stay with them and that's an important thing." said Aidan Cruise, the club president.

"We're very grateful to all the local businesses that have supported us over the years, only for the sponsorship from the businesses in Ballinasloe there would be no boxing club here and to Father

Garvey who provided the building here for us." said Michael Ward, the club's secretary.

The main age-group in Ballinasloe Boxing Club is from ages 9 to 15. Many of their members start training with them from the age of eight. From 11 onwards they are able to take part in competitive boxing. Boxers are required to do a medical if they wish to take part in competitions, they must also do a medical every year at the county championship. If they're good enough to box they can move on to European competitions. The safety of the boxer is very important to all concerned, the boxer, referee and corner-man.

The majority of their members are from Ballinasloe with some others joining from the surrounding areas. Last season the club had five county champions and one Connaught champion.

Based in the Emerald Ballroom on Society Street the club have provided quality training to local boxers for many years now and hope to pass the legacy on to their younger members. For more information Contact Pat Mongan at **Email: patmongan90@gmail.com**



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# Good Year for Ballinasloe AFC



Summer Camp attendees 2011  
with Mayor and Town AFC Officials

**Writes Caitriona Ní Chadhain**

**Ballinasloe Soccer Club has been on the go for 60 years now, having been founded in 1951. Since this year's season started in June the club has been a hive of sporting activity. The club has 13 teams at the moment, including three adult teams and the addition of an Under 12's ladies team.**

The club's pitch is in Brackernagh development park. The pitch itself was a €1.6 million development including enclosed grounds, a seated spectator stand, two grass pitches (one floodlit), two floodlit astro-turf pitches and a clubhouse.

Ballinasloe AFC's teams are currently in mid-season, "all our underage teams are in contention for honours. They're all doing extremely well. And our adult teams are doing very well too." said Johnny Walsh, the Club's Chairperson.

They were involved in the Under 10's Annual Street League which took place in June which has been in existence for the past 30 years and comprises of teams, catering for 130 players from every area in the town. St Grellans finished the overall winners in year's competition. "The beauty of this tournament is that every one of the players are winners, in that all get a trophy and all participate in the finals day. It's all about participation." said Johnny Walsh.

The club also host a week-long summer coaching soccer school every year. This year's camp had around 80 participants and it's chief coach was Barry O'Connor. The cost was cut to €45 per child for this year's camp, included in this price was the week's coaching, a kit-bag, socks, water-bottle and a certificate.

The Under 17 Inter-Provincials were played at the club's pitch recently with Connacht, Leinster and Ulster taking part. The Connacht v Leinster match finished in a 1 - 1 draw and the Leinster v Ulster match finished at 2 - 1 to Ulster.

Ballinasloe was picked as a venue because of its status as one of the best grounds in Connacht and the club is hoping for a youth international to be held there in the near future.

The club hosted a number of fundraisers to raise funds for the club. These included a race night in Joe Kelly's Bar and a successful October Fair Car Park.

Johnny Walsh is Chairperson of the club, Barry O'Connor is the Vice-Chairperson, Cathal Concannon is Vice-Chairperson and Treasurer, Ciaran Keighery is Treasurer, PRO is Jason Fallon and Youth Co-Ordinator is Enda Lyang. The Club's groundsmen are Pat Campbell and Brenda McNally.

Committee members include Joe B. Kelly, Tom Fitzpatrick, Peter Keighery, Enda Concannon, Robert Ronaldson, Patrick Loughnane, Henry Loughnane and Kevin Broderick. Ballinasloe Soccer Club participate in the Athlone and District Schoolboys League (ADSL) This league is for the top players from each club.

**Below are the Ballinasloe AFC players who participated in the Athlone and District Schoolboys League this year:**

**Under 10:** Tommy Lee Burke, Niall Cunningham, Joseph Dowd.

**Under 11:** Leo Jack White, Jordan Carr, Oisín Duffy, Oisín McCormack, Amy Coyne, Eoin Keogh.

**Under 12:** Heather Payne, Paul Carey, Enda Daly, Dara Cunningham

**Under 13:** Jonathon Maloney, Conor Lang, Oisín Kelly, Jonathon Cunningham.

**Under 14:** James Lynch and Glenn Kelly

**Under 15:** Shane Kelly, Conor Payne, Aidan Grenham, Mark Richardson and Cavin Atwood, Mahmoud Giunaa.



(L-R) Kevin Broderick (U15 Manager), Paddy Delaney of Brackernagh Developments and Delaney Furniture presenting a Sponsorship cheque to Noel Lyons (Ballinasloe Town Coach), Jack Delaney, Geraldine Delaney and Johnny Walsh (Ballinasloe Town Chairperson).

# Duggan Park Ballinasloe



## Writes Dan Dowling

**In GAA folklore Duggan Park is as synonymous to Ballinasloe as Croke Park is to Dublin, Breffni Park to Cavan, Cusack Park to Ennis, O'Moore Park to Portlaoise and Markievicz Park to Sligo.**

Ballinasloe's Duggan Park is dedicated to the memory of the late Dr. Patrick Duggan who was Bishop of Clonfert at the founding of the GAA. It was the same Dr. Duggan that Michael Cusack approached to become patron of the GAA. Despite being delighted at the formation of the GAA he declined due to his age and ill health but recommended a younger man; Archbishop Croke of Cashel and Emlly. It was because of this that the GAA was founded in Thurles and not in Loughrea, of such events are history made.

Duggan Park was opened in 1934 and since then has played a pivotal role in the social, sporting and commercial life of Ballinasloe, its hinterland and Co. Galway. The older people of the town look back with fond memories of the street league games that were played there, the titanic struggles and rivalry between teams such as Derrymullen, Jubilee, The Hill, St. Bridgets, Creagh, Brackernagh, The Square and St. Grellans.

Duggan Park is in the centre of Ballinasloe bound to the west by Mount Pleasant Avenue, to the north by Sarsfield Road,

to the west by Harris Road\* and the Fairgreen, to the south by the Show Grounds and Árd Mhuire. It has ample parking thus facilitating easy access and departure from all matches and is also just one mile from the newly constructed N6 motorway

The first secretary was John "Tull" Dunne, he and his hard working committee completed most of the original work by voluntary labour. The ground's stand is dedicated to his name. Before there was any talk of all weather pitches the original Duggan Park committee had the foresight to use some cinders from the local hospital underneath the topsoil, thus making it free draining and playable even under the most adverse weather conditions. Each of the following committees have had a policy

of continuous improvement since then. In 2008 a complete set of new dressing rooms was erected at the Sarsfield Road entrance. In the past year the dressing rooms under the stand have also been renovated to bring them up to the required present day standard, further improvements are also planned.

Duggan Park has been and will continue to be a cherished part of the community for many years. Having been witness to glory, defeat, passion and dedication throughout its years it will always hold great respect in the heart of the community. \*Burma Road as it is known locally; when the road was being constructed world war two was raging, the Burma Road was a vital pass to both sides of the conflict, some of the fiercest fighting in the war took place there, it was



*Local footballers Sean Meade and Cyril Dunne are presented with wallets of notes prior to participating at the Cardinal Cushing Games in New York 1965. Pictured at the Duggan Park, where (L-R): Cllr. Seamus Guider, Cllr. Grellan Deely, Cyril Dunne, Mattie Ganley, (St. Grellans Chairman), Cllr. Tom O'Baoall, Sean Meade, Jim Flaherty, Liam Goode (Committee Member) and Larry Connaire (Committee member).*

continuously in the news, thus some of the local witty characters coined it the Burma Road.

### Secretaries

John Dunne served as Secretary of Duggan Park from 1934 -1985, he was succeeded by his son Cyril, who served from 1985-1995, subsequent secretaries were Willie Ward, Jim Lally and the present day secretary is Brendan Dolan.

### Chairmen

Past Chairmen were Michael Fallon RIP, Brendan Walshe RIP, Michael Boland RIP, Michael Walshe, Fr. John Naughton (now PP Eyrecourt) and the present day chairman is John Burke.

### Committee

The present committee is Willie Ward, Brendan Dolan, John Burke, Dan Dowling, Enda Dowling, Pat Dolan, Jim Lally, Peter Mulryan, Tom Gilchreest, John Connolly, Frank Goldrick, Seamus Goldrick, Eoin Goldrick, Martin Healy, Francis Healy, Joe Kelly, Sean Tully, Christy Brown, Dave Curley, Gerry Seale, Matty Ganly, Michael Walshe, Seamie Fogarty, Dermot Connolly, Joe Warde and Ivan Mullen, Tom Headd, Tony Headd, William Stankard, Jim McDonnell and John Shaughnessy.

**Older People in town still talk of a 1958 Football League Game when the second-half was played in a snow storm.**



*Ballinasloe, 1954 Defeated County Finalists. Front (L-R): Joe Scarry (Manager), Jimmy Crehan (Woodmount), John McGuinness, James 'Giggler' Smith (St. Michael's Place), P.B. Ryan (Duggan Ave.), Michael Ryan, Mikey D'Arcy (The Harbour), Ollie Farnon (Poolboy). Sitting: Mattie Ganley (Dunlo Hill) and Martin Greally (Brackernagh). Back (L-R): Fred Jennings (Coach, Ard Mhuire), Pat Joe Gavin, Sean Keely (Deerpark), Pat Berigan (St. Joseph's Place), Tomas O Boill (Cleaghmore), Sean Reynolds (Seanboley), Paddy Kelly (The Harbour), Christy Dillon (Killure), Brian Naughton (Clontuskert), Sean Meade (Cullagh), Billy Flynn, Jim Flaherty (Mentor), Gerry Daly (St. Michael's Sq.) and Inky Flaherty (Selector).*

### Duggan Park has hosted

- All-Ireland Hurling Championship Games.
- All-Ireland U-21 Semi-Finals Hurling and Football.
- All-Ireland U21 Football Final.
- All-Ireland Club Championship Semi-Finals Hurling and Football.
- All-Ireland Intermediate Junior Football and Hurling Semi-Finals.
- All-Ireland Ladies Football Semi-Finals and National League Games.
- All-Ireland Camogie County and club Semi-Finals and Finals.
- Inter-provincial (Railway Cup) Semi-Finals, Finals, in both hurling and football on numerous occasions.
- Connacht Senior, Junior, U21 and Minor Football Championship Games.
- Galway County Finals in both Football and Hurling.
- Galway County Semi-Finals and Finals in both Camogie and Ladies Football in all grades.

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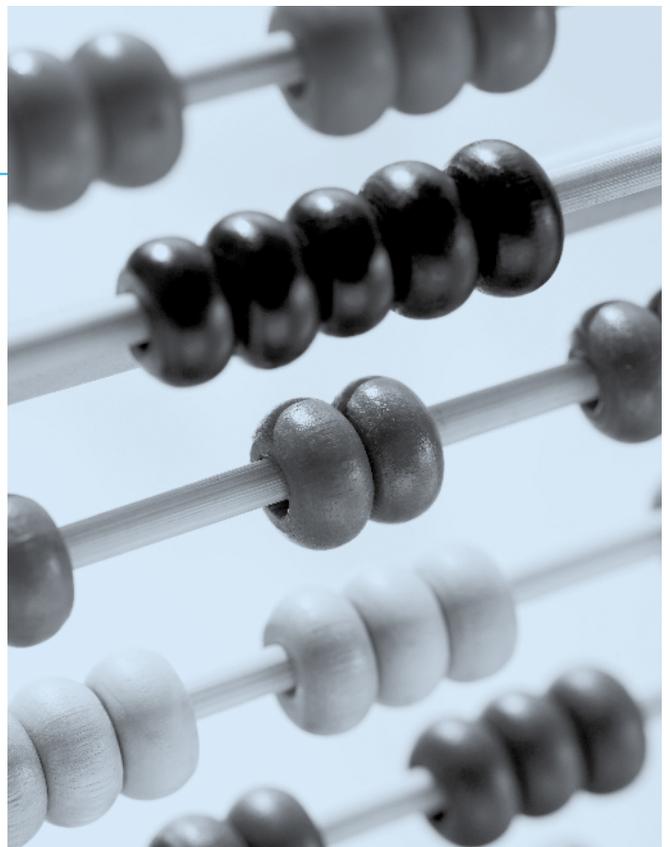
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# The Right Track For Success

**Writes Christopher Day**

Through the auspices of the Mental Hospital (as it was known until the late 60's), Garbally College and a variety of Athletic interests from Relays to Community Games track and field has long been a key component of the town's leisure activities but with no real place to call home. All that however has changed with the opening of a new €1.2 million sporting facility, consisting of a running track and community pitch in Dunlo, Ballinasloe. According to town Mayor Mike Kelly, the youth of the town and it's surrounds have been provided with an ideal opportunity to develop their sporting skills and realise their sporting potential.

The new facility is according to him "The envy of most other similar sized towns." These works, together with the developments being carried out by the GAA and Town AFC mean a total investment of approximately €3m in sporting facilities in this area of the town. It boasts an 8 lane all-weather running track, community pitch and amenity area. While he noted the obvious social benefits Mayor Kelly pointed out that the town could also benefit economically due to being able to host visiting athletics clubs for large scale competitions.

The contractors, Grangemore Landscapes from Cahir, Co. Tipperary, laid the track which comprises of a 6 lane 400m oval, with an 8 lane 100m sprint lane. The system is constructed in accordance with IAAF guidelines and consists of a 10 to 12mm rubber crumb base mat of polyurethane bound rubber granules and a 2-4mm fine crumb structural spray layer comprising EPDM granules in polyurethane liquor. These systems are used in top class athletics tracks all over the

world to ensure consistency for competition facilities, making the track at Dunlo Recreational Park one of the best in the Country. A management committee has been put in place to oversee the operations of the facility and it is comprised of reps. of the Athletics Club, GAA, Ballinasloe Town AFC, Ballinasloe & District Boxing Club and Emerald ABC Boxing Club. The Dunlo Recreational Park Management Committee as it is known will act as a liaison body to ensure that the use of the facility is optimised in a fair and equitable manner for the whole community. Each club with an involvement in the facility will have a designated key holder allowing all clubs access to the facility.

All queries in relation to the opening times and availability of the facility should be directed through Mr. Brian Murphy, Senior Staff Officer, Ballinasloe Town Council, who looks forward to hosting special events and also community days along with the sporting events at the Park. He can be contacted by email at [bmurphy@galwaycoco.ie](mailto:bmurphy@galwaycoco.ie) or call 090 9642263.

Mayor Mike Kelly, Director of Services Kevin Kelly, Town Clerk Gary O'Donnell, Senior Staff Officer Brian Murphy, Town Engineer Adrian Headd and Town Foreman PJ Clancy with local Councillors at official opening of the new track.



## Jacob Walshe Makes Irish U18's

**Writes Caitriona Ní Chadhain**

Garbally College's Jacob Walshe was recently chosen for the Irish Under 18's Rugby Squad.

**When did you first start playing Rugby and how did you get in to it?**

I first started playing Rugby when I was 12. I had just moved to Garbally, it has a strong Rugby culture so I was very much influenced by that and by my brother.

**Tell us about the clubs you play for?**

I currently play for a few teams such as my school, Town and Province. Connacht has a very high standard in underage Rugby and I'm very happy to be involved.

**How many times a week do you train?**

My typical week would involve four training sessions and two gym sessions a week, so very busy every evening after school and during the weekend.

**Your favourite thing about Rugby?**

My favourite thing would have to be the fact that Rugby is a team sport. When hard work and training is done, it's not done just for yourself but for all your teammates too. Meeting new friends, having the laugh and enjoying the success of winning is great as well.



**What position do you play on the field?**

I play loosehead prop and also tighthead if required! I used to play backrow but those days are over.

**When did you find out you'd made the Irish U18 Rugby Squad?**

I got a letter from the IRFU in the middle of October.

**What did the trial process entail?**

I just finished playing in the inter-provincials for Connacht against Munster, Leinster and Ulster where I was picked on the 35 man Irish panel for camp 1 which was held at the end of October.

**What was your reaction to the news?**

I was very shocked but very happy at the same time. I was very thankful to everyone who pushed me on when it was tough and to God who without him it would not have been possible.

**Do you travel far for Irish training?**

Yes. Camp 1 was held in Clongowes Wood College in Kildare and trainings will be held in Ashbourne not far from the school from now on. Our first match is away to Italy in Rovigo in February.

**Do you have a family history in Rugby?**

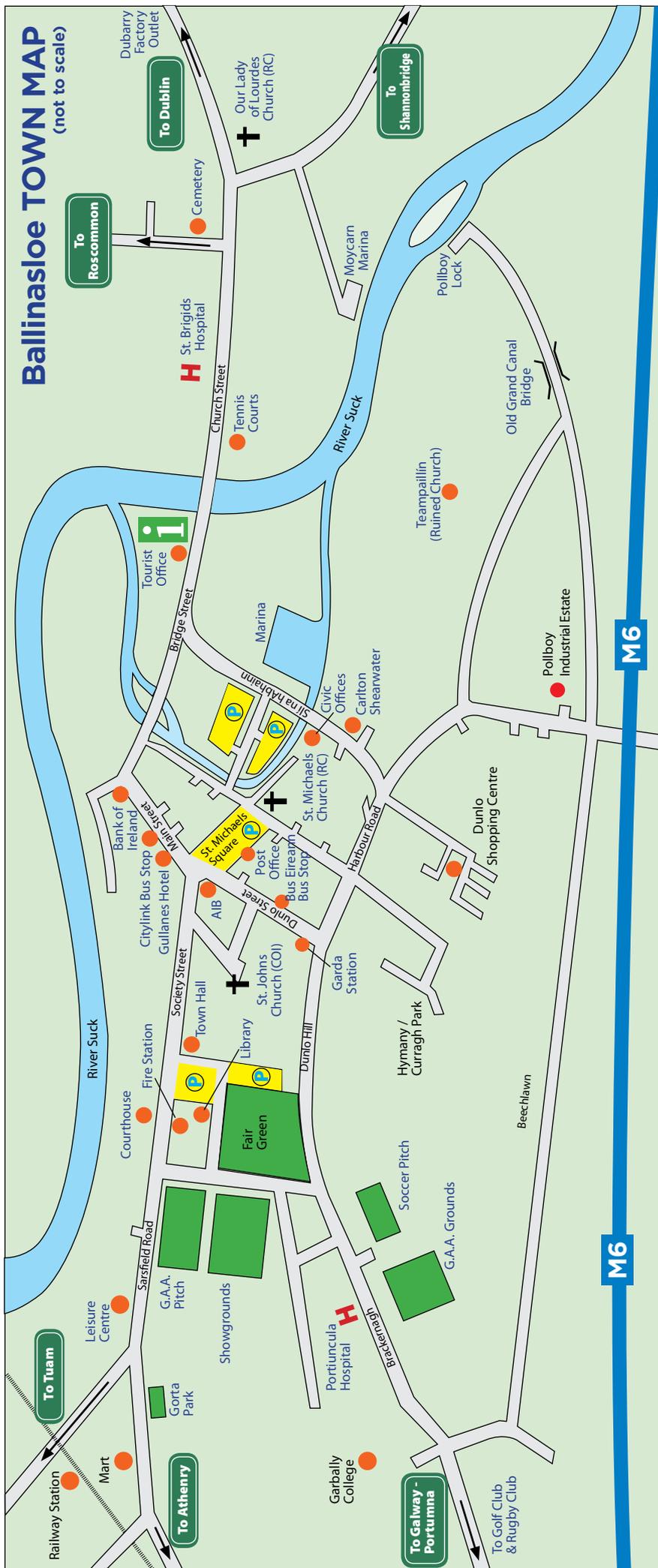
My brother who is 5 years older than me played for school and club but nobody else apart from him played.

**What Rugby players or other athletes do you admire most?**

I really admire Euan Murray and Andrew Trimble for their dedication and commitment to their faith despite their busy international and club Rugby lives. Roger Federer is someone I also admire as his great sportsmanship is always present in every aspect of his character.

**Do you play any other sports?**

I play a bit of Tennis, Golf and Soccer but is not taken seriously with Rugby taking so much of my time up.



## Slí na Sláinte

The Slí na Sláinte route, mapped by the Irish Heart Foundation is seven kilometres in length from the start/end point opposite Dolan's Garage on the Dublin Road. From this point the route follows Bridge Street, passing the Dubarry factory, Our Lady of Lourdes Church and the ruins of Ballinasloe Castle. The route follows a circuit through the town up Main Street, Society Street, Harris Road, past the GAA ground and the Le Poer Trench Monument. It then goes down Dunlo Hill and Hymany Street, Slí na hAbhainn and away from the town along Bridge Street to end, back at Dolan's Garage.

## Ballinasloe Line

A good walk for individuals interested in views of the Callows and of Ireland's extensive bog lands. The start of this walk is at Fanning's Lock the disused first lock of the Ballinasloe Canal. The Canal was abandoned in 1961. From Fanning's Lock proceed along the path of the disused canal. For most a walk of about two kilometers along the bank of the disused canal and the bog railway will provide ample opportunity to view the Callows and see aspects of how the turf is harvested from the bog. This walk is at its best on a bright fresh day in early summer when the wild flowers are in full bloom in the Callow meadows and the ground is dry underfoot. Approximately 4 kilometres in length Flowerhill Equestrian Centre. Situated in the village of Killimor roughly 20 miles outside town, Flowerhill has long been a haven for horse-lovers both local and visiting alike. The centre offers horseriding lessons as well as hunting, clay pigeon shooting, fly fishing and much more, all amongst the beautiful scenery of Killimor. **For more information on location, pricing and opening times, visit [www.flowerhill.net](http://www.flowerhill.net) or call +353 (0)9096 76112**

## Architectural Walking Tour

Ballinasloe's architectural walking tour devised by Galway East Tourism starts at The Man with the Horse statue and continues on up through Main street where people there are a number of Georgian style buildings and Diocletian windows can be admired. At the meeting point of Bridge Street and Main street there are a number of buildings of historical interest, a commercial premises which was once the Masonic Hall and a beautifully crafted 19th century stone house which is currently a guest house. Follow on to Bridge Street, then taking the pathway to the right which runs along the River Suck the several arches of the long stone bridge over the river can be admired, one of the town's most precious monuments. At the far end of the park here St Michael's Church' fine structure is to be admired, St. John's church which dominates the fair green is another admirable structure with a good deal of history behind it. The Courthouse on Society Street and Ballinasloe's Railway Station are two more stops along the way.



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